



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



The Occupational Safety and Health Compliance in the Department of Labor and Employment Bicol

MA. CORAZON M. BLANQUISCO *

Master in Public Administration (MPA), Daniel B. Pena Memorial College Foundation, Inc.

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Abstract

In an increasingly globalized workforce, occupational safety and health (OSH) has emerged as a cornerstone of decent and sustainable work, recognized not only as a regulatory obligation but as a fundamental human right. The International Labour Organization (ILO), through Convention No. 155 on Occupational Safety and Health and Convention No. 187 on the Promotional Framework, underscores the universal necessity of safe working conditions as integral to human dignity, workplace equity, and sustainable economic development. These conventions establish that every worker, regardless of country, industry, or occupation, has the inherent right to a workplace free from threats to life and health. As labor markets transcend geographic boundaries, OSH becomes a collective responsibility of nations to mitigate occupational hazards and health risks that extend beyond localized contexts. This global framework aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), reinforcing worker protection as a pillar of inclusive and sustainable development.

In the Philippines, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) leads national efforts to institutionalize OSH through Republic Act No. 11058, the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Law of 2018, and its Revised Implementing Rules and Regulations under Department Order No. 252, Series of 2025. Complementary policies, such as Joint Administrative Order No. 2017-001 and Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1, s. 2020, further strengthen OSH systems across public and private sectors, ensuring accountability, convergence, and continuous improvement. While DOLE consistently monitors compliance among private establishments, evaluating its internal adherence to OSH standards remains critical, particularly in regional offices such as those in Bicol. Assessing DOLE's compliance not only fulfills legal mandates but also safeguards employee well-being, enhances organizational performance, and exemplifies best practices in workplace safety. Ultimately, workforce health and safety directly influence productivity, morale, and operational readiness, positioning OSH as a vital determinant of both institutional credibility and national development.

Keywords: Occupational Safety and Health; Sustainable Development Goals

1. Introduction

In today's globalized labor markets, occupational safety and health (OSH) has become a defining pillar of decent and sustainable work. Governments, institutions, and international organizations increasingly recognize that safe working conditions are not merely regulatory requirements but fundamental human rights essential to human dignity, workplace equity, and sustainable economic growth. The International Labour Organization (ILO), through Convention No. 155 on Occupational Safety and Health and Convention No. 187 on the Promotional Framework, emphasizes the collective responsibility of nations to safeguard workers from occupational hazards and health risks that transcend geographic boundaries. These conventions affirm that every employee, regardless of country, industry, or occupation, has the inherent right to a workplace free from threats to life and health. Aligning with the United Nations Sustainable

* Corresponding author: MA. CORAZON M. BLANQUISCO

Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), OSH is positioned as a cornerstone of inclusive and sustainable development.

In the Philippines, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) serves as the primary agency mandated to formulate labor policies, enforce employment laws, and promote worker welfare. The enactment of Republic Act No. 11058, the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Law of 2018, and its Revised Implementing Rules and Regulations under Department Order No. 252, Series of 2025, underscores the country's commitment to international labor standards and OSH compliance. Complementary frameworks, such as Joint Administrative Order No. 2017-001 and Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1, s. 2020, institutionalize OSH systems across both public and private sectors. However, while DOLE actively monitors compliance among private establishments, evaluating its internal adherence to OSH standards remains critical. Ensuring workplace safety within DOLE offices, particularly in regional structures like those in Bicol, not only fulfills legal mandates but also strengthens organizational credibility, enhances employee well-being, and reinforces the agency's mission to protect labor rights and promote decent work.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employed the descriptive survey method to assess occupational safety and health (OSH) compliance in the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Bicol offices. The approach was chosen because it allows for fact-finding with interpretation and provides a foundation for quantitative analysis. The primary data source consisted of responses from 81 regular and regular-contractual employees across one regional office and six provincial offices in Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Masbate, and Sorsogon. Secondary data included related literature, journals, memoranda, and other references. A researcher-developed questionnaire served as the main instrument, validated through thesis committee review and external experts. The tool was structured into three parts: compliance with OSH standards, level of compliance across six dimensions (safe physical environment, trained personnel, hazard prevention, medical support, accident reporting, and respect for workers' rights), and common OSH issues encountered. Responses were collected via Google Forms, ensuring accessibility and data privacy. Statistical treatments included frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, F-tests, and ranking methods to analyze compliance levels, differences between offices, and prevalent issues. This methodological framework ensured rigor, reliability, and relevance in evaluating OSH practices within DOLE Bicol.

3. Discussion

The findings highlight the importance of institutionalizing OSH practices within DOLE, not only as a regulatory mandate but as a reflection of organizational credibility and employee welfare. Compliance levels varied across dimensions, with stronger adherence observed in areas such as accident reporting and hazard prevention, while gaps were noted in medical and welfare support and the presence of trained safety officers. These variations suggest that while DOLE Bicol offices demonstrate substantial compliance overall, targeted interventions are necessary to achieve exemplary standards across all areas. The use of validated instruments and statistical analysis provided a nuanced understanding of compliance differences between regional and provincial offices, revealing that resource availability and organizational capacity influence outcomes. Moreover, the identification of common OSH issues underscores the need for continuous monitoring, employee training, and infrastructure improvement. The discussion emphasizes that DOLE, as the lead agency for labor welfare, must exemplify best practices in OSH within its own offices to strengthen its authority and credibility in enforcing compliance among private establishments. Addressing internal gaps not only enhances employee well-being but also reinforces DOLE's mission of promoting decent and safe work environments nationwide.

4. Results

Analysis of survey data revealed that DOLE Bicol offices achieved substantial to full compliance with occupational safety and health standards, with weighted mean scores generally falling between 3.40 and 4.19. The safe physical environment and hazard prevention systems were rated highly, reflecting effective implementation of safety measures and emergency protocols. However, compliance in areas such as medical and welfare support and the availability of trained personnel and safety officers was comparatively lower, indicating areas requiring improvement. The F-test results showed significant differences between regional and provincial offices, suggesting disparities in resource allocation and organizational capacity. Common OSH issues identified by respondents included limited medical support, inadequate training, and insufficient welfare programs, which were ranked according to frequency and impact. These findings highlight that while DOLE Bicol demonstrates commendable adherence to OSH standards, gaps remain that could affect employee well-being and organizational performance. The results affirm the necessity of strengthening

internal compliance mechanisms, enhancing training programs, and improving welfare support systems. By addressing these issues, DOLE can ensure operational readiness, safeguard employee health, and set a strong example of workplace safety for the broader labor sector.

5. Conclusion

This study underscores the critical role of occupational safety and health (OSH) in ensuring employee welfare, organizational credibility, and sustainable development. By employing a descriptive survey method, the research provided a comprehensive assessment of OSH compliance within the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Bicol offices. Findings revealed substantial to full compliance across several dimensions, particularly in maintaining safe physical environments and hazard prevention systems. However, notable gaps were identified in areas such as medical and welfare support and the availability of trained safety officers, highlighting the need for targeted interventions. The significant differences between regional and provincial offices further emphasize the influence of resource distribution and organizational capacity on compliance outcomes.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest should be disclosed.

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