

HEADMASTERS' SAFETY MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE IN TWO MALAYSIAN NATIONAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

A conducive environment to ensure safety among school students is crucial as most of the time they are at school and grow up in school settings. It is vital to understand that, this period is a critical development stage for students whereby their personality is developed holistically in a different environment from home. The failure of handling hazards effectively and neglecting attitude on reporting cases contributes to the rising number of accidents in schools. Thus, the study aims to explore headmasters' strategies in safety management and how they strengthen teacher's safety performances in schools. An explorative case study research design was adopted using purposive sampling. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with two headmasters. The data analyses were performed by reviewing the informants' transcripts, and the transcripts were coded through open, axial and selective coding. The findings of the study revealed seven strategies implemented by the headmaster's in managing school safety are: (a) Importance of Safety Management; (b) Acting as Role Model; (c) Communicates School Safety; (d) Safety Practices; (e) Training Teachers; (f) Budget Arrangements; and (g) Alliance with School Community. Findings also revealed headmaster's strengthen teacher's safety performances in schools in two ways: (a) Trust in Teachers; and (b) Teachers Execute Programmes. This study provides an insight into the headmaster's safety management and safety performance in two Malaysian primary schools. Besides, policymakers will benefit from the change that could be made on safety-related matters with the aim of reducing the number of accident and incident cases among school students.

Keywords: Safety Management, Safety Performance, Primary Schools.

INTRODUCTION

Safety of children is the major concern of parents who always look for promising and welcoming surrounding in schools. Students constantly learn and explore in their school environment (Adams, 2018; Vazir, 2009). Tabancali and Bekta (2009) argued that a safe school should provide an environment that nurtures proper attitudes through promising social and physical interaction. Mastura (2013) defined safety as "the behaviours and practices that protect children and adults from risk or injury" (p.11). Meanwhile, UNESCO (2012) defines safety in the school context as a safe school environment from hazards and risk.

However, the existence of hazards and risks in the school environment is of utmost concern. Aven et al. (2011) stated that the elements of risk and non-safety in school still exist due to the repetition of hazards. According to Malaysian National Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in the News Straits Times (2017), the actual number of accidents is higher in Malaysian schools, as some schools might not have reported 'small cases'. This may due to the perceptions on the severity of the

accidents which vary between school managements and may result in failure to report these cases to the authority.

Few accidents have been recorded in Malaysian schools. One case involves the death of a boy scout after a pulley fell on his head (Yunus, Zachariah, & Adnan, 2018). Another case reported an eleven years old student fell into an uncovered drain at school (Yunus, Zachariah, & Adnan, 2018). There were also few incidents that occurred at secondary schools and residential schools resulting in minor injuries to even death-causing ones (Sharifah Md Nor, 2000). Neglecting certain minor cases contributes to the rising number of major cases, directly affecting the school's image (Dotson, 2016). Since, safety is involving cost of human life and affects the life of people who are involved directly or indirectly (Chandrakantan et al., 2016; Wahmeedh et al., 2011; Zohar, 2002) the need for effective school leadership is crucial to enhance the safety management and increase the efficiency of teacher's safety performance. Vicario (2012) argues that, although the whole school community is responsible for preventive measures, headmasters play a central role in this subject, given that they are the leaders and drivers of any school activity (Fernandez, 2007).

However, Nurul and Tengku (2009) found that the knowledge of school leaders on school safety is low and the study shows 42% of the schools did not implement any programs on safety and health while more than 50% of the schools did not have a safety policy. This evidence indicates school leaders could have overlooked the need for safety management practices in schools. Furthermore, Husna et al. (2017) found human resource development in the area of occupational safety in schools has received little attention in Malaysia. The increasing issues on school safety triggered the Government of Malaysia to mandate that school safety management be set as a Key Performance Indicator for school leaders (Ramachandran & Kenayathulla, 2018). Thus, the aim of the study is to explore headmasters' strategies in safety management and how they strengthen teacher's safety performances in schools. The following research questions guides this study:

What are the strategies used by the headmasters in managing safety in schools?

How do headmasters strengthen teacher's safety performance in schools?

PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT MODEL

The initial stage of literature search on school safety management and safety performance found that there was no standard school safety theories or model applied in any study. As the search broadens to other industries, the most common model applied to safety and health management was the Deming Cycle or known as the PDCA model which stands for Plan-Do-Check-Act (Arntz-Gray, 2016). In a few pieces of research on school health and safety management studies, PDCA was applied extensively as the model's nature to support continuous improvement of processes. One example of research was done in 2016 in Japan where the PDCA cycle was applied to School Disaster Resilience Assessment (SDRA) to prepare schools facing the disaster (Shiwaku, Ueda, Oikawa & Shaw, 2016). In the school setting, safety management and safety performance need continuous improvements as the possibilities of new hazards are high. Headmasters and teachers are responsible to identify and eliminate the hazards to reduce the risk and providing safe surroundings for the students. Therefore, the framework of this case study adapts the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) model to cater to the process of school safety management and safety performance.

Plan

Plan in the context of school safety refers to the safety rules and procedures (Lu & Yang, 2010), policies, procedures and processes to minimizing risk (Diaz, Hernandez & Isla, 2007; Vinodkumar & Bhasi, 2010), safety guidelines (Barnekow et al., 2006) and a safety statement which applies to all individuals in the school area (ROSPA, 2012). Fernandez-muniz, Mantes-peon and Vazquez-ordes (2007) stated that through putting into effect safety rules and procedures, the commitment of management towards safety can be seen clearly. Chandrakantan et al. (2016) stated that occupational accidents and injuries can be avoided if employees comply with safety standards, procedures, and regulations at work (Mearns, Flin, Gordon & Leming, 2001). A review article by Zohar (2010) illustrated a safety pyramid that shows safety policies and departmental priorities being the key enablers to enhanced safety performance in organisations. Well-designed safety procedures are essential since the safety risks must be concurrently assessed and the required safety measures are implemented (Alolah, Stewart, Panuwatwanich & Mohamed, 2014).

Do

The second element in the Deming Cycle is Do where the implementation of any plan requires a strong organizational structure. One of the vital dimensions in safety management is the designation of an individual with responsibilities and accountabilities in the execution of safety programmes and plans (Dorji & Hadikusumo, 2006). Vinodkumar and Bhasi (2010) stated that employees' involvement in safety is considered as a management practice and is measured using details connected with the safety committee. In the school context, the safety committee involves the head of school, senior assistants, safety unit coordinator, secretary of safety unit, and teachers. However, Taylor and Adelman (2000), argued that accountability of school safety management should be shared among everyone including the ground workers. In addition, the visibility of safety policies, procedures, rules and regulations, safety statements, safety organization charts need to be displayed in the school compound (Ssekamanya, Mastura, Khamsiah & Dayang, 2016; Lajiun, 2016; ROSPA, 2012) to build organizational learning about safety (Guldenmund, 2007). An effective safety committee will guarantee the implementation, monitoring and improvement of safety performance (Sawacha, 1999, Diaz-Victoria, 2017). Thus, safety committee meetings are important to address the loop on safety policies and practices and make suggestions for improvement (Chang, Chen & Wu, 2012).

Check

The check element will address the hazard identification and control around the school compound. In order to reduce risk, hazard identification and control are crucial. Identification of risk is the process of identifying situations or events that could give rise to the potential of injury or of harm to the health of a person (HSA, 2017). For an instant, walking around the school compound to detect hazards (Chandrakantan et al., 2016), safety inspection (Barach & Small, 2000; Chen & Lai, 2014). However, the safety action processes must consider the readiness level of staff to handle the situation (Dyson, 1999). Therefore, school emergency plans must be exercised to reach their maximum potential usefulness (National School Safety and Security Practices, 2017). Meanwhile, in risk control, Cooper (1998) proposed that safety control is the use of power on outlining the safety rules and regulations to be complied

with by the employees in order to achieve safe performance. Besides, timely action and proper documentation are essential to control and carry out the monitoring task (Gairin & Castro, 2010). In addition, the prevention culture is an important control tool in schools. A study by Xiao Lini and Ma Yingnan (2010) found some schools to be unsafe due to the structure of the buildings which were built in the 1980s. This demands the headmasters to integrate safety in the usual management tasks and function (HSA, 2017; Diaz, 2012). This is supported by Castro and Gairin (2011) by stating that creating a highly safe school requires an effective combination of preventive measures and action plans in cases of emergency.

Act

The final stage of the Deming Cycle is Act. In managing safety, the dimension of assessment is the key to verify whether all the Plan, Do and Check element is appropriately done. This phase is carried out through audit and inspection activities. Auditing plays an important role in accessing the effectiveness of occupational safety and health system in an organization and define the strength and weaknesses of safety practices (Nurul & Tengku, 2009). Lu (2016) stated that frequent safety inspection is the indication that an organization is moving towards making a change. Meanwhile, Teo and Ling (2006) indicated that safety audits and reviews are a structured process of collecting independent information on the efficiency, effectiveness, and reliability of the total safety management system, and of drawing up plans for correction and preventative action. In order to effectively implement audit and inspection, proper audit tools are required (Lutchman, Maharaj & Ghanem, 2012) to increase management safety practices (Lee & Harrison, 2000). Lajiun (2016) reported the National Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) proposed schools and higher learning institutes carried out periodic safety audits to ensure their buildings and surroundings were always safe and suitable for effective learning. There is a need for school building safety audit especially when it concerns the classrooms as the classroom is a place where the students learn. School leaders are encouraged to seek feedback through a survey to take corrective and preventive action in the future. The final stage of the Deming Cycle will reflect on the audit and inspection outcomes and the necessary action plan required for continuous improvement.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON SAFETY MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Several research findings were found on the relationships between safety management and safety performance. According to Hayman (2007), the influence of management and leadership on policy, procedures and processes to improve safety systems and to raise school safety awareness, leads the staff to take on higher levels of safety accountability. The installation of appropriate safety policies, procedures and processes in an organisation can often be an effective means to address inadequate safety performance (Alolah, Stewart, Panuwatwanich & Mohamed, 2014).

According to Clarke (2010), safety policies and procedures are considered one of the most influential factors driving safety performance because organizational policies regarding safety have a significant influence on cultivating a positive, healthy safety culture. This is supported by Lu and Yang (2011), that safety rules and procedures create a clear mission, responsibilities, goals, sets up standards of behavior for employees and establishes safety system to correct workers' safety behaviors.

Past studies have shown show how safety management contributed to the safety performance of schools. A study conducted by Ssekamanya, Mastura, Khamsiah and Dayang (2016) on primary school headmasters from Kuala Lumpur and Selangor on attitude and stances in implementation of safety management practices revealed that there was a strong positive attitude among school administrators in relation to the safety management plan and policy practices in school. Furthermore, responses also showed that teachers and staff always helped to support school administrators by monitoring students' safety at school.

Meanwhile, Vinodkumar and Bhasi (2010) found significant positive correlations between safety management practices and safety knowledge which subsequently contributes to safety performance. However, a study by Ramachandran and Kenayathulla (2018) found the level of headmasters' safety management in both vernacular Chinese (SJKC) and Tamil primary school (SJKT) Kuala Selangor primary schools were high in aspects of planning and control, but low in aspects of management and leadership.

Zacharatos, Barling and Iverson (2005) found in their research that high-performance workplace safety was positively related to safety compliance and safety participation. Similarly, Tharaldsen, Mearns and Knudsen (2010) revealed that there is a significant effect on safety performance through safety compliance and safety participation. Meanwhile, Kines et al. (2010) revealed in their studies that safety communication and feedback has been identified to be one of the effective ways to improve safety performance in an organization.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted an explorative case study design. According to Yin (2011), the goal of a case study is to understand the social phenomenon that is regarded as complex, and in a real-life setting such as organizational and managerial processes. As the main purpose of this study is to explore headmasters' safety management and how they play a role in strengthening teacher's safety performances in schools, an explorative case study design is an appropriate choice to address the research aims of the study.

Population and Sampling

There were two informants selected in this study. They consist of headmasters from two primary schools in Selangor who had been actively involved in the implementation of safety management in their schools. Both headmasters have good track records of program documentation, records of past building maintenance jobs, received allocations from Teacher Parents Association (TPA) on school safety matters. These criteria have attracted the researcher to further investigate on school safety management in these two schools.

Data Collection Process

Semi-structured interviews were used as a data collection technique in this study. A set of pre-planned core questions were crafted to guide the interview process, however, as the interview progress, a series of other open-ended questions were also asked the informants while allowing time for them to recall and reflect on their opinions and experiences (Yin, 2011).

Pilot interviews were conducted on two school headmasters from Kuala Lumpur to familiarize and further refine the type of semi-structured questions to be asked during the real study. The pilot interviews were useful as the researcher was able to practice interviewing participants and enhancing the skills to interview before the actual study. The interview questions were also refined to make them easier to be understood by the informants.

As for the actual data collection, two headmasters from two primary schools in Selangor were interviewed. All the interviews were held in their respective school offices. The interviewees were coded as informant A and informant B to address the issue of informant confidentiality. The interviews were then followed up with emails to the informants to obtain their consent on the contents of the interview transcripts. Subsequently, document analysis was carried out to confirm the interview findings.

Data Analyses

Firstly, in terms of data analyses, the researchers examined all the data sets to develop the appropriate coding process. The coding process consists of: (a) open coding: where data was coded from the researcher's understanding of the transcripts in relation to the context; (b) axial coding: where data was coded and classified into themes after open coding; and (c) selective coding: where the themes and sub-themes are critically evaluated if they are credible, dependable and confirmable to address the unit of analyses in this research study (Lincoln & Guba, 2002).

Reliability and Validity

Measuring validity and reliability in a qualitative study is checking the trustworthiness of the findings of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) were the first to address rigor in their model of trustworthiness of qualitative research. There were 4 criteria of trustworthiness that can be explained to ensure confidence in the findings that have been carried out.

a) Credibility

Credibility in research findings can be described as assuring the original facts from the informants (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). Member checks is the base of credibility and a critical process where the informants' original views or data should match the interpretation of the researcher without bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The credibility of the findings of the study was done through member checking by the researcher (Harris, et al, 2017). The data was collected from two informants, transcribed and emailed to cross check whether the transcribed data is correct and accurate (Anne, 2014). Furthermore, document analysis of program documentation and records of past building maintenance jobs was done to verify the information given.

b) Transferability

Transferability in the qualitative study means readers can relate to the phenomenon under study and use the findings to understand or make better decisions in their own contextual circumstances. It is hoped that the insights shared from this study would be transferable and contribute towards contextual knowledge of safety management and safety performance in Malaysian schools.

c) Dependability

Dependability refers to the transparency and relevancy of the data over time (Bitsch, 2005). In the process of seeking relevant information on school safety management and safety performance of teachers, an observation was done to check the visibility of safety statements around the school compound. Researcher ensure that the interpretation and recommendations given were backed up or verified by informant's data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011)

d) Conformability

Conformability can be defined as the quality data collected from the informants which can be confirmed by other sources and not derived from the imagination of the researcher (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392). In presenting the analysis of this study, the researcher will relate to conformability in presenting the facts while addressing the research questions.

FINDINGS

The leadership of the school headmasters in safety management practices at schools influences teacher's safety performance in schools. There are two sections in this study. Section A will first highlight the demographic profiles of the informants involved in this study. Section B subsequently discussed emerging themes and sub-themes. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the informants.

Table 1: *Demographic Profile of Informants*

Demographic	Informant A	Informant B
Highest Academic Qualifications	Bachelor's Degree	Diploma in Education
Years of Experience in Education Field	23 years	27 years
Years of Experience as Headmaster	5 years	1 year
Years of Experience as Headmaster in current school	2 years	1 year

The profile of informants includes the highest academic qualifications, years of experience in education field, years of experience as headmaster and years of experience as headmaster in the current school. Both the headmasters have been in the teaching line for more than 20 years which means that they are very experienced headmasters with high levels of expertise. Furthermore, both headmasters are from National Primary school with a different type of school background. Informant A is from cluster school status and Informant B is from inclusive education status.

The next section will present the findings in two major sections according to the research questions. Each section will first introduce the major themes in accordance with what the informants said, and subsequently, the sub-themes that branches out from the major theme will be presented.

Research Question 1: What are the strategies used by the headmasters in managing safety in schools?

Analysis of the data from all informants involved in this study indicated that safety management was evident in the seven emerging themes: (a) Importance of Safety Management; (b) Acting as Role Model; (c) Communicates School Safety; (d) Safety Practices; (e) Training Teachers; (f) Budget Arrangements; and (g) Alliance with School Community. For the purpose of this article, data are selected for findings during the stage of selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), where the themes and sub-themes proved to be credible, dependable and confirmable by the informants. Table 2 shows a visualization of how sub-themes were splitting out from the major theme during axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

I. Importance of Safety Management

The data gathered from the interviews indicates that the headmasters in primary schools give importance to safety in schools. Below is the statement from the informant (IA) and informant (IB);

"Safety is very important to ensure the school is able to provide a conducive atmosphere for students. Safety practices do not only involve the management of properties and facilities which are the assets of the school but also involves the management of human life; the teachers and students" (IA)

"early step is taken to prevent unwanted injuries and accidents especially in relation to safety factors in school. This is done by the discussion on safety matters held in the management meeting and finally in the student's affair unit meeting. The focus is given to 3K (Safety, Health and Cleanliness)" (IB)

This statement highlights the commitment shown by the headmaster towards the vision of safety management in the school and sharing the risk management of the school with the teachers.

Table 2: An Example of Open Coding and Axial Coding Process

Open coding	Axial coding	
	Theme 1 Importance of Safety Management	Theme 2 Acting as Role Model
Code 1: Safety is very important	Code 1: Safety is very important	Code 1: Safety management practices
Code 2: Prevent unwanted injuries and accidents	Code 2: Prevent unwanted injuries and accidents	Code 2: Preparation of procedures and safety rules
Code 3: Focus on Safety, Health and Cleanliness	Code 3: Focus on Safety, Health and Cleanliness	Code 3: Gives warning
Code 4: Management of human life	Code 4: Management of human life	Code 4: Building inspection
Code 5: Safety management practices		Code 5: Educate the teachers
Code 6: Preparation of procedures and safety rules		Code 6: Educate the community
Code 7: Gives warning		
Code 8: Building inspection		
Code 9: Educate the teachers		
Code 10: Educate the community		

II. Acting as Role Model

The second theme revealed that headmasters are acting as a role model to the teachers by implementing the safety management practices by themselves. This indicates that the headmasters strongly carry the modelling attributes to educate the teachers and the whole community. Below are the responses from both the headmasters.

“Preparation of procedures and safety rules such as safety lines, safety display boards, gives warning and realization on safety matters in school”. (IA)

“Observe the condition of school physical such as building, special rooms, school landscape and surroundings” (IB)

This finding shows that headmasters in the two-primary school are directly committed to safety management practices in school through the understanding of the concept, giving importance and their contribution to promote safety management in schools.

III. Communicates School Safety

The interview findings also revealed that headmasters communicate the importance of school safety to the school community. This is proven by the statement given on the communication medium used to communicate on safety issues such as telephone, email, social website, WhatsApp, Telegram, an announcement in school assembly, and display banners. This shows that there is ongoing communication between the headmaster and teachers on safety-related matters. Furthermore, effective communication is needed and appreciated by the school head as this will help to identify and minimize exposure to risk. Informant (IB) shared “Teachers are appreciated when they give ideas, recommendations and responses on safety-related matters in any discussions or meetings”.

IV. Safety Practices

Practicing safety management effectively and efficiently in schools requires the headmaster's ability to perform a high standard of ethical and moral conduct. The findings and feedback from headmasters show the safety management exercises in both schools is done systematically with full integrity. It shows that the interest shown by the headmasters in executing the process of safety management practices in school such as inspection, reporting and documentation. Headmasters keep a record of past incidences at the student's affair unit, carry out inspection from time to time, a minimum of 2 times per year in May and October. Headmasters also follow the procedures fixed by MOE diligently and this information is displayed in open spaces by using banners and communicated during assemblies.

V. Training Teachers

Guiding, and giving appropriate training to the teachers, is one of the headmasters' positive act to increase teachers' safety performance. Through the findings from the two interviews, it is clear that headmasters are concern about the teachers' professionalism and self-development concerning safety management. This is confirmed after the evaluation of the statement given by the headmasters.

"Remind and guide on procedures for risk management implementation through briefing, meetings and in-service training (in house training) It is also done following a suitable time and in an informal way" (IA)

"Teachers are divided into 6 groups to look after and monitor all the areas in the school surroundings and delivering message related safety incidents in schools"

"Invite officials of the areas concerned to give in service training for teachers. It is done sometimes, according to necessity" (IB)

VI. Budget Arrangements

The allocation of budget to solve safety-related problems is vital for the schools. Budgets are needed to maintain facilities, improve the condition of the building, repairing and other maintenance activities. Headmasters from both schools conclude that budget allocation depends on the necessity and needs to do an application for approval before the fund is transferred to the school account.

"No special provisions. It's upon approval by MOE. Depends on the necessity" (IA)

"15K yearly from TPA (one-off), and request from District Education Office depending on the necessity. The budget is not given yearly to the school. We must apply for permission from the State Education Office first to get the budget. There is insufficient allocation. Additional funding is gained through fundraising by the TPA and request or appeal for contributions" (IB)

Based on the explanation above, both headmasters are making efforts to raise funds and these efforts are mostly assisted by the Teacher Parents Association (TPA).

VII. Alliance with school community

Headmasters from both schools also enhance the safety management practices at school by engaging the support from the school community such as Teacher Parent Association (TPA) or directly from student's parents. The headmasters shared that while waiting for the budget allocation for maintenance from the MOE and District Education Office, the school will:

"Request/Appeal from TPA. TPA always provide help and support to resolve the issue of safety management and the school community always present to school to provide help" (IA)

"Get advice from parents who have knowledge and skills to handle the situation" (IB)

As stated earlier, parents are concerned about their children's safety in school and are willing to work together with the headmasters to support the school's safety effort.

Research Question 2: How do headmasters strengthen teacher's safety performance in schools?

The teacher's safety performance was evident in two emerging themes: (a) Trust in Teachers; and (b) Teachers Execute Programmes. Solely depending on strategies is not enough to fully execute safety in schools. The implementation of safety needs a strong team of teachers which is formed by the management headed by the headmasters. To strengthen teacher's safety performance, a school head needs to empower, trust and authorize teachers to take charge of safety matters. Below are the findings based on the data collected.

I. Trust in Teachers

Teacher's safety performance relates to the headmaster's role in executing safety management in schools. The feedback from informant A revealed that the headmaster is trusting the teachers to take their own action towards safety matters. According to informant IA:

"Teachers are very concern and take immediate action on safety" and every teacher has given training on safety matters at teacher training college.

Teachers are assigned tasks according to their knowledge, skills and personal attributes in handling safety matters in schools. This is revealed by informant IB:

"Certain teachers only capable depends on their skills and existing knowledge"

Teacher's safety behaviours are demonstrated through their experiences by headmasters looking and observing the way the teachers handle and solve an incident or accident cases.

II. Teachers Execute Programmes

Executing safety programmes in schools require teachers' high commitment and support. In line with that, safety programmes are conducted throughout the year, according to a suitable time. Headmaster A was more specific in stating the programs are run twice a year and types of programmes differ according to the schools:

"Talk, exhibition and demonstration" (IA)

"Fire drilling practice and prevention of discipline cases" (IB)

This shows that school A involves teacher to execute the safety programmes which is conducted throughout the year compared to school B. However, both schools have their own way of conducting their programmes. This also indicates headmasters are trusting and empowering teachers to conduct programmes to achieve their targeted safety goal where both headmasters distribute tasks accordingly to teachers and monitor their progress throughout the implementation.

DISCUSSION

The analysis results of informants' data revealed safety management was evident in the seven emerging themes: (a) Importance of Safety Management; (b) Acting as Role Model; (c) Communicates School Safety; (d) Safety Practices; and (e) Training Teachers; (f) Budget Arrangements; and (g) Alliance with School Community. Teacher's safety performance was evident in two emerging themes: (a) Trust in Teachers; and (b) Teachers Execute Programmes in Malaysian National Primary School.

In the context of promoting school safety, the commitment of the school management is the most essential element. As the school leader, the headmaster has the responsibility to cultivate safety at all levels and putting it into action by executing plans as discussed in school meetings. The findings of this study are similar to a study by Chen, McCabe and Hyatt (2018), where organization commitment at all levels contributed to safety performance. Headmasters in this school share the actual situation of their school safety to teachers and seek ideas for improvement. Skeepers and Mbohwa (2015) had stated two-way safety communications can increase the value of trust between an employer and their subordinates. As discussed in the Plan-Do-Check-Act model, continuous improvement in the planning stage will give access to management to better safety-related matters in schools.

Furthermore, the last two phases of the Plan-Do-Check-Act model, the Check and Act, are very crucial to determine if the planning and implementation stage of safety procedures are properly accomplished in schools. In this study, headmasters' role in determining the safety policies at the school level, its rules and regulations and safety statements indicate that the school safety procedures are effective. Leaders should be role models by carrying out the task and lead by example (Hoffmeister et al, 2014). On the other hand, headmasters' effort on regular and frequent communication on school safety, various safety practices and emphasizing on safety training for teachers has been an important strategy to improve safety management in schools. On the contrary, a qualitative study by Srichai, Yodmongkol, Chakpitak, Meksamoot and Sureenphong (2015) reports that safety communication in schools is wasteful and ineffective.

The second theme on teachers' safety performance emphasized in the role of headmaster in strengthening and strategizing safety performance in school. Two sub themes emerged from the analysis which were trust in teachers and teachers execute programmes. Findings indicate headmasters trusts teachers to perform the task given, in which the elements in the Plan-Do-Check-Act model are practical and applied easily. Without a strong trust in teachers, safety programmes in schools can be never be implemented successfully. Headmasters in this school are seen to empower teachers and provide them the autonomy to make decisions. Lee, Lu, Yang and Chang (2019) in their study found empowering teachers to participate in decision making and problem solving will enhance their safety performance, participation and obligation to safety compliance.

CONCLUSION

The headmaster as the school leader has accountability in setting and creating a safe school. Although total elimination of hazards is an impossible task, efforts to reduce accidents is essential to promote a harmonious school environment. For that purpose, strategic safety management and firming up teachers' safety performance were the two vital domains found throughout this study. School leaders who are alert to the safety needs of the school will continuously improve the school safety environment through effective and consistent practices.

However, it is also important to understand that, school safety could be widely exercised only through motivating and empowering the teachers. A good team of teachers can move the school towards achieving its goals (Adams, A. Samat, & Abu Samah, 2018; Mohamed, Abdul Razak, & Abdullah, 2018). This study is limited to only two schools and two principals. Further research is needed to find other factors that may contribute to promoting school safety, especially from the school's safety unit coordinator, secretary of safety unit, and teachers. The findings from this study provide a platform for further research in the field of school safety.

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