

# Industrial relations vs. worker safety and health



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## Industrial Relations vs. Workers Safety and Health aspects

### A). The Past and The Present Links Between *Industrial Relations And Safety And Health*

#### Introduction

Industrial relations or better still ' employment relations' together with safety and health aspects of any organizations are vital elements in the relationship between the employee and the employer. In simple terms, industrial relations refer to the relationship between employees and the employers. It is a multidimensional field which looks into the employment relationship between the employers and the employees as it's a cutting edge focusing on the ever changing nature, forms and regulations of the employment relationship. The main objective of this paper is to look into the past and links between safety and health practices within an organization and the industrial relations, in addition to the importance for safety and health practitioners (Monappa, 1990).

Since time immemorial, all employers have a duty of care to their employees, and in turn the inception of the Occupational health and safety (OHS) concept which became paramount in employments. Moreover, a safe working place between the employees and the employer involves more than the physical environment. Harassment and bullying, discrimination and equal opportunity are as well important topics and relate equally to employee welfare as do, the more obvious physical hazards in the workplace. The main aim of " Occupational health within an organization is the maintenance and promotion of the highest degree of physical, mental, and social well-being of

workers in all occupations within an organization. In addition, it also helps in the prevention of workers leaving work due to health caused cases in their working conditions (Edwards, 2003).

### Links between industrial relations and safety and health

The term industrial relations have a broad and also narrow outlook. In the past, the term industrial relations were broadly defined in order to include the relationships and interactions between the employees and the employer. From this perspective, industrial relation the aspect of industrial relations entailed all the aspects of employment relationships, such as human resource management, employee relations, and union-management (or labor) relations. Over the time the issues that were once under the umbrella of the ' industrial relations'. However, the definition of the term has seen changes, becoming more specific and restricted. It is the gradual changes of industrial relations that have seen the connections between ' its' and the health and safety measures within an organization continue to exist (Blanpain & Baker, 2010).

Consequently, industrial relations pertains to the study and practice of combined negotiations, trade unionism, and labor-management relations, while on the other hand human resource management is a disconnect, largely distinct field that deals with non-union employment relationships and the personnel practices and policies of employers. In addition, it also entails the management of differences/conflict between employers, workers, and trade unions whenever it arises. Evidently, the nature of industrial relations is shifting, and the impetus for the same being provided by the changing

scenarios. However, the main connection remains as the enhancement of the worker-employer relationship whereby one of the aspects is the provision of health and safety measures to the employees (Venkataramana, 2007).

It is evident that, the environment in which employers-employees and trade unions find themselves has changed considerably in the one decade and will go on with changing over the coming times. One of the changes that is noticeable is the ongoing disintegration of workplaces and the shift in the balance from collective to individual models of employment relations.

However, the functions of the industrial relations remain as they were' protecting the employer through the maintenance of a healthy relationship between all the parties involved in employment.

The significance of the workplace relations over the time shows the link between the industrial relations and safety and health is there and still remains. Traditionally, employment (or industry) relations, has been associated with the management of either collective or individual conflict in the workplace. In recent years, the focus has opened out to consider the benefits of high performance working on productivity, but also the wider social implications for individuals and their dependents. The workplace provides not only the money that we need to support ourselves and our families, but it can also provide purpose, status, and friendship, allowing people to develop new skills, both technical and social. The ability of line managers to manage employment relations on a day-to-day basis and to get the best from their staff has implications for innovation, productivity, quality and reliability, and ultimately levels of growth at a national level and our ability to compete on the global stage. With so much invested in work by <https://assignbuster.com/industrial-relations-vs-worker-safety-and-health/>

managers and employees individually, employment relations have never been so important (Stellman, 1998).

### *B).* Importance for “ Safety and Health” Practitioners to Understand Industrial Relations

As seen above, industrial relations are an important aspect in the management of organizations. There is in turn a very strong and positive business case for the safety and health practitioners to understand all the aspects of industrial relations. This would enable all the parties involved to fully understand what is needed for each one of them. In addition, it helps understand the fact that, a happy and healthy employee is a more productive employee. In turn it enables the employer understand the repercussions of disgruntled employees. The very last thing any employer would want is a group of dissatisfied employees who might scrutiny their organization’s administration team as one that is concerned only about profits and not anything for workers well-being because this group will not be very industrious. Clear understanding of industrial relations helps the management to take care of their employees for better return in terms of productivity. Moreover, clear understanding of the industrial relations, helps in placing and maintaining of worker in a work-related setting through the adaptation and understanding of physiological and psychological capabilities of the employees. This can be summarized as the ability to manage the workforce for maximum production within an organization (House builder’s health & safety, 2008).

In addition, understanding of industrial relations helps the management to understand the fact that, injuries and ill-health that is caused by poor work circumstances can impose significant and repeatedly unrecognized monetary and legal costs to their organizations. Not to state the implication that could be felt if the corporation directors are found to have been negligent for the workers. Word also gets out and a company with a poor health and safety record will be far less appealing in a tender bid than one which is already fully compliant and has a good health and safety record. Even those companies that do not tender for work still need to protect their reputation; hence a good reputation can be maintained, through understanding of Industrial Relations (Wilson et al, 2003).

## Conclusion

Industrial relation has grown to become of the broad aspects within organization management. The employees-employer relation has been enhanced by the understanding of the aspects within the industrial relations. This in turn brought along the issues of safety and health for the employees within any given organization. Through the understanding of public relations, the employer understands the main focus of occupational health, such as: (i) the maintenance and promotion of workers' health and working capacity; (ii) the improvement of working environment and work to become conducive to safety and health and (iii) development of work organizations and working cultures in a direction which supports health and safety at work and in doing so also promotes a positive social climate and smooth operation and may enhance productivity of the undertakings.

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