Effects of employee trainings on the occupational safety and health in accommodation sector

Ferika Özer Sari*,*

*Yasar University Vocational School, Tourism & Hotel Management Program, Selcuk Yasar Kampusu, UniversiteCaddesi, No: 35-3, Bornova 35500, Izmir, Turkey

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Abstract

In our age, it is a well-known reality that human resource is the key factor of organizational success. Companies’ power comes from the physical and mental strength of their workers. Therefore, sustainability of being powerful for an organization is tied to the physical and psychological health of its employees, and their knowledge and skills, as well. Since the importance of human resources on the organizational success has been realized, responsibility and authority of Human Resources Departments are broadened, especially in accommodation sector. Organizing Employee Trainings and maintaining Occupational Safety and Health are among the main functions of Human Resources Management departments. These two functions interact and they both serve the aim of protecting employees’ physical, psychological and social health. Within this paper, Effects of the Employee Training on the Occupational Safety and Health has been studied by an applied analysis in order to view the approach and practices of accommodation sector. As a result, it’s been realized that employee trainings have a very positive effect on the occupational safety and health. Moreover, it’s been understood that some of the potential training programs such as accident risks and occupational illnesses are inevitable.

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1. Introduction

A company’s appreciation of the employees is observed in the careful attention it pays to their health and the opportunities it gives for their personal development. The training activities planned to cause employees to have the appropriate attitudes, also serve to keep their safety and health. Regular training is considered as a function which serves both to increase employees’ knowledge, skills and performance and to protect their physical and spiritual health. This study aims to understand the contribution of employee training to the protection of their physical and spiritual health in accommodation sector. The qualitative research based on the interviews made with the
accommodation providers is an original study, though it does not claim to be the first and only study made in this area.

To make a general evaluation, expectations from the educational endeavors of the companies may be studied in two parts as economic and social-humanistic goals (Sabuncuoglu, 1994, 129). Among the economic goals there is causing workers to gain the knowledge, skills and manners necessary at work; diminishing of accidents at work; providing job security; lowering the defect rates and in consequence, the abatement of maintenance and repair expenses; the prevention of material and commodity wastage. On the other hand, the social and humanistic goals are the motivation of workers, the improvement of the sense of security of employees, providing collaboration and coordination among the employees (Kaynak et al., 1998, 171).

2. Occupational Safety and Health Problems in Accommodation Sector

Employees of accommodation providers spend most of the day in dealing with their jobs. This results in some problems which endanger their safety and health. We generally face these problems though they differ according to the working place, the quality of the work and the service techniques applied. In order to provide occupational safety and health, it is firstly necessary to elicit the threatening factors clearly. The main threats are as follows:

**Occupational Accidents** - It is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as “an unplanned event, which mostly results in personal injuries, the machines’ and equipments’ taking the knock or the ceasing of production for some time.”

**Occupational Illnesses** - They are the physical and spiritual defects the worker is exposed to as a result of working overtime with respect to the quality and the execution of work, while working in the employer’s command and receiving his/her instructions.

**Job Stress** - It is the tension, depression and pressure unfortunately workers can not escape

Since the training of employees is one of the most effective ways in providing their safety & health in business life, trainings should be given place to. These trainings should start on the day they are recruited since obtaining the necessary information about how to carry on the job will reduce the risk of accidents (Demir et al. 2005, 322).

3. Training Programs Related with the Occupational Safety & Health

The technical trainings about safety & health that companies should give evidently changes according to the sector in which they operate. Details of the content of the specific job training given in an accommodation company and those of a technical training in a logging company and a textile atelier are different. However, one may mention some types of trainings aimed at protecting safety & health of the employees and which may be applied in many companies free from the sector:

- Job Orientation
- General and Personal Hygiene
- First Aid
- Fire Drills
- Usage of Personal Protective Material
- Ergonomics
- Manual Handling
- Coping with Stress

**Job Orientation**

Orientation given to employee who will be newly starting to work in a company is related to the safety & health of the employee and job security in many ways.
General and Personal Hygiene

Among the types of trainings that can -even should- be given to employees of an accommodation company, general and personal hygiene education can not be ignored.

First Aid

The right implementations of someone who is the closest person to a worker that has had an accident or the avoidance of insensible behaviors are as crucial as to save a life. The result of a research shows that the workers who are trained for first-aid are more willing to take responsibility and to internalize safe attitudes.

Fire Drills

In an accommodation company, it is impossible not to mention fire drills while mentioning types of trainings which serve to protect safety & health. Fire drills should be considered indispensable for health in business and security and more importantly, even for life safety. The right kind of behavior and the avoidance of wrong demeanors will not only conserve the existence of the workers but also that of the company.

Usage of Personal Protective Material

Employees who work in the Housekeeping department of an accommodation company are supposed to use cleaning chemicals very often in their daily working lives. These chemicals may contain acid and alkali so high in potency as to damage human skin seriously. The great importance of wearing protective gloves, covered shoes and apron for their safety & health while using such chemicals should be explained to them in training programs organized in regular periods.

Ergonomics

Some employees in an accommodation company use various tools and machines (such as vacuum cleaners, buffing machines, compressors, doormats etc.) and bend down, reach forth, push and pull tools such as beds and sofas through their shifts. If they do not use the appropriate action techniques while doing these jobs, it becomes very easy for them to catch illnesses of bone and skeleton system. Employees should be trained about occupational bone and skeleton illnesses, risk factors, early symptoms, treatment, mechanics of using the body in the right way and ergonomics (Özcan et al., 2007).

Manual Handling

An employee at the bar of a hotel has to place the emptied bottles into cases, carry these cases by hand and place the wrecker in the car and then carry the full bottles by hand again and put them down at certain times or when necessary.

Coping with Stress

We had mentioned before, that most of the employees experience stress problems for various reasons in their work place. If this problem is aimed to be solved through training programs, the right and the most firm step will have been taken in the way to protect health in business life and job security.

4. Methodology

The data sources were aimed to be composed of four accommodation companies related to two important functions taken as a basis in the research and one education and trainings consultancy firm specialized in
occupational safety & health. However, since no agreement could be made on the time to meet with one of the companies when the research was made, only three companies could be contacted. The accommodation companies mentioned are in Izmir. The center of the consultancy firm is also in Izmir and it organizes training programs especially on occupational safety & health in Turkey and abroad as well. The data are collected using a conversation technique which is semi-structured and which does not guide. In the letters scanning, mostly the approaches of foreign and Turkish authors to occupational safety & health were looked into and their application methods were studied. After this study the thematic frame of the study was drawn and three basic questions to be asked to the consultancy firm and five basic questions to be asked to the accommodation companies were identified. One of these questions is common (third question asked to the consultancy firm).

The questions asked to the consultancy firm were:

Are there any concepts to teach or is there a basic training to be given to the employees to protect their own safety & health? What are the other training types you deem as necessary to be given in companies for employees’ safety & health and which topics do they comprise? Can you give any examples to occupational accidents which occur as a worker is using a machine or tool which he is not trained about or as he or she is using a machine or a tool on which he or she is not trained, in companies where such trainings are not handled?

The questions asked to the service companies are as follows:

What is the purpose of employee trainings in your company? Which subjects are they mostly trained in? Which types of trainings are organized in relation to occupational safety & health? Can you give an example to the occupational accidents which an employee does, while using a machine or a tool he or she is not educated about or while doing a job he or she is not trained for? Do you think training has a positive contribution to occupational safety & health?

A recorder is used so that the data can be collected with no losses. The interviewed people are asked permission for the usage of the recorder. There was only one company where recording was rejected and the answers were given in written form. In the observation of the data collected in the research, descriptive analysis was made.

5. Findings

The findings obtained in the research are presented taking the answers to the questions mentioned above as a basis. In the original expressions (Italic) quoted from the interview, the TC letters in parenthesis symbolize the training consultancy firm whereas the letters V, Y and Z symbolize the names of the accommodation companies interviewed.

The concepts to be taught primarily to the workers for them to protect their own safety & health and the necessity of a basic education: As it is deducted from the TC firm’s answer, it’s very necessary and useful to make employees answer the question “Why should I be healthy?” and it’s also necessary to train them about the importance of occupational safety & health. In addition to this “In any company, after a basic business health and safety training of the employees undifferentiating departments, the training modules may be specialized according to the departments and the type of training (TC).”

Other types of trainings deemed necessary for employees’ safety & health and their contents: In addition to the training programs handled at section 3. Training Programs Related with the Occupational Safety & Health, the TC firm pointed out that “the basic occupational safety & health, basic job security, earthquake trainings” should be given. “Even if you are giving the basic job safety & health training, you can not apply for a press factory the exact training model you apply for a hotel; there will surely be differences, to say the least, the examples given through the training are different (TC).”

The purposes of employee trainings: According to the analyzed content of interviews, employee trainings are organized so as to make employees learn the company facts and teach them general rules, to provide the guests’ contentment, to give the technical knowledge necessary to carry out the job, to eliminate the possible defects at work. Furthermore, “The answer to this question may be summarized in three titles, safety, quality of service and costs (Z).”
The subjects on which trainings are most frequent: A clear inference is that the data source accommodation companies were in concurrence about the necessity of “Job Orientations” and “Fire Drills”. For example, “Job orientation trainings, fire and security precaution trainings which are obligatorily given for job security, personal development trainings like communication- time management-team work- are given. In the context of the programs made by the administrators, trainings on job are also given (Y).” “Of course, in the first place an orientation is made for adaptation to the working environment and the company. Fire drills, then sanitation and first aid and also job trainings for the staff working at the production level are often given (Z).”

Types of trainings done for occupational safety & health: Another significant outcome of the content analysis is that V and Y (large scale, 5 starred accommodation companies) can afford more and repetitive trainings on the occupational safety & health when compared to Z (small and medium sized enterprises). “In our company we hold trainings on topics such as ergonomics and manual handling when needed. We give information about how to be protected from illnesses such as Hepatitis-B and the issues to be watched in the working environment. Trainings are done about actual health events which concern the whole society. Again in the context of occupational safety & health, trainings are done concerning the usage of personal protective materials. It is also often told the worker why he or she has to use materials such as eyeglasses, dust mask, headphone and gloves (V).” “In addition to the formal trainings in this subject, I am also trying to make the staff conscious based on my own experiences (Z).”

Examples to the occupational accidents occurred while employees are using a machine or tool they are not trained for or while they’re working at a job for which they’re not trained: Though the accommodation companies which serve as a data source for our research do not tend to give special examples in this subject, they accept that accidents are encountered because of this reason.

Effects of trainings on occupational safety and health: A consensus was observed between all of the data source accommodation companies about the positive effects of employee trainings on the occupational safety & health. This can be seen clearer from their own sentences: “Actually, occupational safety and health is mostly provided and protected by trainings (V).”, “Any kind of training on the reduction of risks to occur in working hours are deemed as effective precaution tools. In this sense, it is thought that trainings contribute to occupational safety & health to a great extent (Y).” and “Anyone who has experienced the disorder and accidents when no training is hold knows the gains of trainings very well. Especially if the safety & health of your employees is concerned, trainings have to be your priority (Z).”

6. Conclusion

In addition to the importance of realizing training programs, “the way it’s done or the way it’s shown” is an important factor in changing the approach of the employee to occupational safety & health. In this sense, we should not be content with only reporting the information, we should be sure that it is taught to the employees and make sure that it has the efficiency to create a change in attitudes.

In our country, we should try to change the fatalist understanding which stems from the approach of the society in general and therefore also affects the employees in the workplaces. It should be explained that many occupational accidents and occupational illnesses are not experienced because of faith or coincidence. Setting out from the data we reached as a result of our research, it may be asserted that in accommodation sector it is not only crucial that the employees must be trained on the occupational safety & health. but also to ensure that they are more sensitive about protecting their own health. Systematic training programs prepared for the employees in their own workplace will be right steps taken for this purpose and these steps will lead us to shape healthier employees and a healthier society.
7. References


