

Received on: 20 July 2025
Revised on: 18 August 2025
Accepted on: 19 August 2025

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH MANAGEMENT IN MEDIUM-SIZED HOTELS: INSIGHTS FROM MAHABALESHWAR, MAHARASHTRA

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to examine the health and safety practices adopted by staff members in various departments of medium-sized hotels. The study provides recommendations for improving workplace health and safety. Data were collected through questionnaires administered to employees from different departments of several medium-sized hotels, supported by an extensive literature review. The findings reveal that accidents and injuries—both major and minor—are likely to occur if proper health and safety procedures are not implemented. Many employees in the industry have already experienced such issues, indicating that poor health and safety management negatively impacts both employees and organizations.

Keywords: OSHA; Health; Safety; Injury; Accident

Introduction

The hospitality industry, fueled by travel, tourism, and the MICE sector, is one of the fastest-growing industries globally. It is inherently labor-intensive, making the health and safety of employees a critical concern. Effective preventive measures not only reduce workplace accidents but also improve productivity, boost morale, lower absenteeism, and maintain employees' physical and psychological well-being.

In Mahabaleshwar, many hotel organizations face challenges in ensuring occupational safety and employee well-being. Employers, Human Resource Managers, and Trade

Unions play a vital role in hazard identification, staff training, and implementing safety measures. Hotel staff—including bellboys, housekeeping attendants, waiters, chefs, maintenance crew, and front-office employees—are exposed to various risks such as slips, falls, burns, muscle injuries, harmful chemicals, and noise pollution. Employers are legally obligated to assess workplace environments to ensure employee safety. Workplace safety in India is guided by regulations aligned with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Compliance officers regularly inspect workplaces to verify adherence to health and safety standards. Despite available literature, there is a lack of specific research addressing health and safety practices among employees in medium-sized hotels.

Literature Review

According to Ragin (2007), health and safety must be prioritized in all workplaces, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). However, SMEs often neglect workplace safety due to a focus on profit maximization, resulting in poor employee welfare. Kandway (1997) further notes that poor working conditions lead to absenteeism, lateness, and reduced productivity.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), a U.S. Department of Labor agency, enforces health and safety standards in both public and private sectors, including hospitality. OSHA requires employers to maintain detailed records of work-related injuries, illnesses, and fatalities. These records do not imply negligence but help in assessing workplace risks.

Key OSHA compliance requirements for the hospitality sector include:

- Maintaining logs of illnesses and injuries
- Training for personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Hazardous energy control (lockout/tagout procedures)
- Hazard communication standards
- Fire safety and emergency action plans

Protective equipment such as gloves, boots, goggles, and helmets significantly reduces accidents. Loewenson (1998) emphasizes that investment in occupational health and safety enhances productivity, competitiveness, and market access. Taylor (1998) also highlights the benefits of preventive health assessments and healthy lifestyle promotion among employees.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) further establishes global labor standards and policies on workplace safety.

Ensuring Health and Safety

Large organizations often establish health and safety committees comprising employer and employee representatives. These committees monitor hazards, recommend corrective measures, oversee training, and maintain safety records. Accredited training programs strengthen committee effectiveness.

Key components of workplace safety management include:

- a) Identifying risks and applying preventive measures
- b) Raising awareness of occupational hazards among employers and employees
- c) Establishing strong communication systems to address safety concerns
- d) Making risk control a core component of hotel management

Studies (Burlington, 2000; Lingard & Rowlingson, 2005) confirm that proactive safety management reduces workplace accidents and improves employee well-being.

The Supreme Court of India, in several landmark cases, ruled that hotels qualify as "factories" under the Factories Act, 1948, as food preparation constitutes an industrial process. Thus, hotels are legally bound to comply with health and safety obligations.

Functions of the committee

The committee is responsible for the constant checking of any measures that have been undertaken in order to protect the health of the worker. It must carry out regular inspections of the workplace and any hazards called to its attention by a committee member or other workers must be investigated. The committee advises the employer in a bid to promote safety and health in the workplace. The committee attempts to correct issues or settles issues before it. The committee is responsible for creation, implementation, and surveillance of records in relation to accidents and near misses. Additionally, the committee oversees the use, care and replacement, when necessary, of equipment in order to safeguard the workers.

The committee shall have the authority to access any records held by the employer in relation to any work-related injury or disease as well as any records or research data that has been conducted in relation for purposes of preparing or using a particular plant or substance at the work. (Peter and Dodgshum, 2008). Positive health and safety management has been acknowledged to have considerable influence on the safety and health results and consequently on the incidents reduction (Lingard and Rowlingson, 2005).

The Supreme Court of India rendered in the Civil Appeal No. 1144-45 and 1147, 1148 and 1149 of 1982 and Writ Petition (C) Nos. 9728-29 of 1983 the judgment that a hotel is a factory. The Hon'ble Court also stated that however the kitchen is inside the premises, the kitchen being a process of making food transformation as every other process in the hotel, makes the entire hotel a factory as that of within the process of cuisine services.

Though, as for example, a railway running shed and also a hotel or restaurant of eating place, Section 2(m) of Factories Act, 1948 disqualifies certain premises from the coverage of the provisions of the Factories Act, 1948.

Objectives

- To study the health and safety practices implemented in accordance with OSHA guidelines.

- To examine the need for OSHA-based training and implementation in hotels.

Study Area

Mahabaleshwar, located in the Sahyadri range of Maharashtra at an altitude of 1353 meters, is a popular tourist destination. The study focused on medium-sized hotels and resorts (3-star and 4-star categories) selected through purposive sampling.

Methodology

A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed among employees across various hotel departments, including front office, housekeeping, food and beverage service, kitchen, and maintenance. Respondents identified their job categories to facilitate analysis of occupational risks.

Data collection methods included observation, interviews, and focus group discussions. Both open- and close-ended questions were used in the survey. Data were analyzed using MS Excel, with tables and graphs illustrating findings.

Table 1.1: OSH at Workplace

OSH at Workplace	Percentage (%)
Excellent OSH Policies	20
Safe Workplace	15
Free from Health Hazards	15
Special Courtesy Required for OSH	50

Interpretation: About 50% of employees stated that occupational safety and health (OSH) requires special attention in their workplace.

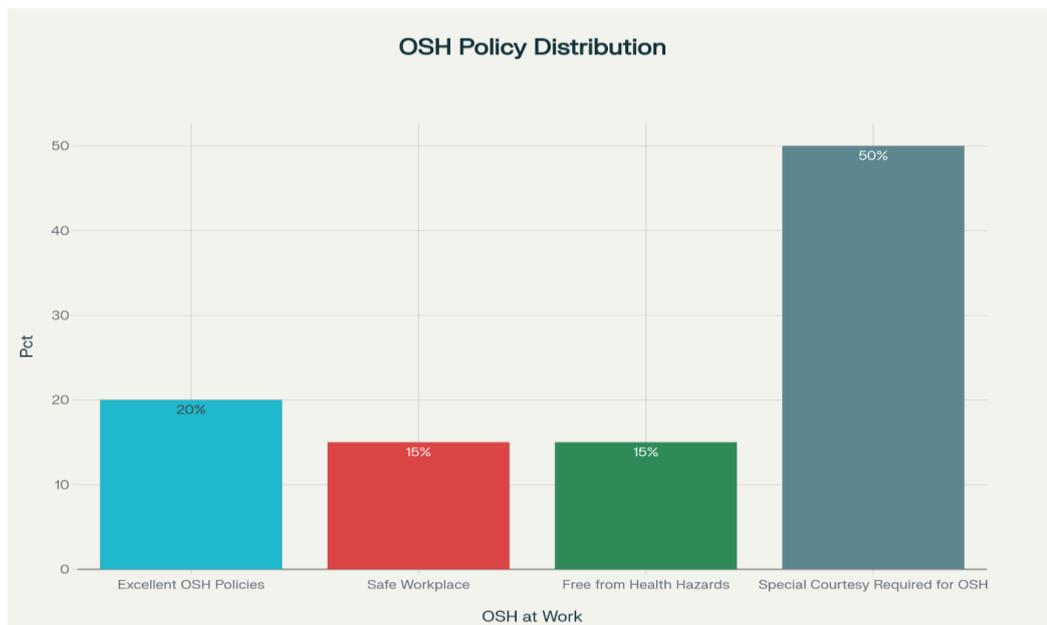


Table 1.2: Workplace Accidents & Injuries

Workplace Accidents & Injuries	Percentage (%)
Musculoskeletal Pain from Long Hours	25
Improper Handling of Cutlery/Crockery (F&B)	20
Improper Handling of Heavy Machines & Chemicals (Housekeeping)	20
Improper Handling of Kitchen Equipment	35

Interpretation: The majority of accidents (35%) occurred in kitchens due to improper equipment handling.

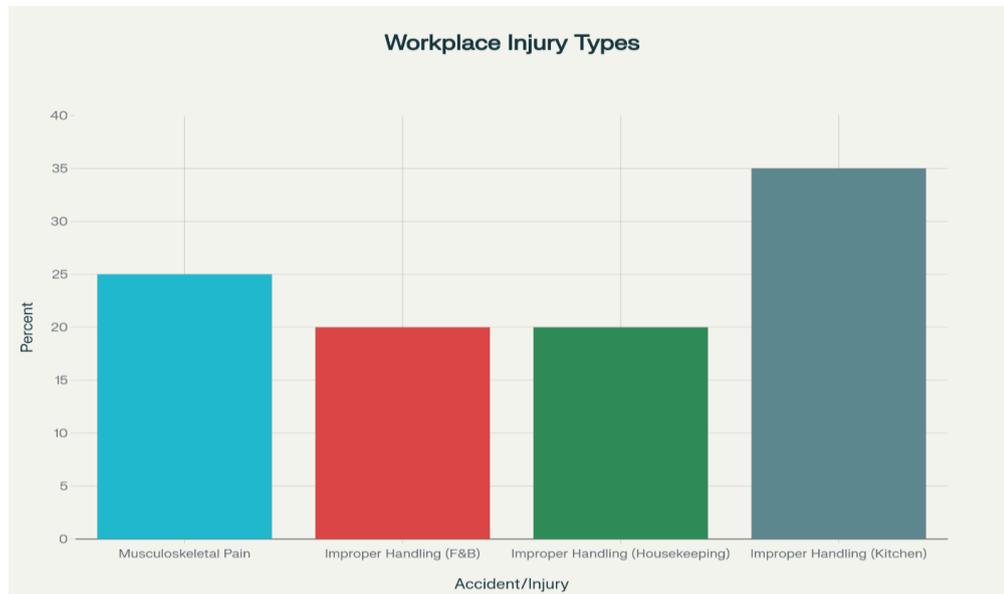
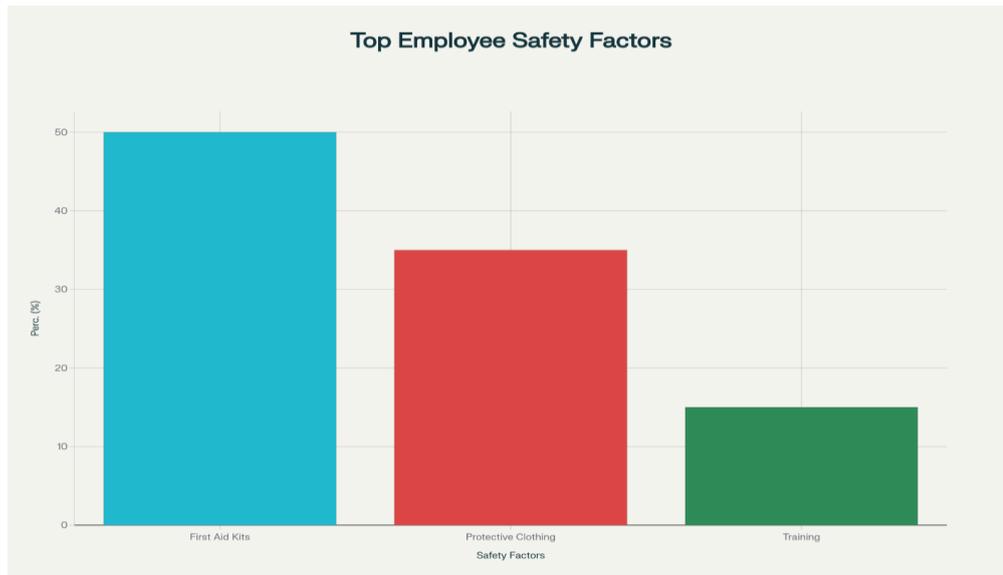


Table 1.3: Factors Available for Employee Safety

Factors for Employee Safety	Percentage (%)
First Aid Kits	50
Protective Clothing	35
Training	15

Interpretation: While first aid kits (50%) and protective clothing (35%) are available, only 15% of employees reported receiving adequate safety training, highlighting a critical gap.



Result and Discussion

Corporate policies should be adopted by managers for all aspects of work within the hotel, that is different activities undertaken in the hotel should have specific safe work procedures developed. It should be effectively communicated to all staff. Regularly Schedule Training, Group meetings to discuss matters relating to safety and health should be held. Every workplace with 50 workers and above should set up safety committees which have representatives from management and employees. Each and every authority should distribute safety codes, rules and regulations; these will serve as a constant reminder of the safety & health duties and obligations.

Health & safety awareness promotional activities should be designed and implemented in order to create a work place with a positive health and safety culture. It ensures that there is a proper mechanism for documentation and review of occupational safety & health programme so as to guarantee relevancy and effectiveness of the programme. With appropriate leadership, attention, and resources, improvement is possible (Institute of Medicine USA, November 1999). It should be mandatory for all changes to the safety and health manual to be accompanied by an implementation date and all such proposals disregarded for better outcome of occupational safety & health at the places of work should be followed.

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