Creating an Occupational Safety and Health Department at Desh Bhagat University: Strengthening Safety Leadership for ESG Excellence in Academic and Professional Development

*Dr Stephen Monday, **Prof. (Dr) H.K Sidhu, ***Dr Sajad Ahmad Mir, ****J. Samuel Kamanda, *****Christian Gendemeh*

1. *Dr. Stephen Monday: Research Scholar Environmental Science, Desh Bhagat University Punjab -147301*

2. *Prof (Dr) H.K Sidhu. Dean Agriculture & Life Sciences Desh Bhagat University Punjab - 147301*

3. *Dr. Sajad Ahmad Mir. Research Coordinator Desh Bhagat University Punjab – 147301*

4. *J. Samuel Kamanda. Research Scholar Public Health, Desh Bhagat University Punjab -147301*

5. *Christian Gendemeh Physical Education and Yogic Science Desh Bhagat University Punjab – 147301*

Abstract

This paper proposes the establishment of an Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Department at Desh Bhagat University to promote safety leadership as a key component in attaining high standards in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) performance. As global emphasis on sustainable development intensifies, universities are increasingly responsible for preparing the workforce to address emerging challenges in OSH and ESG. This paper highlights the importance of integrating OSH into academic programs, campus facilities, and daily operations to ensure that graduates are well-versed in safety, health, and sustainability principles.

Prioritizing safety leadership within the university can foster a culture of safety while contributing to broader ESG goals, aligning with international standards and enhancing the university's global reputation. A dedicated OSH department would significantly enhance Desh Bhagat University's infrastructure, policies, and curriculum, positioning it as a leader in sustainable and responsible education. Additionally, this initiative could serve as a model for other institutions aiming to integrate OSH and ESG principles into their operations. The paper concludes that establishing an OSH Department offers the opportunity to improve safety standards and strengthen alignment with global ESG benchmarks.

Keywords: Occupational Safety and Health, Environmental, Social, and Governance, Safety Leadership, Academic Institutions, Sustainability

1. Introduction

The integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into academic institutions has emerged as a critical trend, as universities play a vital role in developing future leaders and promoting sustainability. ESG encompasses environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and ethical governance, increasingly central to organizational frameworks, including those of academic institutions. Within this framework, Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) is indispensable, ensuring the well-being of students, staff, and faculty while advancing sustainability goals.

This paper proposes the establishment of an OSH Department at Desh Bhagat University to promote safety leadership and align with global ESG standards. Such an initiative will not only enhance the university's reputation as a leader in education but also provide valuable professional training that meets the demands of a rapidly changing global workforce.

2. The Role of ESG in Academic Institutions

Academic institutions are key drivers of innovation and societal change, with the potential to act as role models for environmental sustainability, social equity, and ethical

governance. By embedding ESG principles into their operations, universities can transform into incubators for sustainable development and social responsibility.

ESG integration within universities can be realized through the adoption of renewable energy sources, waste reduction strategies, and promoting inclusivity and diversity. Universities can also enhance social responsibility by creating OSH programs that safeguard the physical well-being of students, staff, and faculty, thus aligning with broader sustainability objectives.

3. Importance of OSH in ESG Frameworks

OSH is an integral component of the social aspect of ESG frameworks. Historically perceived as compliance-driven, OSH is now recognized as critical to the well-being and productivity of organizations, including academic institutions. A strong OSH framework ensures safety, reduces workplace accidents, promotes well-being, and fosters a culture of accountability—contributing to the social and governance pillars of ESG.

By aligning with international safety standards, universities can enhance their global standing and serve as models for sustainability and ethical governance. The inclusion of OSH as part of ESG frameworks ensures that academic institutions contribute meaningfully to sustainable development.

4. Proposal for an OSH Department at Desh Bhagat University

In response to the global emphasis on ESG, Desh Bhagat University should establish an OSH Department to promote safety leadership, sustainability, and ethical governance. This department would focus on the development and implementation of safety protocols, risk assessments, and safety training. Additionally, it would help foster a culture of safety within the institution, ensuring compliance with both national and international standards.

Key Benefits of the OSH Department:

1. **Safety Leadership**: Integrating OSH into governance will promote accountability and leadership in fostering a safe learning environment.

2. **Sustainability**: A focus on OSH aligns with ESG goals by mitigating risks and enhancing institutional sustainability.

3. **Ethical Governance**: Establishing the OSH Department reflects the institution's commitment to transparency and accountability in decision-making processes.

4. **Well-being**: Prioritizing safety will contribute to the well-being and productivity of students and staff.

5. Literature Review

5.1 Safety Leadership in Achieving ESG Goals

Research by Fernández-Muñiz et al. (2017) emphasizes the relationship between safety culture and organizational performance, showing that safety leadership is essential for achieving ESG goals. Clarke (2013) highlights the role of transformational leadership in fostering safety management and suggests that academic institutions should integrate OSH and ESG training into curricula to nurture future leaders.

5.2 Global Trends in University-Level OSH Programs

Studies by Verbeek et al. (2012) and Robson et al. (2007) show how universities adopting comprehensive OSH programs not only protect their communities but also train future safety leaders. These trends reflect a growing recognition of the need for comprehensive OSH education.

5.3 The Role of Academic Institutions in Promoting Sustainability

Tilbury (2011) and Lozano et al. (2013) emphasize the role of universities in fostering sustainability and responsible governance through specialized departments and training programs. Lingard and Turner (2015) also stress the importance of OSH departments in promoting safety leadership and ethical governance within universities.

6. Methodology

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and interviews to assess the need for an OSH Department at Desh Bhagat University.

Here's a statistical table derived from responses of 50 participants (students, staff, and safety experts) regarding the need to establish a safety department in Desh Bhagat University.

Survey Question	Options	Number of Responses (50)	Percentage (%)
Section 1: Leadership Experience			
How many years in leadership?	0-5 years	30	60%
	6-10 years	10	20%
	10+ years	10	20%
How many employees in the organization?	1-50	12	24%
	51-200	15	30%
	201-500	13	26%
	500+	10	20%
Section 2: Safety Leadership Practices			
Importance of safety leadership?	Very important	35	70%
	Important	10	20%
	Somewhat important	3	6%
	Not important	2	4%
Does your organization have a	Yes	28	56%

Siddhanta's International Journal of
Advanced Research in Arts & Humanities
An International Peer Reviewed, Refereed Journal
Impact Factor : 6.8, **ISSN(O) : 2584-2692**
Vol. 2, Issue 1(1), Sept-Oct 2024
(Advancing Knowledge From Multidisciplinary Perspectives)
Available online : https://sijarah.com/

safety leader?			
	No	18	36%
	Not sure	4	8%
Frequency of safety communication?	Weekly	10	20%
	Monthly	18	36%
	Quarterly	12	24%
	Rarely	10	20%
Safety training programs offered?	Workplace safety	35	70%
	Emergency response	25	50%
	Equipment handling	20	40%
	Hazard identification	15	30%
Leadership promotes safety culture?	Strongly agree	25	50%
	Agree	18	36%
	Neutral	5	10%
	Disagree	2	4%
	Strongly disagree	0	0%
Section 3: OSH Awareness			
Have you heard of OSH?	Yes	42	84%
	No	8	16%
Importance of OSH in university?	Important	40	80%

Siddhanta's International Journal of
Advanced Research in Arts & Humanities
An International Peer Reviewed, Refereed Journal
Impact Factor : 6.8, ISSN(O) : 2584-2692
Vol. 2, Issue 1(1), Sept-Oct 2024
(Advancing Knowledge From Multidisciplinary Perspectives)
Available online : https://sijarah.com/

	Neither important nor unimportant	5	10%
	Unimportant	5	10%
Have you heard of OSE or OSO roles?	Yes	38	76%
	No	12	24%
Informed about OSH rights/responsibilities?	Yes	32	64%
	No	18	36%
OSH reports preparation sources?	Expert advice	35	70%
	Public institutions	28	56%
	NGOs	15	30%
Confidence in OSH report reliability?	Confident	30	60%
	Partially confident	12	24%
	Not confident	8	16%
Satisfaction with university's OSH coverage?	Satisfied	20	40%
	Not satisfied	30	60%
Actions to increase OSH focus?	Incentives/	22	44%

	rewards		
	Training for staff	28	56%
	Establish safety department	35	70%
Objectivity in reporting OSH incidents?	Yes	30	60%
	No	20	40%
Most criticized in OSH reports?	Employers	30	60%
	OSH professionals	10	20%
	Employees	10	20%
Institution's role in OSH reporting?	Raising public awareness	30	60%
	Calling for remedial actions	12	24%
	Reminding responsibilities	8	16%

Survey Findings

A survey of 50 participants (students, staff, and safety experts) from the table above revealed that:

- 70% of respondents believe safety leadership is "Very important."

- 60% report being dissatisfied with the university's OSH coverage.

- A significant 70% support establishing a safety department within the university.

- 76% of participants are aware of the roles of OSH experts, and 60% are confident about the reliability of their OSH reports.

Interviews

Interviews with OSH and ESG experts provided insights into best practices from other organizations, which were used to benchmark the proposed department's structure and curriculum.

7. Proposed OSH Department Structure

The OSH Department at Desh Bhagat University will focus on three key areas:

1. **Academic Curriculum**: Courses and certifications in OSH and ESG.

2. **Research Initiatives**: Interdisciplinary research on safety, sustainability, and governance.

3. **Partnerships**: Collaborations with industries and organizations for hands-on training and practical experience.

8. Conclusion

Establishing an OSH Department at Desh Bhagat University will enhance safety leadership, sustainability, and ethical governance, aligning the institution with global ESG standards. By doing so, the university can serve as a model for other institutions and improve its reputation as a leader in sustainable education.

9. Recommendations

1. Establish a task force to assess detailed requirements for the OSH Department.

2. Develop a comprehensive curriculum and recruit specialized faculty.

3. Form partnerships with industry and regulatory bodies for practical training.

References

1. Clarke, S. (2013). Safety leadership: A meta-analytic review of transformational and transactional leadership styles as antecedents of safety behaviors. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 86*(1), 22-49. https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12009

2. Fernández-Muñiz, B., Montes-Peón, J. M., & Vázquez-Ordás, C. J. (2017). The role of safety leadership and working conditions in safety performance. *Journal of Loss Prevention in the Process Industries, 50*, 403-415. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jlp.2017.10.017

3. Robson, L. S., Stephenson, C. M., Schulte, P. A., Amick, B. C., Chan, S., & Bielecky, A. (2007). A systematic review of the effectiveness of occupational health and safety training. *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health, 33*(3), 169-179. https://doi.org/10.5271/sjweh.1144

4. Verbeek, J. H., Ivanov, I. D., & Hoving, J. L. (2012). Measuring the impact of occupational health services. *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health, 18*(1), 22-27. https://doi.org/10.1179/1077352512Z.0000000002

5. Lozano, R. (2013). A holistic perspective on corporate sustainability drivers. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management, 20*(1), 55-79. https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.1288

6. Tilbury, D. (2011). Higher education for sustainability: A global overview of commitment and progress. In *Higher Education in the World 4: Higher Education's Commitment to Sustainability* (pp. 18-28). Global University Network for Innovation.

7. Lingard, H., & Turner, M. (2015). Improving the implementation of health and safety in construction: A case study of the use of safety leadership to promote change. *Safety Science, 78*, 121-129. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssci.2015.04.005

8. Gunningham, N. (2008). Occupational health and safety, regulation and governance: An overview of the global literature. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science, 4*(1), 285-307. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.lawsocsci.4.110707.172302

9. Donaldson, T., & Preston, L. E. (1995). The stakeholder theory of the corporation: Concepts, evidence, and implications. *Academy of Management Review, 20*(1), 65-91. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1995.9503271992

10. Dahlgren, G., & Whitehead, M. (2007). *Policies and strategies to promote social equity in health*. World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/107790