



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY CONDITIONS AMONG SMES: A CASE STUDY BASED IN THE DISTRICT OF BA, FIJI

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Abstract

After the implementation of the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act in Fiji, larger organisations mainly managed to enforce the required section of the Act into their organisations through incorporation and amendment of policies and procedures, whereas Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) still struggle with basic administrative requirements and arising OHS issues. They face a variety of issues including OHS. Hence, their priority largely shifts to operation and smooth running of the businesses. The OHS issues are quite visible as the SMEs play a pivotal role in the Fijian economy, where more than half of the population are employed by the SMEs. This research is focused in the area of OHS in SMEs. A mixed method research was used to get the perspective of the participants for better understanding of the subject where both, qualitative and quantitative analysis were done to derive conclusions. For qualitative sampling, there were 20 participants including the employers and the employees, whereas for quantitative sampling, a total of 53 people including the employers and employees participated. For data collection, employers and employees from different companies in Ba, Fiji was selected. The results showed that for this research, qualitative methods gave better perspective of the participants about OHS conditions after which the solutions/recommendations were derived. Therefore, this study can be used for further research in the area to promote continuous improvements in the SMEs.

Keywords

OHS, SME, OHS Act, Hazards, Risk, ILO

1. Introduction

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) brings in the idea of improving the standards of workplace safety. It focuses on the trends of illnesses and injuries arising from the work practices, mainly through workers and recommends, and suggests ways to mitigate the risks arising from the hazards appearing from work related activities. International Labour Organisation (ILO) figures are around 2.3 million people dying just from work-related diseases or accidents, which assumes to 6000 deaths per day (Ilo.org, 2022.). In Fiji, quite a brilliant job has been done to develop and come up with the OHS related laws such as Health and Safety at Work Act 1996 (HASAWA 1996), General Workplace Conditions 2003 (GWC 2003), etc. They are co-regulatory and self-regulatory, which accommodates all kinds of workplaces and occupations, excluding domestic servants, only to protect employers and employees both. After the OHS Act came into effect, larger organisations have managed to incorporate the legislation quite well into their policies and procedures, while the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) still struggle as well as juggle to get the administrative norms and operations going on with their Standards Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Small and Medium Enterprises are small businesses, which employs a small number of employees. They can be stated as businesses, which makes profit by providing service/s or trading goods. Largely, they are owned privately and operated by corporations, partnership and/or sole proprietorships. The definition of SME differs by country and industry. According to United States Small Business Administration, SME employs less than 500 employees within 12 months' period in the non-manufacturing organisations, whereby any person on the payroll of a company must be considered as an employee (Poole, 2018.). However, as per the Australia's Fair Work Act, SME must have less than 15 employees on their payroll (Khanda and Doss, 2018.), whereas in Europe, Small and

Medium Business Act states that SMEs can employ 250 or less workers (Graafland, 2018). African SMEs have less than 50 workers, while, there are 100 or less employees in Asian countries (Fatoki, 2018).

Reserve Bank of Fiji has its own definition for SMEs; the turnover or total Asset of the enterprise must be between \$30,000 and \$500,000 with employee numbers less than 50 (Sharma, Singh, and Aiyub, 2020). Fiji Revenue and Customs Service (FRCS) database had a list of 28,928 SMEs from 2016 to 2018, which contributed \$378,768, 052 towards the Fijian economy (Anon, 2022). Mostly, financial measures define SMEs, which may vary depending on the nature of business taking balance sheets, asset value, annual sales and net profits into account. They do not dominate any of the industries, but assists in stimulating local economies by creating and maintaining jobs, and providing products and services to communities. Such enterprises support the growth and diversification of its respective industries in the Fijian economy, where locals get to contribute significantly towards small businesses. Every industry has SMEs ranging from small diary shops to small manufacturing companies, which may include bakeries, restaurants, dry cleaners, law firms, engineering companies, construction companies, etc.

SMEs do not have sufficient resources to employ many people to look at the OHS area, when compared to larger organisations who get institutionalised support at their command. Hence, smaller organisations are inclined towards having higher occupational diseases and accidents due to lack of financial and human resource (Surienty, 2018). Other major factors include lack of awareness in OHS matters, training and external support.

There has been a rise in ethical concerns resulting from human suffering, which indirectly or directly affects the productivity of SMEs and economic growth for the nation as a whole. The topic of SME is broad with many aspects. Hence, it easily indicates many research topics for action such as poverty, unemployment, finance, etc. However, these topics have been turned up and down and overly-researched. Great researchers have given great ideas and recommendations, therefore, here, the focus remains on the area of OHS. There has been some fantastic research in the similar developing countries like Fiji, but not enough attention has been given and time has been invested to research in Fiji in relation to OHS issues faced by the SMEs.

2. Research Questions

The following are the research questions that have worked as rudiments to collate the overall findings of this study.

1. What are the OHS problems faced by SMEs?
2. How can the issues of OHS conditions be addressed in SMEs for employers and employees both?

3. Literature Review

Substantial amount of people is employed by enterprises constituted by SMEs in most countries. It is quite evident that SMEs have higher injury at workplaces when compared to larger organisations. At the same time, it is challenging and costly to invest in preventive measures for smaller organisations. As a result of these challenges, many strategies have been suggested/recommended from time to time and tested. Mainly, the idea is to develop such engineering methods that reduces the chances of employees engaging in hazardous activities and behaviours (Surienty, 2018). Also, the extensive focus is directed towards training and education of employees, policies, procedures, hazards management and implementation of these. SMEs find it difficult to implement these strategies due to lack of manpower, technological and economical resources unlike larger organisations. They also lack capacity as a whole to efficiently identify, assess and manage risks and one such reason for this in Fiji is lack of research in the area. There are various reasons that obstructs the research supported activities of SMEs, for example, lack of time, overloaded work, lack of exposure and training, and most important of all, finding a mentor/supervisor/guide in the respective field of study (Jahangiri *et al.*, 2019). However, there are various researches being done in developed and developing countries which are relatable to Fiji.

One such study was conducted at Kotri, Pakistan by Gopang *et al.* (2017). Their research focused on identifying the relationship between the performance of employees in SMEs and OHS measures. 35 different SMEs were selected and questionnaires were distributed. Collected data was used for sampling and analysing through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. During the process, data reliability was checked with the assistance of Cronbach's alpha coefficient. As in their case, it was 0.80 which shows that the data was consistent and good. Furthermore, descriptive statistics such as standard deviation and mean was used and later, inferential statistics technique which includes simple regression and Pearson correlation was used. Moderate positive correlation between the performance of SMEs and OHS measures were revealed through the results. From the study, it clearly reflects that OHS measures were not properly implemented which affected the SMEs performance. The researchers concluded that SMEs in Pakistan require urgent attention towards OHS management systems implementation. It can be understood that similar situations are present in Fijian SMEs that are affecting the employees and the employers, leading to arising of OHS issues within smaller organisations (Gopang *et al.*, 2017).

Another study conducted by Jahangiri *et al.* (2019) focused on OHS problems whilst safety conditions in Iran in the city of Shiraz. 711 SMEs were selected for a cross-sectional study which included 25 to 99 workers in medium enterprises and 1 to 25 workers in small enterprises. Participants whose workplaces were covered under social security insurance were randomly selected to fill the questionnaire consisting of demographic characteristics. It was also comprised of exposure to workplace hazards and occupational accident frequency rate. More chemical and physical hazards were shown in the results of medium enterprises when compared to smaller enterprises, whereas smaller enterprises lead the frequency rate of accidents and ergonomics such as awkward posture more than medium enterprises. Further on reported symptoms, issues like respiratory, eye, ear and skin problems were greater in terms of number in medium enterprises. On the other hand, another research shows that OHS regulations implementation has improved the OHS conditions in medium enterprises more than small ones (Jahangiri *et al.* (2019). Therefore, more focus is required by law makers to focus on specific activities related to small enterprises to further engage the enterprises in the OHS regulations.

Al Mawli *et al.* (2021) states that various reasons such as budget constraints and cultural diversity of workers that are major factors that contributes unsatisfactory level of compliance in the construction industry related to SMEs. They mention that safety practices in Oman can be improved by resolving the issues, such as commitment towards OHS by employers and employees, communication effectiveness, prioritising safety, learning from past incident records, recovery and rehabilitation programme after incident and preventive interactions. According to Al Mawli *et al.* (2021), their research method included online survey, which focused on the challenges faced by SMEs in the water sector. The survey was an adaptation of Partnership for European Research in Occupational Safety and Health (PEROSH). 73 attributes encompass 11 dimensions in the PEROSH survey, which was translated into four different languages (Hindi, English, Arabic and Urdu). 88 responses were received out of 335 distributed surveys and analysed and the results showed that all dimensions ranged from 2.83 to 2.96 out of 5 in Likert scale, which indicates that there is persistent need for improvement in the area of OHS, therefore recommendations were highlighted on ways of effective implementation of OHS safety measures (Al Mawli *et al.*, 2021).

In Malaysia, more than 80 % of the 800 workplaces studied by Surienty (2018) showed that they failed to comply with the workplace related safety regulation in the country, which contributes to 30% to 50% accidents (industrial) in the SMEs alone. SMEs itself contributes to 36% of the Malaysia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which accounts to 99% of the registered businesses, hence, OHS issues must be addressed side by side with economic development. Resources related to finance and capital are limited, which heads to Malaysia to encounter greater challenges to monitor OHS issues and requirements that are to be complied to, while being competitive in the market to survive. The research further showed that by involving general public in enforcement decisions, policy making, human resource and infrastructure development, focus on department job scopes, diversity inclusiveness at work, usage of appropriate languages, and suitable penalties are key factors for success at minimising or even eliminating accidents, lost workdays and death rates at work (Ansori *et al.*, 2018).

The ILO convention 176 has provided workers selected health and safety representatives (HSR) in conjunction with South African Mine Health and Safety (MHSA), which is clause number 29 of 1996. Even though the arrangements are being made for worker consultations in well organised industries worldwide, threat is felt by neo-liberalism, which is described as 'responsibilisation'. Coulson's (2018) paper has delved mainly on the experiences of South African HSR' in regard to global context. In totality, 37 semi-structured interviews with 53 mediated telephone interviews were conducted at 4 large underground mines between 25 HSR from period February till June 2016. The interview mainly investigated HSR perceptions about their preparation, daily errands, experiences of OHS transgressions and contextualisation's. As for the interview, it was translated and transcribed before being analysed. More so, a four-domain framework was designed to summarise the experiences of HSRs, which are as follows: respondent is left feeling accountable, must have an account, transgressions of co-workers and facing employer actions amongst themselves. The coinage of 'responsibilisation' got introduced to describe HSRs holding responsibilities of OHS transgressions with respect to the employer. The pre-conditions of the worker representation in South Africa is mainly judged as inadequate, which posits the lesson African states to harness their assurances towards OHS.

Another research done by Belayutham and Ibrahim (2019) in Malaysia shows that despite government inventions and efforts by construction authorities to strengthen and support Malaysian SMEs, the SMEs are not able to display reasonable safety practices. Hence, their study focused on identifying hurdles and strategies using various types of approaches such as site observation, questionnaire survey and workshops to improve the safety related practises at the construction sites which enabled information triangulation. The research emphasized that lack of commitment towards safety from the clients, poor safety culture and the cost of implementation are the main hurdles to good safety practices. The recommendations included KPIs based on safety requirements, creating and promoting safety culture and the establishment of a financing mechanism to fund the required training related to safety. Many recommendations were made by input collation based on drivers, barriers and strategies through the collaboration of academia, industry and authorities by the collaborative measure towards SMEs' safety practice

enhancement. This new insight enables SMEs and the authorities to become proactive rather than reactive in safety practice advancement in the construction SMEs (Alarcón *et al.*, 2016).

SMEs when compared to large industries indicates different key success factor (KSF) in safety behaviour. According to Ansori *et al.* (2018), their article identified the potential differences among large industries and SMEs in Indonesia. Identified KSFs allows to avoid the main points that may require attention in SMEs and implement OHS improvement programs through study of relevant literature based on 5 different papers related to SMEs. Other 9 papers out of which 2 were recent ones found to have similar model for safety behaviour. For further understanding, 10 more papers were selected for review in terms of the OHS performance of the SMEs. The research showed that there are differences between SMEs' KSFs and large enterprises, and proposes a hypothetical model on the impact of key success factors to SMEs safety behaviour. The focus of attention to improve safety behaviour are different between the large organisations and SMEs. A benchmark could be set using several indicators and factors for safety behaviour in SMEs. The findings are used for guidance to create a model for safety behaviour of SMEs. Further studies are suggested for maximum utilisation of SMEs.

Furthermore, Hrenov (2022) supports the idea that in SMEs, effective management of OHS depends on involvement of employees in safety activities, sharing of information between managers and employees, commitment to safety, and knowledge management of safety and learning. Creating a safe working environment is the responsibility of both, the employer and the employees. Hence, they must work together to make this happen. Employees must be involved in the safety processes and encouraged to be pro-active, so that they can make suggestions to employers where possible. Hrenov's (2022) research done in Finland showed that the results had the following elements proving to influence the success of OHS management systems:

- Real commitment towards OHS objectives should be demonstrated by the managers and employees (Hrenov, 2022). OHS objectives must be incorporated into the organisation's management processes, for example, all scheduled meetings with employee must have an agenda related to OHS;
- SMEs managers and OHS representatives must have good knowledge on OHS regulations, requirements and processes within the organisation. OHS courses that are mandatory for OHS representatives should done by managers as well and time and again, both parties should attend similar refresher courses that should expand their skills in the area and influence positive OHS outcomes (Hrenov, 2022);
- Communication flow should be systemised and made active between OHS representatives, management and OHS professionals to exchange skills and knowledge such as OHS or regular meetings, emails or intranet, verbal communications, etc.;
- Discrimination by the employer or the management should be taken seriously and related activities of representation by OHS representatives should be given time and;
- OHS experts should be available for clarifications and advise to resolve issues affecting the work environment.

According to Wang *et al.* (2018), OHS in SMEs has become a critical problem in China and the globe. Companies and their workers face severe consequences like injuries, accidents and the related property damages. This concern of OHS threatens the government and the society both. There is a serious call for response to minimise injuries and accidents ratio through intervention in SMEs. SMEs had reached 6.666 million in China as of October, 2015 (Wang *et al.*, 2018). As per the European Union report, small and micro enterprises add up to 98.7% of the overall enterprises in China and 50.2 % employees are employed by them, whereas 1.3% are held by the large enterprises (Wang *et al.*, 2018). SMEs, as a whole, makes significant contribution towards the development of the Chinese and the Global economy. SMEs are a huge burden in terms of the OHS policies and the regulation for the government. Safety and production SMEs are constantly battling as the OHS management systems are comparatively poor when compared to bigger enterprises, therefore, their regulatory measures for safety procedures may be delayed. As mentioned, there are issues of threatening of survival and development, and the OHS solutions must affect the issues in a negative way. Hence, work must be done alongside factors implemented by the government and related to their employees. Wang *et al.* (2018), used the evolutionary game theory at work to discover the multiplayer system while working which comprised of SMEs, employees and the government. They found that it is costly to analyse equilibrium points stability through Jacobian matrix and system dynamics which can produce solutions that are equilibrium and control stable. SMEs are geographically dispersing and numerous and the inventions become quite challenging during successful intervention. All the researchers stated in the same article agree on the principles of OHS in hazard reduction to improve working conditions by:

- mutual efforts of the employee and the employer with low cost investment;
- government being responsible for workplace OHS inspections randomly;
- current legislations being complied by the employers and employees both;
- employee to have the right to become whistle blowers upon recognising hazardous work activities etc.

Though these points are significant, Fiji has the essence of it present in the current laws in a very similar form already.

Tiwari and Shukla (2018) states that due to country's economic and social developments, the SMEs has seen a huge growth in the recent years. However, the SMEs require enormous focus on improvements, because the safety standards are quite poor, which open doors to risky conditions of working. Hence, the researchers propose improvement in the OHS management systems of SMEs. When compared with other investments, investments in OHS are uncompetitive due to the management's responsibility attribution, which does not guarantee any responsibility exemption if there's any accident and being righteous in safety investments with an unsatisfactory incentive policy for enterprises. An SME does not have an actual perception of accident/incident risks due to lack of monitoring and assessment of actual risk with the lesser number of workers/employees. Therefore, they see these OHS related investments as unprofitable. Tiwari's and Shukla's (2018) research introduces an index or Efficacy Index to factually quantify implementation of an OHS management system and displays application of index to organisations, collect the required information and process for further inquiry of OHS implementation effectiveness. This reduces the incident/accident rates of SMEs with the OHS awareness to improve OHS loopholes.

To add on, SMEs are the keys in the modern global economy for success. Harncharoen *et al.* (2016) in their research explored on the workers' health in SMEs due effects of the workplace environment. They viewed several scientific articles from the year 2000 to 2014, which revealed 529 similar articles that matched their research of which 92 article were reviewed. It consisted of 75% of observational study papers on workplaces with variety of outcomes and individuals, whereas 25% interventional study papers based on workplace and workers (Harncharoen *et al.*, 2016). Injury and accidents were the most usual outcome. Systematically done reviews showed the SMEs non-uniqueness and the workplace environment's role in psychological and physical health results. Research gaps were identified in the field of OHS within the workers of SMEs in the country's different regions. Based on the quality of its evaluation, the papers were supported. This paper covered different facets of Occupational exposure and SMEs research results by separating the published papers as per the allocated regions. Authors were able to discuss the improvements in OHS among interested people. Quality of the publications were selected over quantity. Hence, it became easier for authors to compare the reliability of the research findings.

Additionally, large enterprises growth commonly depends on the suitable communication done with the SMEs. Mainly in Iran, there are 49 or less employees in SMEs. Zamanian *et al.* (2016) cross-sectional study attempted to show the OHS conditions in Iran to collect more OHS related information. 541 SMEs were chosen from Arak city in Iran with systemic questionnaire and sampling. In order to investigate the target industries, the questionnaires were sent to companies through emails to their Occupational Health units. The SPSS software was used to enter collected data and analyse the descriptive statistical methods. Total response rate was 59% for the SMEs for 6 months, 59.2% enterprises were continuously monitoring their workplace to control or reduce hazard and its related risks. Further on the same research showed that 44% out of the enterprises targeted had quite well written and regulated their OHS policies and in relation to safety, 64.7% included OHS trainings at all levels within the employees' work plan. Additionally, 72.3 % SMEs trained the employees on the use of self-protection devices and 69.7% SMEs had technical and safety protection committees. SMEs were satisfactory as the 70% of the enterprises targeted performed these activities in terms of health management and welfare facilities; this research proves that SMEs vital OHS components with respect to safety management, incorporates announcement and investigation of accidents and OHS education. To improve the effectiveness of the occupational health and safety with employees' health and support technology, Zamanian *et al.* (2016), state that Iran's Ministry of Industries and Business must focus their strategies on the challenged companies.

Furthermore, Bluff (2019), a researcher, investigated on how SMEs provides information, training, instruction and supervision (ITIS) to their workers on workplace health and safety matters with Australia's Model WHS laws. In three industries: construction, manufacturing, and health care/social assistance, 46 SMEs were conducted in the study. The data was collected primarily through interviews and documentation review, by observation of work on ITIS. The distinguished SMEs main method for providing ITIS and their approach to, and scope of, their ITIS provision was through the thematic data analysis. The literature focuses on ITIS provision in characterising SMEs' methods and performance. The methods that are usually used are passive knowledge exchange and basic supervision to check safe work practices, rather than engaging and participative methods. Some SMEs methods included are easy to understand information and allows opportunities to learn various ways. Mostly SMEs and all small enterprises, provided minimal ITIS in an ad hoc way. Only a few enterprises, all medium, used a careful consideration and substantial mix of methods. SMEs favour particular methods due to industry-specific influences, within each of the three industries. For WHS policy makers and practitioners, the study raises questions about the translation of flexible, non-prescriptive legal requirements into workplace practice in small enterprises. Therefore, options are discussed for guidance about developing and implementing ITIS or engaging an external provider for these.

Moreover, all construction industry stakeholders must participate in creating a positive safety culture states Mashwama *et al.* (2018). This impression should reflect through employees' behaviour, beliefs, attitudes, safety

knowledge and their practices. Mashwama *et al.* (2018) investigated on the barriers of OHS implementations in the Gauteng Province of Africa among SMEs within the construction industry. Different construction organisations and workers were given a structured questionnaire to fill. 42 out of 70 distributed, were brought back since they were all valid and usable. Findings from the research makes it evident that the health and safety was recognised and practiced by the respondents. However, there are barriers to OHS implementation such as poor supervision, poor management, equipment and tools, poor audits and inspections, lack of material and components, lack of commitment from management, poor communication within workers' groups, as well as with the management, less involvement of workers in OHS issues, lack of education on risk management and training to name a few. If the issues are addressed pro-actively and correctly, productivity will increase, quality of work will improve, contractors will grow in terms of business and accident/incident claims will reduce, accidents will minimise, rework will reduce, schedule performance will improve. Therefore, leadership and management at all levels are required to encourage and improve OHS in construction in South Africa. It must be noted that health and safety of workers cannot be compromised as it is all pervasive which increases productivity and performance. It also builds up the company image and reduces claims, accidents and lost time injuries. Hence, the OHS implementation concept must be highlighted occasionally by the client or the consultant/s where major workshops or training could be held at least 3 times a year to create awareness on OHS implementation.

4. Research Methodology

This research used Mixed-method approach to collect the data. Primary data was collected through interviews and by distribution of the questionnaires among the employers and the employees in SMEs. Secondary data was collected by the use of internet through research portals such as Google Scholar, EBSCO, FNU library and various other related websites. For more information, employers and employees were requested to provide further information to understand OHS in SMEs by giving interviews.

Mixed methods research was adopted in the research, whereby qualitative and quantitative data was collected to analyse and make conclusions. Mixed methods research usually involves the collection of data, analysing of data, and finally, interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data (Hughes, 2016). The whole purpose of this research is to understand both the approaches and evaluate approaches methodologically to provide answers to the research questions. However, there are certain drawbacks of using this method such as:

- data collection requires more time;
- difficulty in connecting quantitative and qualitative data;
- more resources within short period of time is required.

The primary data collection for quantitative analysis was done through structured questionnaires and unstructured interviews were used for the qualitative analysis, and as stated above, secondary data collection was done through Google Scholar, EBSCO, FNU library and various other related research portals.

4.1 About Qualitative Research

Qualitative research insights into comprehensive detailing of the research information such as human experiences, their feelings, opinions, emotions and actions with in-depth interpretations which can lead to the creation of a theory and/or support the view which may have been existing already (Abrar *et al.*, 2018). However, some researchers argue that qualitative method of research can be subjective and bias with result interpretations as the method is focused on the topic only. It can be difficult to opt for qualitative research when compared to quantitative research as there's no fixed structure (Gazso and Bischooping, 2018).

For both, qualitative and quantitative research methods, the participants were informed about confidentiality and discussed that the information was specifically for scholastic importance and interest only. A sample of the interview questions were also provided to avoid any disagreements later.

4.2 About Quantitative Research

Quantitative research focuses on designing and analysing numerical data for its interpretation and is mainly dominated by the positive paradigm whereas qualitative research focuses on analysing the data narratives (Choy, 2014). However, they are not based on constructive paradigms. This research survey can be easily managed and evaluated when required, the numeric information can be obtained and comparison facilitated. While this research method has its own strengths, it displays some weaknesses as well, for example, there is no room for peoples' beliefs and perceptions and the respondents cannot describe their thorough experiences (Choy, 2014).

5. Results and Discussions

Longitudinal and Cross-sectional studies have shown common issues in most industries after managing moderate to vigorous physical activities, the hazards mainly are repetitive motion injuries, electrical hazards, fire hazards, chemical exposure, falls and falling objects (Ghosh, Khan and Vohra, 2022). These common hazards are quite visible in SMEs, as they play an important role in the country's economy by employing more than half of the population in Fiji in the private sector. SMEs face new challenges every day, where fatality rates seem to be higher when compared to larger enterprises, though there are accidents at workplaces, employers and employees does not seem to have sensed the gravity of the situation where the risk is increasing by the day. Financial stability is one of the core issues that is likely to appear for SMEs and therefore, understanding the arising OHS problems does not seem to be at the focus for them unless injuries occur (Ghosh, Khan and Vohra, 2022). The research has found out how SMEs recognise and incorporates the processes related to OHS and what ways of interventions are working for them in small and medium businesses.

Occupational arrangements can be largest contributor towards daily mishaps at workplace with adverse health effects due to adverse working conditions (Montano *et al.*, 2017). Proper strategies are required to influence employers and employees towards creating safety culture. As such, it is best to get the information from them directly and get their perspective of OHS conditions that is and should be in the SMEs, before making any recommendations. Therefore, the objective of this analysis is to examine employers' and employees' interviews as reflections on Occupational Health and Safety conditions at the workplaces in Ba, Fiji and to scrutinise the feasibility and acceptability of potential solutions for OHS problems.

5.1 Qualitative Analysis, Discussion and Interpretation

30 people were approached for this study. However, only 20 people agreed to participate. Two groups of ten in each were considered as samples out of which 10 were employers and 10 were employees of different organisations in Ba, Fiji and in-depth interviews were conducted using convenience sampling. Unstructured open-ended questions were used by maintaining the two themes (Problem and solution) of the research topic. The interviews were conducted after the working hours of the respective groups. The interviews were recorded through mobile phone recorder and also noted in a notebook using a pen. Qualitative content analysis followed later, which is a process through which raw data is condensed into themes or categories based on valid interpretation or inference (Selvi, 2019). Inductive reasoning is used during the process, where categories or themes arise from the data with constant comparison and careful examination by the researcher.

5.1.1 Results reflection

Employers and employees who participated recognised that they spend most of their time at work without realising the importance of Occupational Health and Safety at work. One of the common issues which appeared were related to musculoskeletal health problems in employees. The interviewees suggested various possible ideas or strategies, which they thought would work primarily during the work hours for them, having safety talk once a week, safety awards and body stretching every 30 minutes, etc. However, the several other issues were discussed such as impracticality and productivity concerns. The actual purpose of discussion remained focused on the research questions with the idea of creating awareness on OHS, providing alternatives as OHS solutions to existing conditions, suggesting implementation of obligatory strategies and both, employers and employees taking responsibility of OHS at work.

Therefore, organisations should have similar sessions such as interviews or get together within organisation with central focus on OHS to recognise certain barriers, which would assist in future OHS arising issues and in identifying practical initiatives.

5.1.2 Interview Conduction

Twenty people, including employers and employees with diverse backgrounds and expertise, participated to give a best view of their perspective of OHS in SMEs. The interviews were taken separately for everyone, where each interview lasted for not more than 20 minutes. The focus remained on SMEs with the turnover or total asset of the enterprises between \$30,000 and \$500,000 with employee numbers less than 50. The interview questions were open-ended questions, where the own words are used by the participants to answer. Feedback from this method of research is ideal for the qualitative research. This method enables participants to think and add their thoughts on the subject instead of just opting for 'yes' or 'no' type of answers. Closed questions are usually good for surveys, gathering results and data analysis, whereas open-ended questions can give you the in-depth of the participants' views. Hence, it is very important to ask the right type of questions to get the best out of the views of participants, which remains one of the most challenging fields to explore.

5.1.2.1 Demographic information of the Participants

EMPLOYEES													
Gender	Age Range					Work Experience (years)			Qualifications Achieved				
	43+	37 – 42	31 – 36	25 – 30	24 and below	0 – 3	4 – 7	8 +	Post Graduate	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	High school
Females	0	0	0	3	4	1	4	2	0	0	2	2	3
Males	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	1

Table 1: Demographic information of the employees

EMPLOYERS													
Gender	Age Range					Work Experience (years)			Qualifications Achieved				
	43+	37 – 42	31 – 36	25 – 30	24 and below	0 – 3	4 – 7	8 +	Post Graduate	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	High school
Females	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1
Males	6	1	1	0	0	0	2	4	0	1	2	0	3

Table 2: Demographic information of the employers

5.1.3 Interview Reflections

There are three common type of qualitative data collection; in-depth interviews, observations, and focus groups. For this research, in-depth interview was chosen as it was best for meaning making. This approach is quite an effective way to gather information, as it is also useful while learning about the different individual perspectives where feelings and experiences are shared.

While engaging in the unstructured in-depth interviews with the different groups from different companies which included the 10 employees and 10 employers, the participants did not wish to disclose their identities. Therefore, unique coding system (UCS) was used, instead of names in Table 3 below.

UCS	Date interviewed	Location of the business	Business type	Gender	Industry
EME 1	01/11/2022	Ba town	Company	Female	Retail
EME 2	01/11/2022	Ba town	Company	Female	Restaurant
EME 3	01/11/2022	Ba town	Company	Male	Retail
EME 4	01/11/2022	Ba town	Company	Male	Retail
EME 5	01/11/2022	Ba town	Company	Female	Retail
EME 6	01/11/2022	Ba town	Company	Female	Retail
EME 7	01/11/2022	Ba town	Proprietorship	Female	Restaurant
EME 8	01/11/2022	Ba town	Company	Female	Restaurant
EME 9	01/11/2022	Ba town	Company	Male	Restaurant
EME 10	01/11/2022	Ba town	Company	Female	Retail
EMR 11	01/11/2022	Ba town	Proprietorship	Male	Retail
EMR 12	01/11/2022	Ba town	Proprietorship	Female	Restaurant
EMR 13	01/11/2022	Ba town	Proprietorship	Female	Retail
EMR 14	01/11/2022	Ba town	Proprietorship	Male	Retail
EMR 15	01/11/2022	Ba town	Proprietorship	Male	Retail
EMR 16	01/11/2022	Ba town	Proprietorship	Male	Retail
EMR 17	01/11/2022	Ba town	Proprietorship	Male	Retail
EMR 18	01/11/2022	Ba town	Proprietorship	Male	Retail
EMR 19	01/11/2022	Ba town	Company	Male	Retail
EMR 20	01/11/2022	Ba town	Company	Male	Retail

(Source: Researcher’s compilation)

Note: EME = Employee, EMR = Employer

Table 3: List of interviewees with unique coding system

Furthermore, 10 participants were directly involved in the management of their respective businesses, while others were employees of different SMEs. The sole focus of the interview remained on the OHS problems and solutions, keeping the idea in mind to extract as much information as possible to suit the research topic. Below are the interactions with words of the participants and researcher's interpretations.

During the interviews, the majority of the participants' mentioned that they developed back pain and muscle related issues, as they had to stand and interact with customers most of the time. This issue can later lead to musculoskeletal problems. There are many other issues which were highlighted during the interviews with both, the employers, and the employee. Quotes of employers and employees with the mention of similar topics during the interviews are as follows, which are in colloquial language with the analysis:

EME 1: We daily work by standing or working. There is no time to sit. If there is, then we just lean awkwardly on to something. We are so busy. We do not know how to tackle this problem. Our back has started to give us problems. Spaces are always full, we can't even stretch our bodies.

EMR 15: I know that some employees are complaining about standing, but there are many organisations who work the same way. If the employees are not fit for that position, then maybe we should think of some other alternative for them.

The employee seems to be overloaded at work. However, both the participants are concerned about the same issues. There needs to be a proper communication on this matter between both the parties.

EME 3: OHS policies are a waste every time, someone stick it to the notice board, it does not stay there. Some of the colleagues are cheeky. Anyway, we are all overloaded and have to work extra hours; who has time to look at these things when we are stressed and fatigued.

EMR 16: I am not really sure about our OHS policies, but we know what is required of us. We are following the OHS rules and regulations of the company. I just recalled, somebody removed the OHS policy from the dining hall. I was supposed to put a new one.

Participants from both the groups have noticed that their organisations' OHS policies are missing from the required areas. The employer participant does not seem to be very active about the display of OHS policy and just recalls what to do during the interview. However, the employee participant does not really care about the OHS policy of his organisation and seems to be working under stress.

EME 5: PPEs are there in stock, but most of us have been working without it. PPEs make us uncomfortable. Let's take mask for example. How do you breathe?

EMR17: We do have OHS meetings, but not every member attends it. Some are not taking things seriously. The company usually provides PPEs (Personal Protective Equipment) such as hand gloves for packing, but most of the time I see workers are doing packing without the given gloves. When they are asked, they say they are not comfortable. I mean what kind of excuse is that. If he gets hurt, who will pay.

Concerns are raised about the PPEs. Some employees are not comfortable wearing it, whereas employers' view is that the requirement of wearing it is mandatory and if employees get injured, employer will have to bear the cost. So, to avoid injuries, the employees must follow the employer' guideline.

EME 8: We do have OHS policy, but I feel it's in general and should be specific to our processes.

EMR 11: Our company has a very simple OHS policy. It is very basic and meets the OHS requirement when in the beginning of the year when the OHS guys arrive, they are satisfied. I personally think that we need a better policy. Someone should come and tell us what other things can be incorporated in our policy to suit our organisation.

Both the participants agree that OHS policy of their organisations need to be changed and it should suit to the processes of the organisation.

EME 2: There are times when we want to compare our processes with our competitor to improve OHS conditions in our restaurant as we feel we can improve our work area. Sometimes the oil smell and its smoke really makes us suffocate. We notified our boss, but he says, "don't you know

we are OHS certified, why waste money on unnecessary things”. Sur hands are tied. We cannot do much. Sooner or later, we want to leave this job.

EMR 18: OHS is costly. The year begins and we start paying for OHS, fire, business license, etc. Cost of OHS continue with this sign, that sign, etc. Government should reduce that fee of these things.

From both the quotes, it can be gauged that some employers perceive OHS as an unnecessary expense. Hence, they do not wish to spend money of matters related to OHS. As mentioned by the employee, they are facing real challenges of occupational hazards which seriously needs to be taken care of, for example, installation of proper exhaust fans to pull all the oil fumes.

EME 7: We work together with our bosses, and we have a great relationship. We also understand that running a small business is quite costly. Though we may have different views about OHS, but we do not really rise it as problem, because we know it will be very costly. We are getting better pay. There are some hazards which have become part of our working lives and we have learnt to live with it.

EMR 19: Our process is bit hazardous in nature. Costs are high for our business and OHS requirements as well. Our workers must work the way it is required of them. We know it’s risky. That is why we pay them more than the average wages, so employees do not complain. If they do not do it, someone else will.

Both participants feel that the processes related to their organisations are risky and costly. They tend to feel that they have to deal with this anyway, so they should not raise OHS as a concern.

EME 4: Boss tells us that we should be careful if something goes wrong and we will be accountable, especially if it is related to OHS. Maybe it’s an easy way for him to pass the responsibility to us and be free. We will of course not do anything stupid. We do not want to be charged by this OHS guys, but owner needs to know that someone also needs to remind us, show us and trains us from time to time.

EMR 12: Procedures are set, PPEs are provided. Workplace arrangements are made as per the law. Employees need to be careful. We cannot be reminding them every time to focus on their job.

Above statements seem to be disagreeing with other. The employee knows all the arrangements have been made, but training and daily reminders are also important, whereas the employer feels that once all arrangements are made, it is the responsibility of the employee to take care of himself or herself.

EME 6: There was one time when Peni slipped and fell, and injured his knee. He was taken to the hospital and treated. He joined again seven weeks later and told us that he was the one who spilt that cream on the floor and forgot to wipe it. So he became the victim of his own mistake. Anyway, later during his absence period, the company hired a temporary. So when Peni came back, he just worked for three more weeks because his contract was expiring. We came to know boss did not want Peni back because he had to bear Peni’s all medical cost.

EMR 13: There are some good employees who really follow the OHS procedures. Then there are some who know everything but do not follow. One such example is Rajesh. He saw that there was a placard on the wet floor showing sign of slip and fall hazard, he still ran through that, slipped and fell, and injured his kneecap. Now who is to blame. Why do I had to pay for his foolishness?

Both participants give example of different workers, who got injured because of their own mistake. In both the case, due to the law requirements, the employer is bearing the cost and the employer is not happy about it.

EME 9: Our company does give us with the PPEs, but it gets worn out quickly. This year when I asked for another safety shoes, the boss really scolded me. I am now afraid. Even if I don’t have something, I just don’t say it unless they ask or willing give.

EMR 14: We provide PPEs with manuals and employees do not read them. We cannot force, so we tell them verbally about when it should be changed and when it should be discarded, yet they

don't follow. When we ask them about not using PPEs, they just say they do not have it or it has just worn out, but they don't come to us by themselves to notify us.

In both the case, participants have their own plight. Employees fear asking for PPEs and Employers seem to expect that employees will notify them by asking for it.

EMP 10: Our employer is miser. There are so many OHS issues. There is noise from machines, slip and fall due to water leakage in the bulk 1, tripping hazard in bulk 2, etc. He won't spend an extra single cent for workplace safety unless something really went wrong.

EMR 20: I think all is well, until, something goes wrong. Till then, I do not think any extra expenses are required. I agree that we must comply with OHS rules and regulations, but why spend extra when our business does not involve much dangerous work which would give rise to a hazard or accident. Doing too much at times may also attract mishaps.

The employee has identified some hazards, but he believes that his employer will not spend money for OHS issues, unless something harmful happens and the participant from the employers' group also has similar belief; he is not willing to spend on OHS till something unfavourable happens.

EME 4: It is the owners' responsibility to provide a safe work environment and safe systems of work. I just read few lines from the OHS Act, so why should we employees take extra duties. I know that our company has a policy which I have seen on the wall, but not read it. Even there's not enough effort from the boss to ask or explain things to us. He just comes and loads us with work and goes. We do not have enough people in the company.

EMR 14: I am trying to get my employees read the procedures first, but most of them expect me to explain things. There are not enough employees, therefore, I have to take care of other administrative matters.

Both the participants feel that there's not enough employees. The employee participant feels that the employer is overloading them with work, however, the employer's perspective is different. The employer's understanding is that due to less employees, he too has to work and at the same time, expects employees to support by doing certain things by themselves.

EME 10: There are new employees in the shop. The boss is expecting them to know everything. He should understand that in the beginning, they will be a bit slow as they are learning new things. Obviously, some small mistakes will be made.

EMR 13: Some employees are just too lazy to do things even if it concerns their safety. Just like the case of one employee in our company who was walking with a sharp knife and was unknowingly going to stab the manager. Luckily, I shouted on top of my voice to stop her. So naive. These young guys are so naive or maybe they do like that so that no one gives them any extra work to do. How to teach them the same things over and over again?

Employee participant tries to give explanation about incident that may happen at work, whereas the employer participant does not agree to a similar situation. He thinks that some employees are just too lethargic to follow safety rules. This is highly evident in most of the organisations, as the employees show a negative attitude towards what is expected from them and in return, they tend to be oblivious. Not realising the repercussions of their actions and negligence, many employees put themselves in the problem and at the same time they also bring uncertainty to the organisation as a whole.

5.1.4 Findings and discussions of the qualitative study

5.1.4.1 Understanding OHS and Processes

OHS Structures, policies, and other issues:

- *SMEs lack OHS related knowledge* – most participants did not remember or know about the OHS regulations. SMEs are not mainly aimed by the OHS authorities for random inspections and requirements as they are so numerous. Hence, these contributing factors add up as conditions to poor OHS knowledge within SMEs;

- *SMEs lack proper OHS systems and resources at workplace* – staff lack responsibility in supporting formal OHS practises such as OHS meetings, display of OHS related notices and lack of urge to know more or anything extra about workplace safety. Employers and employees both, show uncertainty about responsibilities;
- *Relatable reality of policies, legislation and information within SMEs* – organisations have developed policies, however, not every time they may put things in 100% order to fulfil the OHS requirements. This seem to be due to the reason of unclear responsibilities and relationships within the hierarchy. Also, the findings show that policies and procedures are too technical, simple and does not suit the respective SME.

OHS hazards at work:

- *SMEs may downplay OHS risks and not use OHS information* – employers and employees both understand that OHS hazards are real, however, most times they resist outside advice (Jahangiri *et al.*, 2019). At times, they also avoid advice if given based on the idea that some hazards might not be that harmful. Many other excuses also arise such as lack of money and time as barriers to workplace safety. However, the hazards mentioned by the employees such as stress, noise, slip and fall, trip and fall, fumes, etc. are all serious issues and needs urgent attention by the employers.
- *Social relationships shape OHS views* – the cost of running the business is often understood by the workers and they align their own interests with the needs of a firm, as when the workers and owners work simultaneously (Ansori *et al.*, 2018). As a result, this type of working relationship could lead to a lack of recognition, or an over-acceptance of workplace hazards.
- *Individual navigation expected* – sometimes workers are expected to be responsible for their own methods of navigating OHS risks. The advantage is that they feel and act responsible, but at the same time crafting and using own ways to control their tools or task may be hazardous. Therefore, employers tend to avoid OHS related programs (which they should not), as they feel it is time consuming.

Managing Occupational Health and Safety:

- *Social disruptions arise when there is injury* – the injuries have had an impact of organisations' productivity which had earlier led re-evaluation of worker's employment. Instead of letting the worker go, employer must arrange for counselling or discipline options, so that he/she can retain an experienced worker rather than getting a new employee and spending time and money on their training.
- *Circumstances design SME strategies to manage OHS* – sometimes employees do not use the personal protective equipment (PPEs) and sometimes overuse despite proper training being provided. The common reason among employees are the unavailability of PPEs. In most cases, it is not true, therefore, employers need to take strict measures against the employees to set clear examples of consequences of non-compliance.

5.1.5 Qualitative Conclusion

Thus, unique characteristics of SMEs should be considered by the makers of the policies and OHS professionals when planning or designing procedures, programs and services as it affects the approaches to Occupational Health and safety. To be concise, they should recognise that SMEs:

- have autonomous and independent culture, which can enable them to see OHS as an individual employee problem, instead of a workplace problem;
- are usually interrupted by workplace accident/incident due to over reliance on fewer employees they employ with lesser profit margins;
- can improve their OHS related outcomes if they are supported in:
 - understanding the OHS laws and its requirements;
 - accommodating the economic constraints and the nature of working relationships;
 - recognising what they lack in terms of required OHS resources and systems and its affordability.

6.0 Quantitative Analysis, Discussion and Interpretation

6.1 Quantitative Research Method

A structured closed-ended questions were used with the provision of answering using Likert scale was given. Likert scale is a rating system used in research questionnaires, which are intended to measure people's perceptions, attitudes or opinions (Imran *et al.*, 2018). A range of possibilities are listed for specific statements or questions where the responses usually include "strongly disagree," "disagree," "neutral," "agree," and "strongly agree." This approach was devised by an American social scientist named Rensis Likert in the year 1932. Likert's system is widely used in the field of research, as it makes research easier to quantify. Hence, this research also used the same

for a better perception of the employees and employers through the analysis of the data in relation to OHS conditions in SMEs. Quantitative content analysis followed later using mathematical approach which uses numbers, measures and studies to analyse the data (Scuotto *et al.*, 2019).

6.1.1 Results reflection

All the participants agreed to fill the distributed questionnaires, however, 63 out of 80 participants returned the filled questionnaires. While distributing the questionnaires, the discomfort was present on the faces of the participants due to the reasons best known to them. On the other hand, some were also comfortable and happy to assist. Similar reflections were there on the results, where most of them have given optimistic feedback about the OHS conditions in their organisations. The results indicate that most of the participants in the SMEs are quite happy and comfortable with the existing conditions within their organisations. The Likert scale used for collecting data worked quite well for this research and made things easier in projecting findings on the tables. The questions designed for the questionnaire seemed to have given perspective to participants to think in terms of OHS, while they engage in their work daily.

6.1.2 Data Collection

A total of 80 questionnaires were distributed during the working hours of SMEs to employees and employers from random companies in Ba, Fiji and collected after four days after being filled; 53 out of 60 employees and 10 out of 20 employers returned the filled questionnaires. As stated above, SMEs with the turnover between \$30,000 and \$500,000 were chosen for data collection, where less than 50 employees work. This method does not really require participants to think hard to explain their views. Instead, fixed ideas based on the questionnaire will reflect their views or understanding of the subject. Participants answers are later extracted to discussion and analysis of the research topic. Hence, it is significant to develop suitable questionnaires, which suits the topic of the researcher.

6.1.2.1 Demographic information of the Participants

EMPLOYEES													
Gender	Age Range					Work Experience (years)			Qualifications Achieved				
	43+	37-42	31-36	25-30	24 and below	0-3	4-7	8+	Post Graduate	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	High school
Females	1	5	6	9	8	11	11	4	0	2	6	10	15
Males	4	4	4	7	5	11	10	6	0	0	2	4	14

Table 4: Demographic information of the employees

EMPLOYERS													
Gender	Age Range					Work Experience (years)			Qualifications Achieved				
	43+	37-42	31-36	25-30	24 and below	0-3	4-7	8+	Post Graduate	Degree	Diploma	Certificate	High school
Females	3	1	1	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Males	2	2	1	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0

Table 5: Demographic information of the employers

6.1.3 Findings and discussions of the quantitative study

This part illustrates and explains the collected data in the form of tables to clearly display the findings for better understanding of the research done through questionnaires. The questionnaires had questions and statements to which the participants were supposed to choose and tick from the options stated, “strongly disagree” or “disagree” or “neutral” or “agree” or “strongly agree”.

6.1.3.1 Occupational Health and Safety

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
I understand what is Occupational Health and Safety?	P	%	I understand what is Occupational Health and Safety?	P	%
Strongly Agree	20	37.7	Strongly Agree	10	100.0
Agree	17	32.1	Agree	0	0.0
Neutral	16	30.2	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	0	0.0	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher’s compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 6: Understanding the definition of OHS

The purpose of this question was to gauge the participants understanding about Occupational Health and Safety. After all the efforts of the Fijian government in introducing and implementing the OHS Acts, it was not surprising to see that both groups of the participants knew about OHS. As shown in the table, 100% of the participants from the employers group chose ‘strongly agree’ and none of the participants from both the groups chose ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’ and remained at 0%. This indicates that all the participants at least have an idea about OHS due to the various reasons. Interestingly, 30.3% of the employee group chose ‘Neutral’ which indicates that they are not sure about the subject of OHS as law, which is mandatory for all the workplaces in Fiji. Hence, SMEs operators must make sure that systems are in place for everyone, who are connected to their organisation are fully aware of the concept of OHS and its requirements.

6.1.3.2 Knowing Rights as per the OHS Act

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
I know my rights as per the OHS Act (Health and Safety at Work Act 1996 or HASAWA 1996).	P	%	I know my rights as per the OHS Act (Health and Safety at Work Act 1996 or HASAWA 1996).	P	%
Strongly Agree	19	35.8	Strongly Agree	10	100.0
Agree	19	35.8	Agree	0	0.0
Neutral	15	28.3	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	0	0.0	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher’s compilation)

Table 7: Acts and Laws of OHS

Everyone has the right to work in a safe work environment. Everyone is free to feel and express their opinions or at least, that is the idea in Fiji. One cannot be denied information related to his or her work. Another example of right is that, one cannot be discriminated under as stated section 23 of the Health and safety at Work Act 1996; which specifies that an employer cannot dismiss a worker or act in a detrimental way to a worker just because the worker has assisted an OHS Inspector by providing any information regarding OHS or has made a reasonable complaint regarding OHS or has stopped work due to an immediate threat situation, where a worker may stop work as he or she has the reason to believe that continuation of that particular work may lead to an accident or incident, which may cause harm to the worker who is working or passing by. Hence, this question depicts the perception of the participants about what they feel or think about their rights as per the OHS Acts. As shown above in the table, majority of the participants from both the groups selected on the agreeing sections of knowing their rights where 100% of the employers and 35.8% of the employees ‘strongly agreed’. 28.3% from the employees group has remained ‘neutral’, which indicates that they do not encounter informative peers who would want to create enough awareness about rights related to OHS so that all the people associated with the organisation know about their rights as per the HASAWA 1996.

6.1.3.3 Small and Medium Enterprise (SME)

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
I understand what is a Small and Medium Enterprise (SME).	P	%	I understand what is a Small and Medium Enterprise (SME).	P	%
Strongly Agree	13	24.5	Strongly Agree	10	100.0
Agree	12	22.6	Agree	0	0.0
Neutral	21	39.6	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	7	13.2	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher's compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 8: Understanding the definition of SMEs

In most cases, people do not know a particular term, specifically when they do not use or need it on their daily basis. However, the data above shows that quite a number of participants knew what an SME is. This indicates that these participants understand certain business jargons and know what may be expected. Employers' group remained on 100% for 'Strongly Agree' whereas 24.5% 'Strongly Agree' and 22.6% 'Agree' were selected by the employees' group. 39.6% opted for 'Neutral, for the same' which means they may have come across the term, but not enough attention was given to understand it, whereas 13.2% indicate that they do know what SME is. So, they may understand SME by other term such as 'big' or 'small' business but not as 'Small and Medium Enterprise.' As employers, they have the responsibility towards employees to make them aware of certain norms and terms.

6.1.3.4 OHS Policy

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
My organisation has an OHS policy?	P	%	My organisation has an OHS policy?	P	%
Strongly Agree	40	75.5	Strongly Agree	10	100.0
Agree	9	17.0	Agree	0	0.0
Neutral	4	7.5	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	0	0.0	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher's compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 9: Existence of OHS policies in SME's

Having an OHS policy is mandatory for all the organisations in Fiji. No organisation is allowed to operate without an OHS policy. Therefore, all organisations chosen for this research are operating successfully, which means, currently, they are having an OHS policy. It is just that we have to know if the participants are aware of it. As shown above, 92.5% (75.5%+17%) participants from the employees group agree on having an OHS policy in their organisations which is a very good sign of organisations' compliance of OHS Regulations. Only a mere 7.5% selected 'Neutral' from the same group, which indicates that they may or may not have noticed the existing OHS policy in the organisation or maybe the organisation has not displayed the policy in a very visible way. On the other hand, employers' group 100% opted for 'strongly agree' on have an OHS policy.

6.1.3.5 Understanding OHS Policy

EMPLOYEE			EMPLOYER		
I understand my organisation's OHS policy?	P	%	I understand my organisation's OHS policy?	P	%
Strongly Agree	8	15.1	Strongly Agree	10	100.0
Agree	25	47.2	Agree	0	0.0
Neutral	20	37.7	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	0	0.0	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher's compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 10: Understanding OHS Policies

The purpose this question was to gauge how many participants understand their organisations OHS policy. As shown in the table, from the 63 participants, no one was completely unaware of the contents of the OHS policy. Employees' group's selection got distributed amongst 'Strongly Agree' (15.1%) and 'Agree' (47.2%) who knew the content of the Policy. 37,7% were 'Neutral'. This means that more than half of the respondents from the participants were fully aware of their organisation's intent and commitment towards safety at work. On the other hand, all participants in the employers' group chose 'Strongly Agree'.

6.1.3.6 Notification on Changes to Safety Procedures

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
My organisation always notifies me about the changes to safety procedures.	P	%	My organisation always notifies the workers about the changes to safety procedures.	P	%
Strongly Agree	0	0.0	Strongly Agree	10	100.0
Agree	22	41.5	Agree	0	0.0
Neutral	26	49.1	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	5	9.4	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher's compilation)

m Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 11: Notifications about the OHS safety procedures

It is the responsibility of the organisation to notify its employees about the changes to safety procedures that has taken place. There can be many reasons for procedural change; amendment in the law, introduction of new machine in the workplace, organisation restructure, change in the layout of the workstations, etc. This research shows that 9.4% of the participants are never notified of such changes. This is inappropriate as they have the right to know all the details, which is related to their work and which may affect them in some way. 49.1% of them are not even sure about what decisions have been taken regarding changes to safety procedures. Data collected from employees' group displays an unhealthy work environment, which lack safety culture and attitude towards OHS whereas employers' group does not agree with this data as 100% of them has opted 'Strongly Agree' to organisation 'notifying employees of changes to safety procedures.'

6.1.3.7 Emergency Evacuation Plan

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
I know the emergency evacuation plan of my organisation.	P	%	I know the emergency evacuation plan of my organisation.	P	%
Strongly Agree	5	9.4	Strongly Agree	10	100.0
Agree	41	77.4	Agree	0	0.0
Neutral	0	0.0	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	7	13.2	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher's compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 12: Emergency evacuation plan of OHS

As per this data, most of the participants (77.4% and 9.4%) knew the emergency evacuation plans of their organisations which is commendable. Though, some of them selected 'Disagree', therefore, there should be better systems introduced to check and include the ones who may have been missing out during the emergency drills, for example, use of checklist or name list. However, 100% of participants from the employers' group has opted for 'Strongly Agree' indicating they are fully aware of the 'emergency evacuation plan' of their organisation. There is a clear disparity in understanding for both the group, especially the employers. They seem to think since they know the 'emergency evacuation plan, hence, all employees must also be knowing.

6.1.3.8 Fire Drill

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
Fire drill is carried out in a timely manner in my organisation.	P	%	Fire drill is carried out in a timely manner in my organisation.	P	%
Strongly Agree	5	9.4	Strongly Agree	7	70.0
Agree	36	67.9	Agree	3	30.0
Neutral	11	20.8	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	1	1.9	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher’s compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 13: Ad hoc Fire drills for safety and security reasons

Similar reactions from the previous questions are showing on the above table. Majority of the employee participants agree (9.4% Strong Agree and 67% Agree) on fire drills being carried out in their organisation. However, 1.9% disagrees for the same, which means that the SMEs in Ba have been proactive in relation to fire safety. Though 20.8% of the same participants were unsure as they remained ‘Neutral.’ Employers’ group mainly agreed by opting for ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Agree’ adding to 100% where seem to be not aware of the employees’ plight about the same issue. Fire drills are common practise of OHS programs that are run within organisations to promote safety culture. This drill is important, as it prepares its participants to know the practicality of things that may be encountered during an actual course of such event. Demonstration has always been more effective than just reading theory (Pilieci, 2018).

6.1.3.9 Fire Plans

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
Fire plans are displayed on the required walls and corridors.	P	%	Fire plans are displayed on the required walls and corridors.	P	%
Strongly Agree	5	9.4	Strongly Agree	6	60.0
Agree	31	58.5	Agree	3	30.0
Neutral	16	30.2	Neutral	1	10.0
Disagree	1	1.9	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher’s compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 14: Display of fire evacuation plans

All workplaces must have a displayed fire plan on the visible areas of the workplaces. This enables the occupants of the building to get a brief idea about how to escape from the arising dangers. It is useful to both, daily and new occupants. However, during the fire drill briefings and fire wardens’ trainings, trainees shall be made aware of such displays. As per this study, majority of the employee participants were aware of the fire plan displays within their organisation’s buildings. Though 30.2% respondents are unsure and 1.9% does not know about the same. Employers’ have opted for ‘Strongly Agree’ (60%), ‘Agree,’ (30%) which is acceptable, on the other hand 10% them has also chosen ‘Neutral’ were seemed to be unsure about the display of Fire plan within their organisations. It seems that SMEs operators has not given the necessary attention towards fire safety. This is objectionable, as it is their responsibility to see if the required attention is given towards the obligatory requirements of the OHS.

6.1.3.10 Personal Protective Equipment

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
Personal protective equipment (PPE) such as hand gloves, safety boots, hair net, etc. are given by the company.	P	%	Personal protective equipment (PPE) such as hand gloves, safety boots, hair net, etc. are given by the company.	P	%
Strongly Agree	10	18.9	Strongly Agree	7	70.0
Agree	26	49.1	Agree	3	30.0
Neutral	16	30.2	Neutral	0	0.0

Disagree	1	1.9	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher's compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 15: Knowledge about personal protective equipment

Though majority of the participants from the employees' group either 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree' to this statement, 30.2% has opted for neutral which means that either they were not given or it was given but they are unaware about who paid for their PPE/s. As per section 9 of the HASAWA 1996, it is the responsibility of employer to provide safe systems of work. Hence, the personal protective equipment must be given by the employers. The employers' group has opted for 'Strongly Agree', which is 70% and 'Agree' 30%, which indicates that the employers' assumption is that they are complying with the OHS laws and this needs to be clarifying by employee or OHS representatives/committee members within their organisations.

6.1.3.11 PPE Replacements

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
PPEs are replaced or given in a timely manner.	P	%	PPEs are replaced or given in a timely manner.	P	%
Strongly Agree	10	18.9	Strongly Agree	6	60.0
Agree	26	49.1	Agree	4	40.0
Neutral	16	30.2	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	1	1.9	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher's compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 16: Replacement of personal protective equipment

Both types of PPEs are there; designed for single use and multiple use, for example latex gloves requires daily replacement or Earmuffs can be used multiple times. In this case, more than 50% of the participants 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree' on getting the PPE replacements as and when required, however, we have a significant number of people who are unsure who selected 'Neutral'. They should be made aware of these arrangements established by law so that they do not suffer in silence. Employers and OHS representatives/committee members need to take the responsibility of making the employees aware of such arrangements to avoid mishaps such as cut on hand due to no hand glove on. Similar as the previous table, for this statement, employers have opted for 'Strongly Agree' (60%) and 'Agree' (40%) only which shows that employers again are not aware of this issue.

6.1.3.12 Display of Safety Signs

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
Placard, entry/exit signs, and other safety signs are displayed at all the required locations.	P	%	Placard, entry/exit signs, and other safety signs are displayed at all the required locations.	P	%
Strongly Agree	10	18.9	Strongly Agree	10	100.0
Agree	26	49.1	Agree	0	0.0
Neutral	10	18.9	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	7	13.2	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher's compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 17: Safety sign displays

Display of safety signs are important part of OHS systems within organisations. Safety signs are designed signs to indicate mandatory actions, warnings, PPEs requirements, prohibit actions, indicate routes, etc. These are necessary requirements of workplace arrangements to avoid risks arising from existing or new hazards. Significant number of participants either 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree' that their organisations abide by this requirement of law. However, 18.9% remain 'Neutral' and 13.2% 'Disagree' about the idea which is quite surprising, whereas the employers' group has a completely different perspective where all the participants selected 'Strongly Agree'. This

again shows disparity in understanding each other view where employers again need to know better about the employees' perspective.

6.1.3.13 OHS Committee/OHS Representatives.

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
My organisation has an OHS committee/OHS representatives.	P	%	My organisation has an OHS committee/OHS representatives.	P	%
Strongly Agree	6	11.3	Strongly Agree	10	100.0
Agree	30	56.6	Agree	0	0.0
Neutral	10	18.9	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	7	13.2	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher's compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 18: OHS committee and representatives

Sections 16 to 25 of the HASAWA 1996 very clearly explains the composition structure, method of election, process or running an OHS committee and appointing OHS representatives. All the organisations are required to form an OHS committee through proper election specified in the OHS Act if more than 20 workers are employed at a workplace. If less than 20 people are employed, then they are required to appoint OHS representatives who would raise concerns related to OHS as and when required. There are several functions specified in the OHS Act. As per this study from the employees' group, 56.6% agree that their organisation has an OHS Committee or appointed Representatives with 11.3% strongly agreeing to the statement. Significant percent of participants had remained neutral (18.9%) and some disagreed (13.2%). Once more, employers have a different view as they are adamant that their organisations are doing the requirement and for the same, they have all opted for 'Strongly Agree.' Hence, this indicates their better method or alternative of communication is required.

6.1.3.14 Training as per the OHS Act

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
OHS committee/OHS representatives are trained as per the OHS Act.	P	%	OHS committee/OHS representatives are trained as per the OHS Act.	P	%
Strongly Agree	8	15.1	Strongly Agree	8	80.0
Agree	35	66.0	Agree	2	20.0
Neutral	4	7.5	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	6	11.3	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher's compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 19: OHS trained personnel's/representatives

OHS training usually comes as part of being in the OHS committee or OHS representative. These trainings contribute to identifying arising OHS issues, required approaches and tools which assists in eliminating or minimising safety concerns at work. The chosen employee participants of 81.1% (15.1% + 66%) seems to be agreeing that their organisations have been providing trainings which is a good indication of organisations' commitment towards OHS. 7.5% have remained 'Neutral' and 11.3% has disagreed. Employers group does not agree to this belief as they have all either agreed or strongly agreed on 'OHS committee/OHS representatives are trained as per the OHS Act.'

6.1.3.15 OHS Meetings

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
OHS meetings are conducted in a timely manner.	P	%	OHS meetings are conducted in a timely manner.	P	%
Strongly Agree	8	15.1	Strongly Agree	6	60.0
Agree	33	62.3	Agree	2	20.0
Neutral	4	7.5	Neutral	2	20.0

Disagree	8	15.1	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher’s compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 20: Regular OHS meetings

According to section 11 of the Health and Safety at Work (Representatives and Committees) Regulations 1997, the OHS committee shall have meetings every 3 months to discuss the arising and existing OHS issues within the organisation. This meeting shall occur within the work hours of work. the records of these meetings shall be kept for more than 7 years for reference purposes. The copies of the minutes of these meetings shall be displayed in the prominent areas where it is visible to everyone, especially workers so that they are also aware about the relevant discussions. For this research, the data reflected in the table shows OHS committees/representatives’ commitment towards a healthy workplace. 62.3% has agreed and 15.2% has strongly agreed that the OHS meetings are conducted once every month. A vast percent of 15.1% think vice versa about the statement as they have disagreed. There are three possibilities; one is that OHS meetings are not conducted, the second one is that it is conducted, but participant who were not part of the committee were not notified and the third one is that OHS meetings are conducted, but there is no notification or display of the minutes for everyone else to see. For employers’ group, 20% has agreed and 60% has strongly agreed which means that 80% of them are they must have a clear record of the same whereas 20% of them has remained ‘Neutral’ which is a sign of poor management as they are unsure and unsteady about the functions of the OHS committee/representatives.

6.1.3.16 OHS Meeting Notification

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
I am always notified about the agenda/discussions before/after the OHS meeting.	P	%	I am always notified about the agenda/discussions before/after the OHS meeting.	P	%
Strongly Agree	20	37.7	Strongly Agree	0	0.0
Agree	20	37.7	Agree	10	100.0
Neutral	3	5.7	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	10	18.9	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher’s compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 21: Notification of OHS meetings

OHS chairperson can call for an OHS committee meeting anytime if he or she has circulated the meeting agenda three days prior to the meeting (Section 11 – Health and Safety at Work [Representatives and Committees] Regulation 1997). However, they do not require notification for emergency meetings. For SMEs in Ba, Fiji, as indicated above 75.4% participants does come to their consensus that they are notified about the OHS meeting agendas and/or discussions. It is also evident, that there are people who feel they are always left out is indicated with 18.9%. Employers group has agreed to have been receiving the notifications about the OHS meetings. This means OHS committee/representatives’ group is complying with the OHS regulations as required.

6.1.3.17 Safe Work Environment

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
My work environment is safe for work.	P	%	My work environment is safe for work.	P	%
Strongly Agree	23	43.4	Strongly Agree	2	20.0
Agree	24	45.3	Agree	8	80.0
Neutral	6	11.3	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	0	0.0	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher’s compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 22: Conducive working environment

It is the responsibility of the employer to maintain a safe work environment. The OHS Act states that the employer must provide safe systems of work and maintain it in consultation with its workers without risk to health and safety of anyone (HASAWA 1996). From the employees' group, 43.4% has strongly agreed and 45.3% has agreed which means that most of the participants are happy with the current workplace arrangements. Only a mere 11.3% of them remained 'Neutral'. From the 63 participants from both the groups, no one disagreed/strongly disagreed which indicates that participants' organisations are all quite proactive in terms of maintaining a safe work environment as the employers' group not too opted for the same and remained at 'Strongly Agree' (20%) and 'Agree' (80%).

6.1.3.18 OHS Hazards

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
My organisation has OHS hazards within the work environment.	P	%	My organisation has OHS hazards within the work environment.	P	%
Strongly Agree	10	18.9	Strongly Agree	0	0.0
Agree	11	20.8	Agree	0	0.0
Neutral	27	50.9	Neutral	2	20.0
Disagree	5	9.4	Disagree	7	70.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	1	10.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher's compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 23: OHS work hazards at working environment

OHS hazards are the leading cause for workplace incident/accidents. Hazard is something or some event which can cause harm to people or damage property or harm the environment. There are various kinds of hazards mainly classified as physical hazard, chemical hazard, hazard, psychological hazard, ergonomic hazard and biological hazard. As per the data, 50.9% of the employee respondents were unsure about the OHS hazards existing in their workplace. Some disagreed, however, 39.7% (18.9% + 20.8%) had agreed and strongly agreed. This indicates that only a few knew well about the organisations' arrangements. Employers group results show a distinct view compared to employees where they have 20% has opted as 'Neutral', 70% has disagreed and 10% agreed. It seems that most of the employers do not believe that hazards exist in their organisations. An independent OHS inspection and identifying by an outsider may assist in giving a clearer view of matters.

6.1.3.19 Maintaining Safe Work Environment

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
My organisation is doing enough to maintain a safe work environment.	P	%	My organisation is doing enough to maintain a safe work environment.	P	%
Strongly Agree	13	24.5	Strongly Agree	3	30.0
Agree	27	50.9	Agree	7	70.0
Neutral	11	20.8	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	2	3.8	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher's compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 24: Proper and safe working environment

The tasks designed for daily work reflects the standard of work practise exists in an organisation. Training needs analysis (TNA) and risk assessment are one of the best tools to maintain and improvement the work practise. TNA determines the gap within the practises, knowledge, abilities and skills of individuals. OHS risk assessment determines the types of hazards and the types and severity it poses. Understanding the hazard exposure of work task arising factors are very significant for the smooth daily operations. The practises/tasks and standard operating procedures of the organisation usually should indicate to workers that they are in a safe environment. From this table, it seems that employee participants perceive that their organisation is doing quite well in terms of maintaining a safe work environment as 24.5% has strongly agreed and 50.9% has agreed. 20.8% seem to be bit confused about the statement and 3.8% has disagreed whereas employers' group mainly selected the agreeing slots. Though different questions/statements in the filled questionnaire may have revealed different things, this table is a clear indication that the organisations in Ba are doing the best they can in relation to OHS to maintain a safe work environment.

6.1.3.20 Improving Safety Standards

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
My organisation should improve safety standards at work.	P	%	My organisation should improve safety standards at work.	P	%
Strongly Agree	19	35.8	Strongly Agree	5	50.0
Agree	23	43.4	Agree	5	50.0
Neutral	11	20.8	Neutral	0	0.0
Disagree	0	0.0	Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
TOTAL	53	100.0	TOTAL	10	100.0

(Source: Researcher’s compilation)

Note: P = Participants, % = Percentages

Table 25: Improving of safety standards at work

Continuous improvement of OHS practises is always recommended. It is a way of continuously analysing your performance through real data, by addressing the causes and weaknesses. Therefore, as shown above most of the employee participants has opted for agreeing 79.2% (35.8% + 43.4%) sections to indicate to safety standards improvements are required. Only 20.8% of them selected ‘Neutral. Employers group has equally agreed with 50% and strongly agreed (50%). Both the group are almost on the same page in term of continuous improvement of OHS standards. Regardless of how better an organisation might be operating, there are new technological advancements daily which require attention, for example, training staff to operate new machine, training staff for better OHS document management software, adopting changes to new law requirements, creating awareness for new safety procedures, etc. Hence, the practise of continuous improvements should continue to which most of the participants also supported.

6.1.4 Quantitative Conclusion

6.1.4.1 Overall Results

EMPLOYEES			EMPLOYERS		
Overall Results	T	%	Overall Results	T	%
Strongly Agree	252	23.8	Strongly Agree	140	70.0
Agree	493	46.5	Agree	47	23.5
Neutral	247	23.3	Neutral	5	2.5
Disagree	68	6.4	Disagree	7	3.5
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0	Strongly Disagree	1	0.5
TOTAL	1060	100.0	TOTAL	200	100.0

(Source: Researcher’s compilation)

Note: T = Total number of selections by Participants, % = Percentages

Table 26: Summation of quantitative results

Overall results depict that the employee group’s most selected option for this research questionnaire was ‘Agree’ which was 46.5%. The second highest chosen option was ‘Strongly Agree’ at 23.8%. A few participants opted for ‘Neutral’, which was 23.3% and only 6.4% chose ‘Disagree’ to answer the questionnaire. The employers group strongly agreed by reflecting through 70% and 23.5% of them agreed. Some have even remained neutral, that is 2.5% and also disagreed 3.5% and strongly disagreed 0.5%. Overall, the results are a clear indication of SMEs owners’ efforts to comply with the OHS laws in Fiji. As stated in the above paragraphs, there are various issues which still needs to be resolved. In this case, communication becomes the most effective tool the employers and employee must openly discuss with each other about issues, which are not covered or ignored. Both has the equivalent amount of role to play, and the answers reflected as ‘Neutral’ indicate that not enough awareness has been done for the organisations to think in terms of Occupational Health and Safety. Another reason maybe that the participants were hesitant to answer the questions due to the reasons best known to them. However, the questionnaire did give the participants a notion to think about improving safety at work. Even if the workplace conditions or layouts within the workplace may change over time, continuous improvement should remain as the paramount aim of the workplaces.

7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

According to Saunders and Bezzina (2015), back bone of any kind of research is ‘research methodology’. The main aim of the quantitative research in this study was to quantify the data to allow the result generalisation by measuring the perception/responses of the participants. During the process of collecting data, the researcher faced the following limitations:

- *Outcomes are limited* – this research involved structured close-ended type of questions, which lead to limited outcome due to limited options for respondents to choose;
- *Lack of resources* – the researcher had to arrange for a laptop to work on the research on a private time;
- *Lack of knowledge* – the researcher lacked knowledge in this area of research of such a scale. Therefore, more reading of published articles were required;
- *Time consuming and expensive* – careful planning had to be done to choose the right participants, who would most likely respond as the time was less and the researcher had to bear own cost for travelling, distributing and collecting the questionnaire;
- *Difficulty in analysing the data* – expensive data analysis software was not available to the researcher, therefore, Office programs such as excel and word was used. At a later stage, the researcher had excess to Prism software, which was used to generate graphs which are shown in Appendix 2.

Qualitative method used in this study has obtained data with open-ended questions through interview or conversational communication. Though it worked better than the quantitative research, this method also had limitations as below:

- *Time consuming* – it was bit difficult to convince the participants to be part of the research which consumed more than the required amount of time;
- *Verification of the results* – due to open ended questions, the participants had more control over the contents that was being recorded. The results could not have been verified against the situations stated by the participants.
- *Responses could not be measured* – perspective-based method has been used through interviews, so the responses could not be statistically measured.

This research can be utilised for further research in the same field. The data presented can be used in developing further strategies to collect related information and gather more perceptions regarding the target population. Just like OHS risks are arising daily with new processes and technology, these researched ideas can be used in reskilling and retaining the workforce in the industries. Understanding OHS hazards will also urge researchers and participants to look for solutions for addressing the issues of OHS conditions.

In summation, it can be said that over the years, OHS requirements have changed around the world, including Fiji and there is a continuous demand for rigorous improvements in the standard of all workplaces. All the literatures reviewed above influenced the idea of the structure of this research, however, the quantitative and qualitative research methods used in this research were similar to Mashwama’s *et al.*, (2018) study, where the questionnaire were distributed to collect the data and Coulson’s (2018) research was adopted to conduct the in-depth interviews. Hence, the recommendations gathered from analysing this research to address OHS conditions in SMEs are as follows:

- More research is required so that continuous evaluation of OHS policies, procedures and standards are exercised;
- Create multi-component OHS interventions to be used for SMEs as there are evidence that supports them where a combination safety audits and trainings are recommended to be based on the needs of the organisation (Aegerter *et al.*, 2020);
- Usually, the larger organisations combine training, safety audits, engineering controls and motivational elements such as financial incentives need to be adopted by the SMEs as well;
- To promote a healthy environment which most of the larger organisations have adopted, there should be safety talk once a week, monthly safety awards, body stretching every 30 minutes daily, moving every 30 minutes for sitting staff and sitting for 5 minutes after every 30 minutes, frequent water drinking, rearrangement of the office every 3 months, working with the standing computer tables, etc.;
- Communication is the most essential factor for organisations performance (Narayan and Nair, 2021). Hence, SMEs need better initiatives to communicate and motivate the OHS performance of the employees, for example, daily safety talk before starting the work, getting award for no injuries during the month or year and;

- OHS mandatory courses which are designed for OHS representatives should be done by all employees, as well as the managers and employers. Time and again they must attend similar courses to polish their skills to influence positive outcomes, as stated in the literature review (Hrenov, 2022).

In Fiji, further to this effort, shall include addressing of return to work and disability management as well.

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