



Neglect of Small Industries in Accessing Occupational Health Services

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ABSTRACT

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Dear Head of Editor,

Small businesses are the backbone of any economy, with small and medium-sized industries accounting for about 95% of Iran's industries, ranging from household activities to manufacturing and services such as home appliances, food and beverage, clothing and textiles, furniture, and decoration. Domestic, stationery, health and beauty, electrical, etc. Workers in these industries account for a large share of the total labor force. These industries play a crucial role in improving productivity, developing employment, and reducing poverty and social inequality [1].

In these industries, poor safety and health performance have led to a higher risk of occupational accidents compared to larger firms, which can be attributed to lack of financial resources, poor attitude of managers toward safety, fewer employees in these companies for Attendance at activities such as safety committees, limited physical space in industries, lack of staff representation, inadequate safety inspections, and limited support for services and other occupational health counseling were noted [2].

Small industries are deprived of many of the benefits of large corporations, including inadequate access to occupational health services. Occupational health is a branch of health sciences that deals with employees' health issues and the purpose of this field is to ensure, maintain, and promote employees' health. According to Article 93 of the Labor Law, to prevent accidents at work and ensure safety and higher supervision over the protection and health of workers, a committee for technical protection and occupational health in the industry is formed [3]. The primary role of these committees is to inspect the workplace, investigate incidents, and anticipate and prevent accidents. In Iran, according to the provisions of the workshop protection regulations approved by the Supreme Technical Protection Council of the Ministry of Labor, in workshops with more than 25 employees, the employer is obliged to employ an occupational health expert. However, employees in small industries are deprived of full-time or part-time employment services and occupational health organizations because they have fewer workers. On the other hand, social prestige in large industries is significant, and they do not want to lose such credit due to problems or accidents. As a result, they spend more time and money on these things, so the safety and health system is an integral part of these industries. In small enterprises, on the other hand, this aspect is not so important.

According to Article 95 of the Labor Law, the responsibility for implementing technical and occupational health rules and regulations lies with the employer or the officials of those units [3]. But since one of the most critical problems and bottlenecks for small industries is their limited access to financial resources, small industry

managers always neglect the importance and sensitivity of this issue.

Small industries experience more occupational injuries and deaths than large industries. The costs of work-related accidents follow the iceberg pattern and include direct and indirect costs. Direct costs are the visible part of the costs and a small part of the cost of work-related accidents and include the costs for which money is paid. Indirect costs such as replacement and training costs for new people, property damage, cessation of work and production, replacement of equipment, costs of emergency arrangements and clearance, costs of accident investigation, costs of fulfilling legal obligations, fines, compensation, and lost future obligations Empowering employees is a loss of organizational credibility and business opportunities, most of which are hidden and invisible costs and are often irresponsible [4].

There are solutions to the challenges of small industries in accessing occupational health services, aggregating resources such as utilizing the capacity of occupational health engineering services companies and occupational medicine that industries accept based on the number of workers. Annually, companies providing group occupational health services must provide a wide range of primary preventive services, including medical services, worker training, measurement of harmful factors in the workplace, and, if necessary, additional services at an additional cost. Is. Work Improvements in Small Enterprises (WISE) aims to provide direct training to industry volunteers and improve the safety, health, and productivity of small industries, including management commitment, worker participation, training, identification, assessment, and risk control. This program has recently had a significant impact on developed and developing countries social and economic development [5].

Considering the particular economic conditions prevailing in the country's industries, especially small enterprises, and on the other hand, the greater vulnerability of this sector in terms of the number of work-related accidents and lack of available financial capital, it is suggested that support measures be considered for this sector. Support packages in the form of health counseling services, using the WISE training approach for employers and managers of small companies that with practical and low-cost measures, improve the productivity goals and improve working conditions in small industries by providing training to employers and Helping workers to increase productivity and improve safety and health, such as operational and skill-based training courses on key technical topics such as how to move and transport materials properly, workstation design, the safety of production machines, material control Dangerous, lighting, work-related welfare facilities to be implemented in

small industries that lead to the empowerment of workers and employers to identify, control or eliminate harmful factors in the work environment. On the other hand, it is necessary to sensitize and motivate managers and employers about the importance of implementing safety laws, environmental health, and its role in job development. Without the heartfelt belief of managers in the importance of this issue, the creation of support mechanisms alone will not work, and in addition to the required support policies, employers and industry managers are one of the primary audiences of such programs, so that the health and safety of workers in the workplace. Be one of the most critical work priorities.

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