

Importance of Effective Human Resources Management in Creating a More Secure Work Environment by Improving Safety Culture

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Abstract

This paper delves into the critical relationship between human resource management (HRM) and safety culture within organizations across diverse sectors. Safety culture, encompassing values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours about safety, is essential for creating a secure work environment. Based on the Scopus data and bibliometric analysis for the last ten years, this paper explores the impact of HRM practices on employee safety culture in different fields. Moreover, it examines the interplay between HRM and safety culture by analyzing existing literature. This study examines the research landscape at the intersection of HRM and safety culture through Scopus analysis and bibliometric techniques. It highlights the interdisciplinary nature of this research, which draws from fields such as engineering and social sciences. Despite fluctuations, 2019 marked a peak in research output. Engineering and Social Sciences dominate the subject distribution. Analysis of keywords reveals "safety culture," "data analysis," and "employee engagement" as prominent, with "human resource management" implicit in abstracts and titles. The paper also presents a range of HRM practices that can enhance safety culture. Despite these benefits, the paper acknowledges potential barriers HRM may face in promoting a safety culture, and strategies to address these barriers are proposed. Finally, this paper underscores the pivotal role of HRM in shaping safety culture and contributing to improved employee well-being, organizational performance, and overall success.

Keywords: *Safety culture, human resource management (HRM), Secure Work Environment*

Introduction

Safety culture refers to the values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours determining how an organization prioritizes and manages safety. It is essential in organizations because it helps establish a safe and healthy work environment, improves employee morale, increases productivity, and reduces accidents and injuries costs (Tsaor & Lee, 2022). Safety culture is essential in various sectors. Safety culture is essential in healthcare because patient safety is a top priority. A strong safety culture can help to reduce medical errors, improve patient outcomes, and increase patient satisfaction (Ayisa, Getahun, & Yesuf, 2021; Kanwal, Nizam Bin Isha, Salleh, Kanwal, & Al-Mekhlafi, 2023; Lee, Wu, Hsieh, Weng, & Huang, 2015). In the Railway sector, safety culture is also crucial in high-speed railways, where appropriate systems should be in place to ensure safe performance during operations. Top management decisions are vital in improving organizations' safety culture (Bugalia, Maemura, & Ozawa, 2019). In the energy sector, safety cultures significantly prevent workplace accidents (Ajmal, Isha, Nordin, & Al-Mekhlafi, 2022; Kanwal et al., 2023). Safety culture can help prevent workplace accidents and injuries. Establishing a safety culture requires sustained efforts from top leadership, including education, building a security community and policies, initiating security boot camps, motivation, and safety mindfulness (Acquaye, 2020). In the transportation sector, safety culture is essential for mitigating road accidents (Al-Mekhlafi, Isha, Abdulrab, Ajmal, & Kanwal, 2022; Al-Mekhlafi et al., 2023; Al-Mekhlafi, Isha, Chileshe, Abdulrab, Kineber, et al., 2021; Al-Mekhlafi, Isha, Chileshe, Abdulrab, Saeed, et al., 2021; Al-Mekhlafi et al., 2020).

Human Resource Management (HRM) is responsible for ensuring the safety of employees in the organization. However, the extent of HRM's responsibility for safety may vary depending on the organization's policies and practices. Green HRM initiatives, which focus on integrating environmental management into HRM, can promote and maintain sustainable business practices, including environmental safety (Al-Tahitah, 2023; Arumugam & Vijai, 2018; Reddy, 2017). Additionally, socially responsible HRM practices, such as those related to corporate social responsibility (CSR), can positively impact employee engagement, which in turn can lead to a safer and more productive work environment (Moin, Omar, Wei, Rasheed, & Hameed, 2020; Rawshdeh, Makhbul, & Alam, 2019). Psychological safety, which refers to the perception of safety in interpersonal interactions, is an important aspect of HRM and can impact job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Manap & Meor, 2020). Therefore, while

HRM is responsible for ensuring the safety of employees, the specific strategies and initiatives used to promote safety may vary depending on the organization's goals and values.

Therefore, this study aims to explore how human resource management in any organization or sector plays a significant role in improving the safety culture among the employees as part of the primary duty of the HRM.

Literature review

According to the search results, HRM practices can significantly influence employee attitudes and behavior, including their attitudes toward safety practices. Specifically, the following HRM practices were found to impact employee behavior, attitudes, and safety practices. First, involving employees in safety management practices can improve working conditions and positively influence their attitudes and behaviour concerning safety, thereby reducing accidents in the workplace (S.K, 2023). Second, providing training and development opportunities can strongly impact employee outcomes, including their attitudes and behaviours toward safety practices (Elsayed, Khreis, Abuelhassan, & Abdelgawwad, 2023). Third, HRM practices related to compensation and rewards were found to be dominant predictors of employee attitudes and behaviour (Hossain et al., 2023). In particular, compensation was found to have the highest effect on turnover intention (Elsayed et al., 2023). Fourth, motivation was also a dominant predictor of employee attitudes and behaviour (Hossain et al., 2023). Implementing effective HRM practices can improve working conditions, reduce accidents, and achieve performance excellence, as seen in construction management studies (Mohammed, Shafiq, Al-Mekhlafi, Al-Fakih, et al., 2022; Mohammed, Shafiq, Al-Mekhlafi, Rashed, et al., 2022; Mohammed et al., 2021).

The relationship between Human Resources Management in enhancing safety culture

Previous studies have delved into the correlation between Human Resources Management (HRM) and safety culture, offering valuable insights into how HRM practices and organizational culture can bolster safety culture within organizations. Here is a summary of the key findings from these studies. One study explored the impact of organizational culture, employees' commitment, and sustainable competitive advantages on strategic HRM practices in the banking sector of Saudi Arabia. The results revealed that organizational culture significantly influences employees' commitment and sustainable competitive advantages. Furthermore, sustaining competitive advantages is vital in influencing strategic HRM practices (Tawfig & Kamarudi, 2022).

Another investigation focused on the mediation role of an organizational supportive culture in the relationship between HRM practices and patient satisfaction in a teaching and referral hospital in Erbil, Iraq. The findings indicated that HRM practices positively correlate with a supportive culture, and a supportive culture in hospitals has a positive and significant impact on patient satisfaction. The study underscored the importance of HRM practices in enhancing patient satisfaction through accurate healthcare services and meeting patient expectations (Ahmed & Bein, 2023; Al-Mekhlafi, Isha, Chileshe, et al., 2024). The role of organizational culture was further examined in a study investigating the relationship between HRM and non-financial performance in food and beverage companies in Nigeria. The findings demonstrated that both HRM and organizational culture have a significant effect on non-financial performance. However, organizational culture did not significantly affect the relationship between HRM and non-financial performance (Abel, Amos, & Asikhia, 2020; Al-Mekhlafi, Isha, & Hashim, 2024). Another study emphasized the interrelationship between organizational culture and safety in various organizations. It highlighted the crucial role of organizational culture in ensuring safety and the significance of effective two-way communication in developing a corporate 'safety culture' (Al-Mekhlafi, Isha, & Hashim, 2024; Clark, 2002).

Additionally, the study aimed to determine the relationship between HRM and key recruiting factors in local and multinational businesses. The findings demonstrated a significant relationship between HRM and the main factors attracting the right employees in local and international companies (Alsadoon, 2022). These studies underscore the importance of HRM practices and organizational culture in enhancing safety culture, patient satisfaction, non-financial performance, and attracting the right employees. They provide valuable insights for organizations seeking to improve their safety culture and overall performance by implementing effective HRM strategies and fostering a positive organizational culture.

Method

This study figures out the data from the literature review to find the relationship between human resources management and safety culture. In addition, based on the Scopus database, this study extracted the papers that address this relationship in the last ten years, from 2014 to 2023, to get knowledge about how previous studies address the different fields. The keywords that were used in the research were "Human Resources Management " AND "safety culture". The research is within the article title, abstract, and keywords. The research in Scopus was limited to many criteria as shown in Figure 1.

The time period was limited to 2014 to 2023. The type of documents was limited to conference papers, articles, and review papers. Lastly, all documents written in another language other than English were excluded. Then, the analysis proceeded with 207 comments.

For the analysis method, the study combined the Scopus figures and information and employed the VOSviewer to conduct the bibliometric analysis. Bibliometric analysis is conducted systematically, involving several key steps to evaluate and interpret academic literature, such as data collection, extracting relevant bibliometric data, analysis techniques, visualization via VOSviewer, interpretation, and reporting.

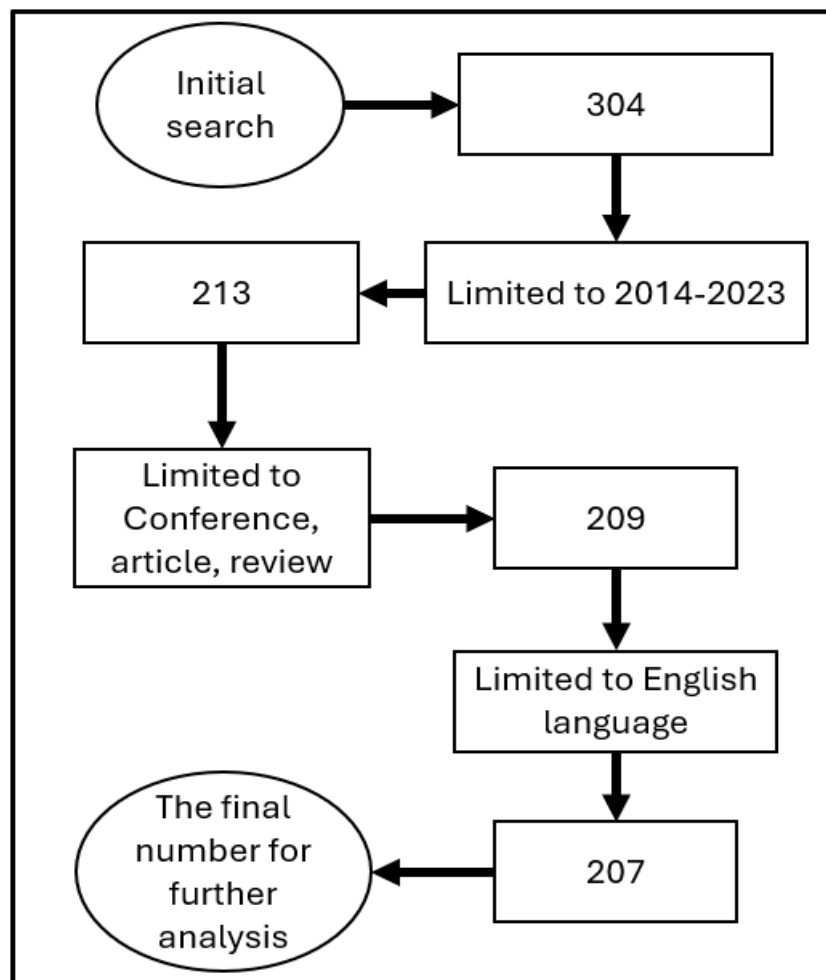


Figure 1: The criteria of research for the relationship between human resources management and safety culture

Results

Based on the 207 documents the analysis was conducted. First, the analysis shows the statistics based on the Scopus results. Then, the bibliometric analysis was also conducted to see the relationship between HR's safety culture according to many criteria.

Scopus analysis in terms of the documents by year

The trajectory of research endeavours over the past decade has been marked by a turbulent series of ups and downs. In 2015, research in this field experienced a noticeable decline in research output on this topic. However, this down was not permanent, as saw a remarkable rebound in subsequent years. By 2019, the number of studies had soared to its highest point, reflecting a period of significant innovation and achievement. Following the zenith of 2019, research once again faced a downturn in research activity as depicted in Figure 2. While the exact reasons for this decline may vary, it underscores the dynamic nature of this field and the need to adapt to evolving circumstances.

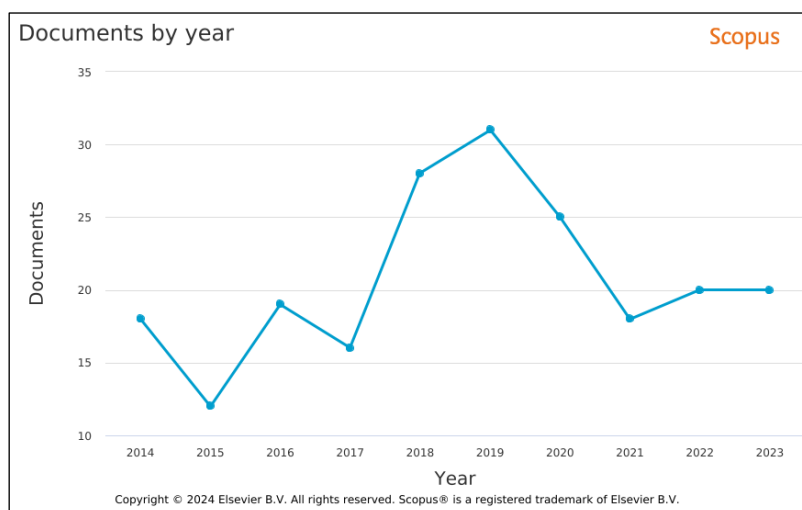


Figure 2: The trend of the publication of HRM and safety culture by year

Scopus analysis in terms of subjects

Based on Figure 3, the highest number of publications was in the field of Engineering, with 130 documents. The second highest area was Social Sciences, with 47 documents. The remaining publications were from Medicine, Energy, Chemical Engineering, Earth and Planetary Sciences, Computer Science, Environmental Science, Business, Management, and Materials Science.

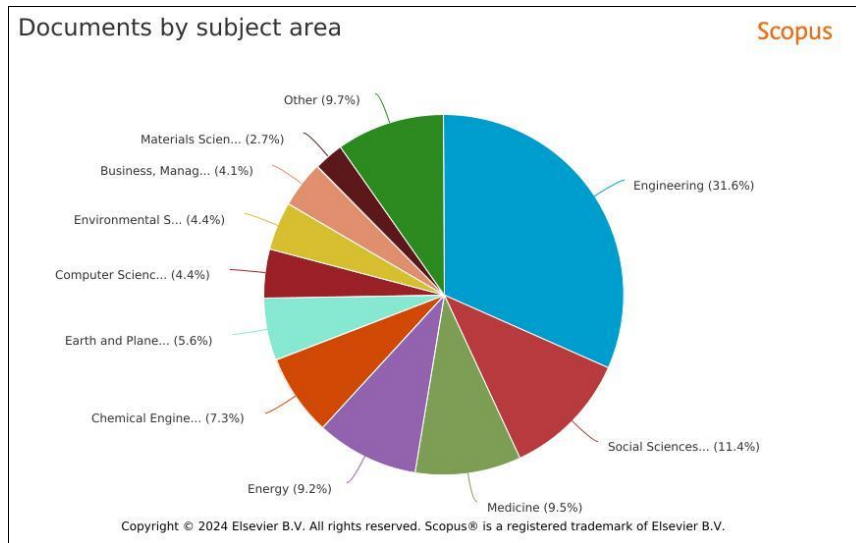
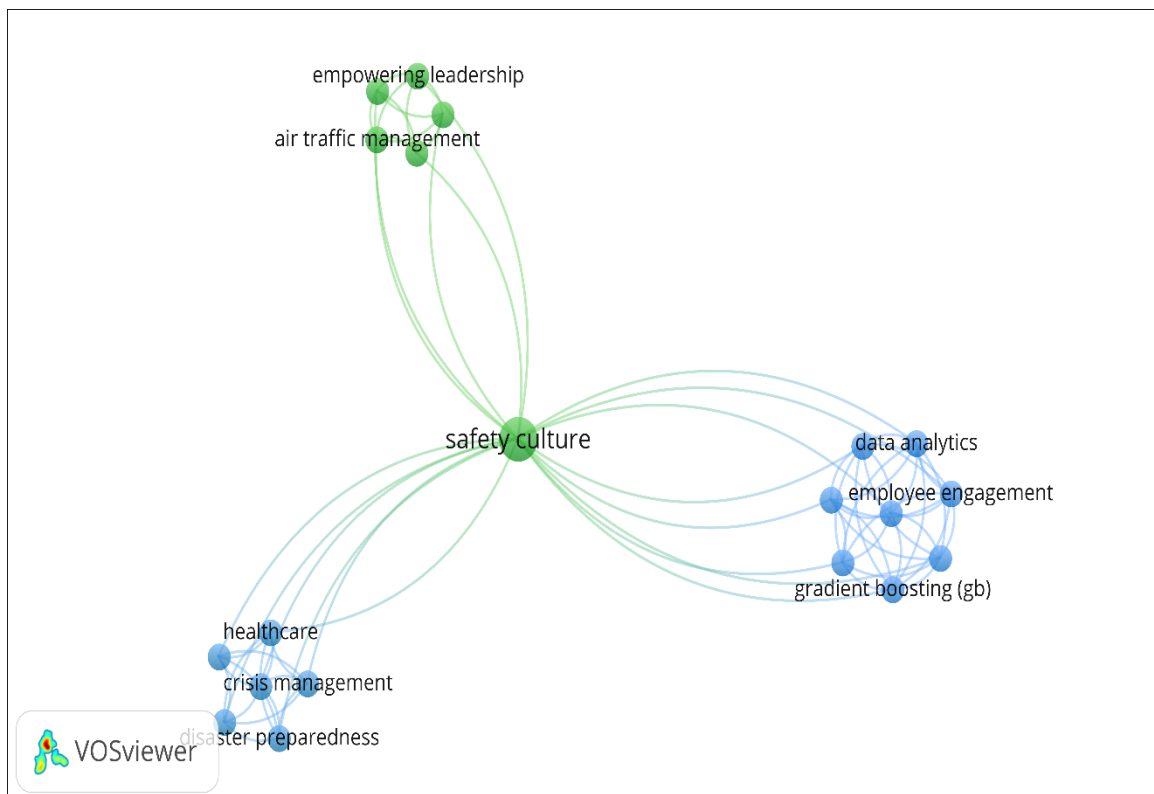


Figure 3: The trend of the publication of HRM and safety culture by subject

Bibliometric analysis

Using VOSviewer, a bibliometric analysis was conducted to discover the keywords used in 207 documents addressing the relationship between HRM and safety culture. In the created map, we selected co-occurrence and author keywords with a minimum occurrence of 1, excluding items not connected. The most commonly used keywords were "safety culture," followed by "data analysis" and "employee engagement." Interestingly, the



keyword "human resource management" did not appear in this map, suggesting that authors did not use it as a keyword in their publications.

Figure 4: Analysis of the keywords used by authors

Interestingly, when running the analysis with the unit of analysis set to "all keywords," only four main keywords emerged: "accident prevention," "personal training," "human resource management," and "safety culture," as depicted in Figure 5. This suggests that while authors did not explicitly list "human resource management" as a keyword, it was still found within the abstracts or titles of the documents.

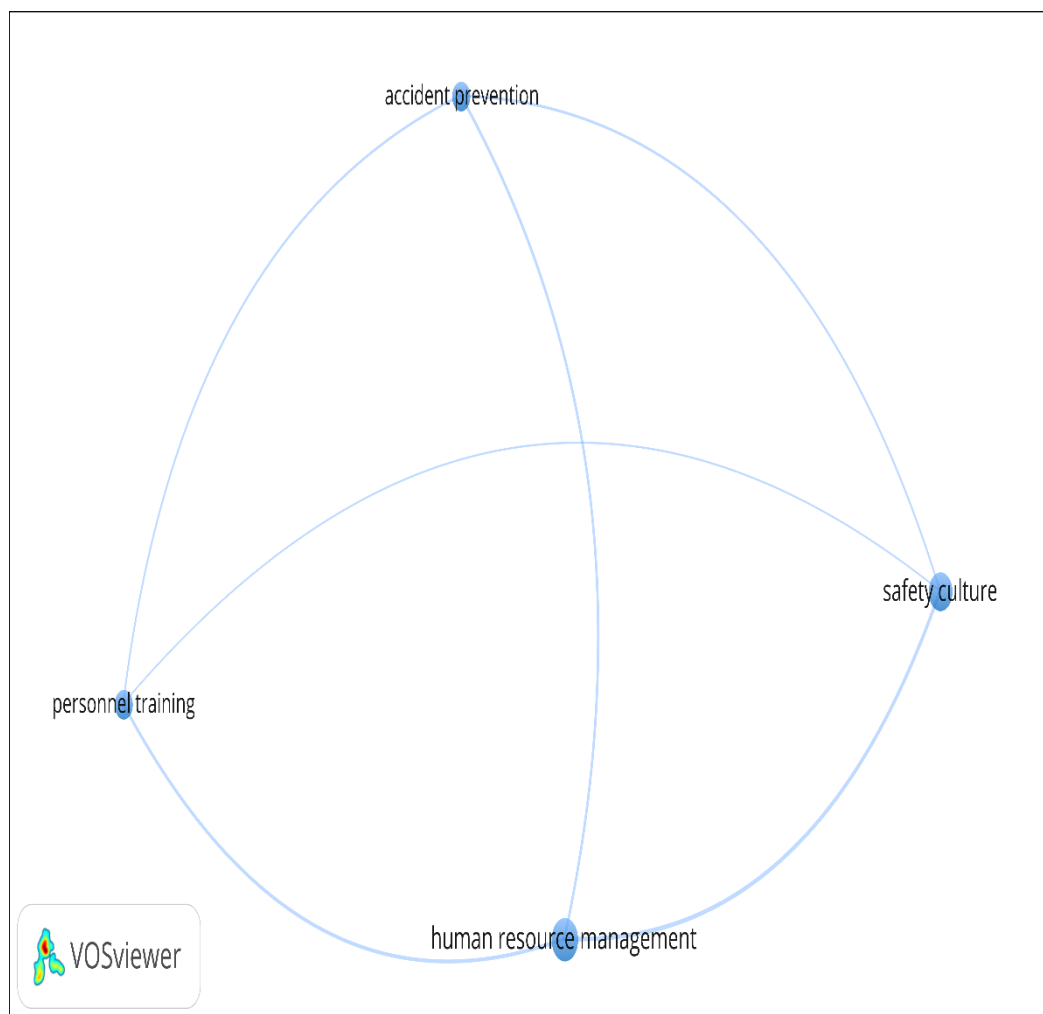


Figure 5: Analysis of the main keywords (unit of analysis "all keywords")

Discussion

HRM Practices for Improving Safety Culture

Improving hospital safety culture requires a multifaceted approach involving Human Resource Management (HRM) practices. Here are many HRM practices that can be implemented to improve safety culture:

- Effective communication: HRM can promote effective communication by training staff on communicating effectively, encouraging open communication channels, and promoting a culture of transparency (Draganović & Offermanns, 2022).
- Training and education: HRM can provide training and education to staff on safety practices, procedures, and protocols. This can include training on how to handle emergencies, how to report incidents, and how to use safety equipment.
- Leadership support: HRM can promote leadership support by ensuring that managers and supervisors are trained on safety practices and protocols and that they lead by example.
- Non-punitive response to error: HRM can promote a non-punitive response to error by creating a culture of learning from mistakes, encouraging staff to report incidents without fear of retribution, and using incidents as opportunities for improvement.
- Customized safety intervention programs: Customized safety intervention programs have been shown to increase staff safety culture. HRM can develop and implement customized safety intervention programs that address their hospital's specific needs and challenges.
- Collaboration and communication between researchers and safety staff: Collaboration and communication between researchers and radiation safety staff have been shown to initiate an improvement in the radiation safety culture in open-source radioactive material laboratories. HRM can promote collaboration and communication between different departments and staff members to improve the safety culture (Root, DeVol, Sinclair, & Martinez, 2020).

Consequently, implementing these HRM practices can help improve safety culture in an organization, leading to better patient outcomes and a safer working environment for staff.

Potential barriers HRM may encounter in promoting a safety culture

Promoting a safety culture in HRM (Human Resource Management) can encounter several potential barriers. These barriers can hinder the establishment and maintenance of a culture that prioritizes safety in the workplace. Potential barriers include lack of management support: When HRM tries to promote a safety culture, it is essential to have the support and commitment of top-level management. Without their active involvement and support, it can be challenging to implement safety initiatives effectively (Shoemark & Foran, 2021). Resistance to Change: Introducing a safety culture may require process, procedure, and behavior changes. Resistance to change from employees or other stakeholders can impede promoting a safety culture (Nuridah & Yodang, 2020). Inadequate Resources: Implementing and sustaining a safety culture requires resources such as time, budget, and personnel. If HRM does not allocate sufficient resources to support safety initiatives, it can hinder the promotion of safety culture (Nuridah & Yodang, 2020). Lack of Employee Engagement: Employees must be actively engaged in safety initiatives for a safety culture to thrive. If employees are not involved or do not perceive safety as a priority, it can be challenging to promote a safety culture effectively (Mello & Barbosa, 2017). Organizational Culture: The existing organizational culture can either facilitate or hinder promoting a safety culture. If the organization's culture does not prioritize safety or values productivity over safety, it can create barriers to promoting a safety culture (Kurihara et al., 2022). Communication and Training: Effective communication and training are crucial for promoting a safety culture. A lack of clear communication channels or inadequate training programs can impede the dissemination of safety information and hinder the development of a safety culture (Mello & Barbosa, 2017).

Strategies to overcome these challenges effectively

To overcome these barriers and promote a safety culture, HRM can take several actions:

- **Leadership Commitment:** Top-level management should demonstrate their commitment to safety and actively participate in safety initiatives.
- **Employee Involvement:** Engage employees in safety programs, encourage their participation, and provide opportunities for feedback and suggestions.
- **Resource Allocation:** Allocate sufficient resources, including time, budget, and personnel, to support safety initiatives.
- **Training and Communication:** Provide comprehensive training programs on safety practices and ensure effective communication channels for sharing safety information.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Foster a culture of continuous improvement by regularly evaluating and updating safety policies, procedures, and practices.

By addressing these potential barriers and implementing these actions, HRM can promote a safety culture that prioritizes the well-being and safety of employees in the workplace.

Limitations of study

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between Human Resource Management (HRM) and safety culture, several limitations should be acknowledged: First, The study relies on literature available in the Scopus database from 2014 to 2023. This scope might exclude relevant studies published in other databases or non-English languages, potentially leading to a partial understanding of the topic. Second, While the study covers multiple sectors (healthcare, railways, energy, transportation), the findings may not be generalizable to all industries. Different sectors' unique characteristics and challenges might influence the applicability of HRM practices and their impact on safety culture. Third, The study does not account for cultural and geographical differences that might influence HRM practices and safety culture. Practices effective in one cultural or geographical context might not be applicable in another. Finally, The relationship between HRM and safety culture is complex and influenced by numerous factors, including organizational size, leadership styles, and employee demographics. The study may not capture all these nuanced factors. Therefore, Future research should address these limitations by incorporating diverse data sources, broadening the scope of literature reviews, using mixed-method approaches, and taking cultural and contextual factors into account to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between human resource management and safety culture.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article has discussed how Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a crucial part in fostering a culture of safety in businesses of all types and sizes. The results of the literature study and the analysis of the correlation between HRM and safety culture demonstrate the critical role that HRM practices and organizational culture may play in advancing safety, boosting employee engagement, and realizing organizational excellence as a whole.

This literature analysis sheds light on the several HRM procedures that affect workers' mindsets and actions concerning security. Key practices that contribute to creating a safety culture include involving staff in safety management, offering training and development opportunities, implementing appropriate pay and incentive systems, and encouraging motivation. Collectively, these measures aid in creating a safer workplace, fewer accidents, and an overall safer culture.

Various research studies have looked at the relationship between HRM and safety culture and found that organizational culture strongly influences HRM practices. According to the research, companies with positive work environments had higher employee satisfaction rates, better non-financial performance, and a more competitive talent pool. The article mentioned effective communication, training and education, leadership support, non-punitive reactions to mistakes, tailored safety intervention programs, and cross-departmental cooperation as HRM practices that may be applied to promote safety culture. By implementing these measures, businesses may make the workplace safer and more productive. Despite these positive factors, a lack of

management support, reluctance to change, insufficient resources, insufficient employee participation, and opposing corporate cultures were recognized as possible challenges to creating a safety culture. Methods were discussed for overcoming these obstacles, emphasizing top-down support, bottom-up participation, strategic use of resources, open lines of communication, and a never-ending drive for betterment.

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