PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF NON-OBSERVANCE OF WORK SAFETY REGULATIONS

Dace Brizga
Ludis Pēks
Latvia University of Agriculture

Abstract. *Non-observance of work safety regulations contribute to the worsening of employees' health condition, development of occupational diseases and the increase of the possibility of accidents. Accidents happen because they have definite causes – the attitude of employers and employees towards work safety. The aim of this study was to research the psychological aspects of non-observance of work safety regulations from the work safety specialists' point of view. The methodology of research – studies of publications pertaining to the research theme, unstructured observations, analysis of the essays written by work safety specialists about the attitude towards work safety, motivation to observe its regulations and ignoring the regulations. The text analysis was carried out using the software programme Weft QDA.*
Keywords: *attitude, motivation, non-observance of regulations work safety, work safety specialist.*

Introduction

The purpose of education is to educate competent specialists, when they have acquired knowledge, skills and abilities, are able to appreciate health as a means for ensuring sustainability, improving quality of life, as well as taking advantage of and influencing the conditions that affect human health. In order to achieve absolute physical, mental and social well-being, a specialist must be able to identify and fulfil the desire to satisfy the needs, and to change or restore the environment, according to the definition of health provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), health is "not merely the absence of disease, but a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being" (Healthy Workplaces, 2010:11).

WHO states that safety and health of employees is a serious global problem that requires employers and employees` co-operation, a comprehensive way of thinking and acting. Based on a healthy workplace model developed by the WHO, it can be said that a healthy workplace is the one where an employer and employees cooperate in order to ensure a continuous improvement process for the protection and promotion of health, safety and well-being and to facilitate sustainability in the workplace. On the basis of identified needs it is necessary: to promote the importance of health and safety in the physical work environment, to advance the role of health, safety and well-being in the psychosocial work environment, including organization of work and workplace culture, personal health resources in the workplace, ways of participating in the

community to improve the health of workers, their families and other members of the community.

The studies (Brizga et al., 2013) for a dual attitude towards work and civil protection show that specialists know the rules of ergonomic requirements, but fail to apply them on a daily basis. Attitudes are formed over a long course of time and are based on life experience. Herek (1986) considers that „attitudes should be viewed as strategies for meeting personal needs, they serve psychological functions" (p. 99). Based on the researcher's knowledge – when the concept of the object change, the situations that change attitudes might come up, as „attitudes are complex, i.e. serving multiple functions, situational factor is the most effective factor in changing attitudes, i.e. "prime" receptive of the person`s change" (p. 112). Attitude evolution is based on beliefs, feeling and/or past behaviour (Zanna & Rempel, 1988: 315). Researchers believe that an individual's attitude is not stable, but it varies depending on various external and internal factors. Attitudes form in cognitive operation (source of information), in affective perception (emotions associated with objects that influence attitudes) and past behaviour. If an individual has gained positive attitude for the past behaviour, then this positive attitude will be preserved in the future, and vice versa - an individual appears as the cause of attitudes. Attitude-behaviour relationships have been an interdisciplinary concern, as they include social sciences, social policy, public campaigns, human communication studies and other areas. Behavioural intention (Kim & Hunter, 1993) plays a crucial role in the relationship between attitudes and behaviour. Evaluating attitude to behaviour (for example, what health problems can occur if evaluating risks in accordance with regulatory requirements, an individual determines specific behaviour, prognosis for certain activities form. The studies carried out by Kim and Hunter was based on the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The planned behaviour model is widely used (Ajzen, 1991; Godin & Kok, 1995; Armitage & Conner, 2001) and is based on the opinion that an individual's behaviour is based on intention - attitude to variables, beliefs and values about the outcomes of behaviour, subjective norms, opinions expressed by others regarding their behaviour, and self-control, which together with the intention predicts the expected outcome. In the context of work and civil protection, it is important to examine own behaviour and actions in reaching a particular objective, what is public opinion regarding the fact of the failure to comply with certain rules of behaviour, and what motives would encourage to follow these rules – belief in the outcomes of own behaviour. The American psychologist, representative of social cognitive theory, Albert Bandura (Bandura, 1965; 1977; 1988; 1989; 1991; 2004) developed the theory that would determine the methods on how it is possible to change behaviour. Not only the environment determines the formation of behaviour of personality, but the interaction between personality factors - environment - behaviour. The environment and community transform individual`s beliefs and cognitive skills. In

interrelationship a human affects the environment and is affected by the environment. Human thoughts and emotions affect behaviour and behaviour affects thoughts and emotions. So humans themselves set up their own working environment following safe working conditions, being aware and predicting the consequences unless their behaviour is affected by the external environment, such as - economic, social and others, then people are able to influence their behaviour. Observation takes an important role in Bandura`s social learning theory - in indirect teaching (Vicarious), because the importance of modelling other people's behaviour, attitudes and emotional reactions is emphasized. When observing other people's behaviour, action is evaluated in a cognitive way by keeping information in memory to be used to satisfy one`s needs. Self-regulation plays an important role in the theory of behavioural change; it is a mechanism that ensures the replacement of the control of external behaviour by internal control of behaviour in the development process, including motivation, social and moral standards. The achievement of desired goals is primary based on the motivation to change one`s own behaviour. Self-efficacy is related to the ability to assess one`s own behaviour and adapt to changes. In the context of work and civil protection a specialist has to acquire new technologies that correspond to ergonomic requirements that do not harm human health, has to consider variety of situations and has to choose adequate standards of behaviour that are appropriate to work safety requirements in the work environment. In the context of social cognitive theory Bandura has developed the theory of health and prevention promotion, as a multifaceted causal structure, where self-efficacy is interacting with objectives, expectations of an outcome, motivation for a better outcome, and behaviour that ensures well-being. The ability of self-efficacy to control the psychosocial impact on the change of one`s habits in order to mobilize perseverance necessary to preserve the change of behaviour for the purpose of promoting health. A comprehensive approach to health promotion also requires changing the practices of social systems that have widespread effects on human health (Bandura, 2004:143). Managers of enterprises and organization develop programmes that would help to change of behaviour for management. In order to develop programmes it is necessary to study theories of behavioural change. The biggest challenge is to enter the programmes on how to help change the behaviour of managers, in order to ensure a healthy lifestyle (Glanz et al., 1990).

Materials and methods

To research the psychological aspects of non-observance of work safety regulations, the evaluation of essays written by the students - work safety specialists of the study programme "Work Safety" was carried out using content analysis, applying a free qualitative analysis software application Weft QDA. Electronically 22 essays were sent within the framework of the study course

"Pedagogy and Work Psychology". With the help of software programme the required passages were found in the essays. After getting acquainted with the students' essays and studies of theoretical literature, the following categories were formulated.

Table 1

Codes of categories

Codes	Categories
attieksm	The factors influencing the employer's and employees' attitude towards work safety and civil protection
motiv	The employers' and employees' motivation to observe the requirements of work safety regulations
ignor	The reasons for ignoring work safety regulations
neiev	The reasons for non-observance of work safety regulations

Results and discussion

From the observations and discussions with work safety specialists it was stated that non-observance of work safety regulations occurs due to a dual attitude – the regulations are known but, unfortunately, not observed in everyday life.

While carrying out the content analysis of the answers, it can be seen (Table 2) that the factors influencing the attitude of employers' towards work and public protection is a significant psychological aspect, since it was mentioned in most of the essays (81%), the opinion about the reasons for ignoring work safety regulations was mentioned only by a part of respondents (11.4%). Only 11 respondents' answers (6.6%) included the employers' and employees' motivation to observe the requirements of work safety regulations. The reasons for non-observance of work safety regulations were mentioned by almost one third of respondents (17.5%).

Table 2

Opinion about non-observance of work safety regulations

Codes	Concepts	Number	%
Attitude	The factors influencing the employers' and employees' attitude towards work safety and civil protection	136	81
Motivation	Emmployers' and employees' motivation to observe the requirements of work safety regulations	11	6.6
Ignoring	Reasons for ignoring work safety regulations	19	11.4
Non-observance	Reasons for non-observance of work safety regulations	29	17.5
	Total	166	100

The main conclusions the work safety specialists arrived at, concerning the attitude: "...those who know, but do not understand and those who know,

understand, but nonetheless, do not observe, in my opinion are to be considered victims of insufficiently qualitative education, which, in turn, significantly influences their attitude concerning this issue, its main causes and reasons being the knowledge and life experience acquired (perhaps, more correctly - not acquired) during their earlier life". The respondents indicated the lack of knowledge, understanding and practical skills:"...better attitude towards the issues of work safety could be improved by more qualitative preventive measures, during which the necessity of work safety and the possible consequences of ignoring it could be explained more accurately and deeply". The surrounding environment influences the observance of work safety regulations, since, according to the respondents`:"...when people are in a well-organized environment from the work safety point of view, they start accepting it as a norm and their attitude changes".

The respondents mentioned also the role of the family in the process of the formation of attitude:"...in order to form a normal or preferable attitude towards the observance of work safety regulations, the child has to be educated from childhood","...the attitude towards the studies and regulations of work safety is very individual, because everyone has taken a different "road" on the formation of attitude", and the respondent also pointed out that: "a negative, in some cases also an indifferent attitude towards the studies and regulations of work safety is the change in people's fundamental values", "..More and more people are aspiring to material values, neglecting the rest","...money is more valuable than human lives. Unfortunately, this attitude is formed from an early childhood. Today parents are forced to earn a living for survival, working at different jobs simultaneously, thus spending less time with their children both relaxing with them and educating them in different situations. Therefore the children get the impression that the main things we need to live are material values".

The information obtained from the essays reflects the situation existing in our society:"...the attitude towards the observance of work safety regulations is different, some people observe the regulations, others do not know them, and some people ignore them". The specialists in work safety acknowledge: "It is difficult to judge why people ignore the regulations, more likely they do not feel themselves as a value in today's society and they do not want to protect themselves. However, there are people who most probably are "great" optimists and believe that nothing bad will ever happen to them".

From the respondents point of view: "It is the work safety specialist of a company who has to be an occupational psychologist being able to listen to, assess the emotional state and encourage each employee's sense of security. Quite often the reason for ignoring safety regulations is the psychological factor as the lack of motivation to work well, because the employees of a company do not feel appreciated. Another reason can be an employee's overall dissatisfaction with the work safety system, as this employee's opinion about the system does not coincide with the existing one. The work safety specialists point

out that pedagogical competence is significant for the specialist:"...the following factors lie at the basis of ignoring and incomprehension of work safety regulations: employee's psychosocial and psychological problems, non-functional or non-existing work safety system and pedagogical competence of the work safety specialist". With regard to the reasons of non-observance, the respondents mentioned that:"...the most significant reason is the fact that part of society was brought up in a society where work safety requirements were not known or understood, etc. They have lived a great part of their lives according to the model of their parents and surrounding community, therefore at present, even though they are aware of and understand these requirements, anyway, they do not observe them, as, according to their opinion, it will not bring about any significant changes, as they have done things differently throughout their lives before". The respondents mentioned an individual's conscious or unconscious influence on society by non-observance of work safety regulations as a significant reason, since it serves as an example:"...it is important whether an individual will observe them or not, whether he/she will help others to understand the work safety regulations or not". It was pointed out in the essays that: "A part of employers do not see the real meaning of complying with the work safety requirements and perceive the requirements of the regulations as the current burden inflicted by the bureaucratic state apparatus", since the respondents think that the policy pursued in Latvia "only encourage such perception", since employers and employees "can carry out some of the duties faster, not complying with the regulations". Basing on the respondents' experience it can be said: "There are cases when an experienced employee knows and understands the safety regulations, but he/she does not observe them because he/she wants to show the new employee, that his/her work method is faster and so far has been equally safe, hence the new generation does not acquire experience in the preservation of good health throughout their lives". Similar observations have been carried out in Latvia and other countries as well. It was found out that specialists know but do not observe the rules of work safety requirements (Bertaitis, 2013). It can be observed also in some other aspects – for instance smoking. The research carried out in Australia showed that medical students and graduate nurses are aware that they are role models and that they have an influential role in modifying patient behaviour, but, nevertheless, they smoke (Moxham et al., 2013).

Conclusion

Basing on the studies of the relevant publications and the results of content analysis of the respondents' essays, as well as on the evaluation of the authors' unstructured observation evaluation it was found that:
• The employers' and employees' attitude plays the decisive role in observing work safety regulations;

- Significant opportunities for changing the employers' and employees' attitude towards work safety can be achieved by appropriate improvements in education, both in educational institutions and in work places. The upgrading of the acquisition of positive experience and practical skills is equally important.
- The formation and development of attitude is largely influenced by the family, educational, work and social environment;
- Not only attitude, but also lack of corresponding motivation influence ignoring or non-observance of work safety regulations;
- The specialist in work safety needs pedagogical competence, focusing on the ability to deal with the problems of attitude and motivation;
- The attitude towards work safety and the opportunity of its change are influenced by the opportunities of changes in basic values, because quite often material values, not life and health prevail as values. Further research should be carried out regarding this aspect.

References

1. Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of Planned Behaviour. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes*, 50, pp. 179–211.
2. Armitage, C., Conner, M. (2001). Efficacy of the theory of planned behaviour: A meta-analytic review. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, pp. 40, 471–499.
3. Bandura, A. (1977). A. Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioural Change *Psychological Review*, Nr.2, Vol.84, pp. 191-215. Retrieved from http://www.uky.edu/~eushe2/Bandura/BanduraPubs.html
4. Bandura, A. (1965). Vicarious processes: A case of no-trial learning. In *L. Berkowitz (Ed.), Advances in experimental social psychology (Vol. 2, pp. 1-55)*. New York: Academic Press. Retrieved from http://www.uky.edu/~eushe2/Bandura/ BanduraPubs.html
5. Bandura, A. (1988). Organizational applications of social cognitive theory. Australian *Journal of Management, 13*, pp. 275-302. Retrieved from http://www.uky.edu/~eushe2/ Bandura/BanduraPubs.html
6. Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. *American Psychologist, 44*, pp. 1175-1184. Retrieved from http://www.uky.edu/~eushe2/Bandura/ BanduraPubs.html
7. Bandura, A. (1991). Social cognitive theory of self-regulation. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes, 50*, pp. 248-287. Retrieved from http://www.uky.edu/~eushe2/Bandura/BanduraPubs.html
8. Bandura, A. (2004). Health promotion by social cognitive means. *Health Education & Behavior, 31*, pp. 143-164. Retrieved from http://www.uky.edu/~eushe2/Bandura/ BanduraPubs.html
9. Bertaitis, I. (2013). *Pedagogical competence of the labour protection specialists*. Synopsis of the doctoral thesis. Jelgava. pp. 87.
10. Brizga, D., Pēks, L., Bērtaitis, I. (2013). Computer use impact on students' health in the context of ecological approach to occupational safety. *Proceedings 12th International Scientific Conference "Engineering for Rural Development"*, pp. 598-602.
11. Glanz, K., Lewis, F. M., Rimers, B. K. (eds., 1990). *Health Behavior and Health Education: Theory, Research, and Practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

12. Godin, G., Kok, G. (1995). The theory of planned behavior: A review of its applications to health-related behaviors. *American Journal of Health Promotion, Vol. 11*, pp. 87–98.
13. *Healthy workplaces: a model for action* (for employers, workers, policy-makers and practitioners). Geneva: World Health Organization, 2010, pp. 32. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/occupational_health/publications/healthy_workplaces_model.pd
14. Herek, G. (1986).The Instrumentality of Attitudes: Toward a Neofunctional Theory. *Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 42, No. 2*, pp. 99–114.
15. Kim, M. S., Hunter, J. E. (1993). Relationships among attitudes, behavioral intentions, and behaviour. *A meta-analysis of past research, part 2. Communication Research, Vol. 20. No 3*, pp. 331–364
16. Moxham, L., Dwyer, T., Reid-Searl, K. (2013). Graduate nurses and nursing student's behaviour: Knowledge and attitudes toward smoking cessation. *Original Research Article. Nurse Education Today, Volume 33, Issue 10*, pp. 1143-1147
17. Weft QDA [online][20.02.2014] Available at:
18. Zanna, M. P., Rempel, J. K. (1988). Attitudes: A new look at an old concept. In D. Bartal and A. W. Kruglanski (Ed.). The social psychology of knowledge. Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press. pp. 315-334

| MPA **Dace Brizga** | Latvia University of Agriculture email: dacebrizga@inbox.lv |
| Prof. (emeritus) Dr. paed., Dr. sc. ing. **Ludis Pēks** | Latvia University of Agriculture email: ludis.peks@inbox.lv |