

Consequences of Under-Reporting of Occupational Accidents in the Nigerian Construction Industry



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Abstract An essential and major part of each prevention policy is to have explicit information on the figure of diseases and accidents, their seriousness, the origins, the work environment, and sectors where they happen. This means that every organization and nation required a well-active and efficient system for recording and reporting diseases and accidents. This will serve as a source of information for the investigation, policy formulation, and prevention of incidents in the workplace. Inadequate resources and bad reporting mechanisms could support the under-reporting of occupational accidents. The study's aim is therefore to examine the consequences of under-reporting of occupational accidents in the Nigerian construction industry. A review of the literature was conducted on under-reporting of occupation accidents followed by a field survey with 300 structured questionnaires, administered to solicit information from construction professionals in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The SPSS software and Microsoft excel were used to analyse the data. The findings of the study revealed the consequences of under-reporting among which are affecting the implementation policy on occupational health and safety, and equally affecting the planning and prevention of occupational illness and accidents. The study, therefore, suggests an improvement in any existing reporting structure and also establishes an unsophisticated and robust system of reporting to motivate construction organizations and employees to account for the full detail of all incidents that occur in the working environments.

Keywords Under-reporting · Occupational accident · Health · Safety · Construction industry

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1 Introduction

The under-reporting of incidents in the organizations could be supported by the demonstration of a poor health and safety culture and insufficient reporting mechanisms put in place for recording and reporting hazardous events and accidents [1]. One serious feature of the ineffective application of the reporting scheme is the lack of management commitment. Management commitment produces a higher degree of motivation for the workers and consideration for the management of health and safety in the organization [2]. Therefore, the active participation of top management in health and safety in the workplace is indispensable. The negative consequences of lack of commitment to health and safety by the management in the organization can have adverse effects on both the organization and employees such as increase absenteeism of employees, loss of production, equipment damages, and a bad image of the organization as a result of higher numbers of accidents occurred in the organization [3].

Accurate reporting of occupational illnesses and injuries is essential to observe workplace safety and health and to recognize the most desirable interventions for the prevention of occupational accidents [4, 5]. It was reported that there was a discrepancy in the figure of accidents reported to the occupational health and safety department of the federal ministry of labour and employment and that of the Nigerian social insurance trust fund [6]. This has a lot of negative implications on health and safety management in Nigeria. Therefore, the study was conducted to identify the consequences of under-reporting of occupational accidents in the Nigerian construction industry.

2 Literature Review

The majority of the accidents experienced in the workplace go unrecorded with the figure of individual under-reporting varying from 71 to 80% [7, 8]. It was also revealed that the underestimate rate of work-associated illness, injuries, and the level of fatalities could be as far as a hundred percent [4]. Nayanthara and Uthpala [9] revealed that 80% of construction incidents are under-reported. Some studies had associated accident under-reporting at the employees level due to age [10], fear of deprivation of benefits [11], and the perception that injuries are part of work and nothing can be done to stop it [4]. Employees are less likely to report accidents in the workplace when unemployment is high [12]. Similarly, establishment under-reporting has been associated with issues like size [13] sector [14] absence of management understanding of the importance of accidents information [15], and establishments' health and safety climate [16]. The notions that organizations could be subjected to sanction for high records of occupational accidents could be among the reasons for under-reporting accidents in Nigeria [6]. Also, high accidents

records give a bad image to the organization, therefore, contractors records of accidents forward to the appropriate authorities are likely to be imprecise [17].

Furthermore, the quantity and quality of health and safety information in and among teamwork and management might also account for under-reporting. A climate that disheartens reporting health and safety matters with supervisors, co-employees, and management would probably nurture a climate that is encouraging under-reporting workplace accidents at both organizational and individual levels. An organization with a poor health and safety climate is less likely to firmly enforce health and safety policies despite if they are legally stated [16]. Though it is a legal obligation for the organizations to keep precise logs, one can forecast that the implementation of such a policy would be more neglectful in an establishment with a bad health and safety climate. Mandatory reporting systems have been strengthened by automatic logging systems in the railway sector [15]. But, the recording of various cases still relies on individual employees and organizations to complete the appropriate paperwork.

The previous research outlines several issues that impact incident reporting. Powell et al. [18] established that cases were not reported if they were observed as part of the job. Equally, Beale et al. [19] highlighted that the reporting of ferocity occurrences by publicans and established that some level of severity was acknowledged as the norm. Suppression and under-reporting of information have been associated with the presence of a blame philosophy where the drive of assembling incident and accident information is to allot blame rather than take correcting measures [20, 21].

A level of reliance is needed for employees to report cases. Some establishments have applied confidential reporting systems to this end [22]. Whereas others have attempted to design a no blame philosophy that boosts the reporting of cases as a method of improving safety and health rather than apportioning blame [23]. Control of accidents is important in the construction industry, organizations are required to appraise the hazards and take appropriate measures to safeguard, ensure the health and safety of their employees, minimizing risk through continuous surveillance and observing where incidents are likely to happen. And more importantly, the organization must keep accurate records of all incidents that occurred in the workplace.

3 Material and Methods

The study aim is to examine the consequences of under-reporting of occupational accidents in the Nigerian construction industry. The literature review of under-reporting of occupational accidents was conducted, then followed by a field survey. 300 questionnaires structured in a 5-point liker scale were administered to the construction professionals in construction and consulting organizations and 235 were returned which represent 78.33%, therefore considered suitable for the analysis of the research. The set of questionnaires consist section that comprises the variables on the consequences of under-reporting of occupational accidents in the

Nigerian construction industry. The data collected were analysed with SPSS software and Microsoft excel. This is to find out the importance of factors that represented the consequences of under-reporting of occupational accidents in the Nigerian construction industry. The factors put in rank, the top-ranked is more significant than the next.

4 Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the result of the respondents' view on the consequences of the under-reporting of occupational accidents in the Nigerian construction industry. Affecting implementation policy on occupational health and safety and affecting planning and prevention of occupational illness and accidents both have the highest relative importance index of 0.804. Suppressing accurate reporting can result in missed opportunities to identify cases at an early stage has a relative importance index of 0.800 and the result on inadequate budgetary provision for occupational health and safety has a relative importance index. 0.762. The result of the study agrees with the position of [4] which highlighted that management failure to record the injury occurrence statistics could hinder decision making concerning the setting of prevention priorities and for allocating resources for health and safety matters. The authors further emphasized that plant managers must recognize that suppressing accurate reporting could result in missed opportunities to identify conditions at an early phase. Similarly, [24] emphasize that when an organization under-reports occupational injury, its employees' compensation affair will not reveal its real injury experience, in such a situation, the erroneous information could be used for the management of health and safety in the organization. Likewise, if organizations do not recognize entire occupational incidents, they will not properly evaluate the extent and cost of occupational injury and might not target internal health and safety resources adequately. Please read the Instructions to

Table 1 Consequences of under-reporting of occupational accidents

The consequences of under-reporting of occupational illnesses and accidents	Sum	Mean	Std. Dvt	Relative importance index	Ranking
Affecting planning and prevention of occupational illness and accidents	945	4.02	1.084	0.804	1
Affecting implementation policy on occupational health and safety	945	4.02	1.084	0.804	1
Suppressing accurate reporting can result in missed opportunities to identify cases at an early stage	940	4.00	1.169	0.800	3
The result of inadequate budgetary provision for occupational health and safety	895	3.81	1.144	0.762	4

Authors documents carefully. Manuscripts that do not comply will be returned for correction. The following should be noted in particular.

5 Conclusions

The consequences of under-reporting of occupational accidents in the Nigerian construction industry are enormous namely affect the adequate planning and prevention of accidents and illness, affecting the planning and implementation of occupational health and safety policy, result in inadequate budgetary provisions for health and safety and suppressing accurate reporting can result in missed opportunities to identify cases at an early stage. Monitoring and assessment are vital for efficient prevention of under-reporting of occupational accidents, and review of the management system in agreement with the guidelines is equally essential. Effective mechanisms must be put in place for the record-keeping and reporting procedures. This forms the central point of the program. An active monitoring system can be put in place for the evaluation of accidents and incidents in the Nigerian construction industry. Reporting of accidents is important as it is providing appropriate interventions for accidents and illness prevention. The establishment of an uncomplicated and robust reporting system to encourage construction organizations and employees to account for the detail of all accidents is essential. The system should be simple to understand, and less time consuming to use. The application of less formal methods to account for less severe accidents might help to control the difficulty of under-reporting. This can be accompanied by the support of the organizations to report all accidents. It is worthy to note that accurate reporting of occupational accidents can help to recognize unsafe work practices and areas, measure the influence of occupational problems on productivity, safety, health, and costs and appraise the impact of health and safety improvements.

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