

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

“If Industries Don’t Care About Safety At Their Premises, They Will Incur Losses In Productivity, Profits, And Compensation Fees.”

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Labour is not a commodity; men, women and children are worthy of better fate than the casual hire of their labour (ILO 1944). Violence in the workplace is a current yet often misunderstood workplace health and safety issue. Due to media attention centred on a few horrific incidents, workplace violence is often perceived to involve violent outbursts by disgruntled workers. In the overwhelming majority of cases, however, this stereotype is not accurate. In most cases, workers are the victims of violent behaviour due to a number of structural changes in the workplace (e.g. understaffing, ineffective safety procedures) and in the broader society (e.g. diminishing social services, de-institutionalisation). As such, the solutions to workplace violence are based on addressing these structural issues, rather than on blaming workers for a hazard they are not responsible for creating.

Danger arising from work is an unwanted and unintended by-product of the processes of work. All interested parties such as the public, government, the agencies of government, employers, managers, employees, representative organisation, technologist, scientists, and occupational health care personnel.

All of them are concerned with the minimisation or elimination of danger associated with work (Atherley 1978).

Concern with the concept of “healthy organisation” in its wider sense, is gaining prominence amongst researchers, employers and policymakers throughout the European Union (Cooper & Williams 1994; European Foundation for the Improvement of living and Working Condition 1994). This has manifested itself in increasing concern to more positively address the factors responsible for ill health in the workplace.

No treatment of safety management history can be accomplished without considering the total socio-economic systems within it evolved. For example, the Industrial Revolution gave us the father of scientific management, Frederick Winslow Taylor. He advocated that there was one best (standard) way to perform each job, one best (standard) tool with which to perform it, and a stipulated (standard) time in which to perform it (Ezell 1992). Another example is a “paradigm shift” taken by consumers throughout the world. This is where consumers became less interested in productivity and more interested and demanded quality products or services.

During these various eras of socio-economic evolution, the safety management front has also evolved. One of the most important influences was H.W Heinrich's approach to industrial accident prevention. A student of Taylorism and an industrial engineer himself, Heinrich outlined his approach in terms of the Three Es of safety (engineering, education and enforcement), as well as his famous domino theory of accident causation and after-the-fact analysis of unsafe acts and unsafe conditions (ibid.). The other important

influence was social legislation, which led to the enactment of workers' compensation laws.

The management tools of Total Quality Management, Management by Objective (MBO), and Quality Circles have also evolved the safety management front. Over the years, many attempts to introduce management-oriented and holistic approaches to safety and health programming were done by safety professionals. The most significant lesson to be learned was that "Unsafe acts and unsafe conditions, as well as the accidents and injuries that result, are only *symptoms* that something is wrong with the management system (ibid.)." As Philip Crosby says in *Let's Talk Quality*: "Safety is a great analogy for understanding quality. Everything safety is about relates to the absolutes of quality management." Philips Crosby stressed is that: Safety is quality management. Furthermore, in Charles W. Ezell article "*Safety Management: A new and Better Way?*" (Occupational Hazards October 1992), three simple principles of total safety management that organisations could be followed was stressed.

"Substantial improvements in safety and health will occur only if management regards it as an operational, not a social, strategy."

Three Principles of Total Safety Management

1. Make management an integral part of the total safety organisation.

- Corollary: Make safety an integral part of the total management organisation

2. Hold management accountable for safety performance.

3. Make management a part of the accident causation sequence.

In Malaysia, the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) 1994 is the current legislation regulating safety and health issues at workplace. The Ministry of Human Resource has the enforcement responsibility while the Ministry of Health provides consultative and advisory services mainly on occupational health or medical activities. In other words one of the many functions of the Ministry of Human Resource is to update and implement policies and legislation relating to occupational safety and health in order to ensure a healthy and safe working environment in Malaysia.

Like any other professions, the individual soldier (*employee*) is the single most important element in the performance of our Army. Unfortunately, history is replete with examples of weapon systems and other materials that were developed without consideration of their impact on the soldier's health and performance.

The Malaysia OSHA 1994 is not applicable to the Malaysian Army. As the Malaysian Army moves into the 21st century, more sophisticated systems will be acquired to meet the Army's future needs. In fulfilling its future need the Army is in the process of transition to a smaller force which has an enhanced quick-response capability. Such new systems will present greater safety and health hazards challenges that can be met only with proper

strategy, additional personnel and funding. It is of utmost important that the Malaysian Army managed effectively and efficiently. By not managing the safety and health hazards issues effectively and efficiently, can waste public funds, can delay fielding of systems, and can limit training, mobilisation and demoralise soldiers.

1.2 AIM

The aim of this research is to do an exploratory study on occupational safety and health hazards (OSHH) in the Malaysian Army.

1.3 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research is to highlight the tangible as well as the non-tangible aspects of OSHH in the Malaysian Army, especially from the strategies, policies, organisational structure, action plans, training and OSHH programs perspectives. The following are the objectives:

- a. To highlight the various current Malaysian Army's strategies, policies, organisational structure, action plans, training and OSHH programs related to occupational hazards.
- b. To address the various issues and peculiarity of occupational hazards in the Malaysian Army.
- c. To determine the various sources of occupational hazards including the most common industrial hazards in the Malaysian Army.
- d. To provide suggestions on how to eliminate and control the impact of those hazards.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

To date no comprehensive study has been undertaken to research into the overall issue of OSHH in the Malaysian Army from the management perspective. Most of the past researches that have been carried out focuses into the various particular types of occupational hazards occurring in the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF). The following are some examples of those past researches:

- a. Zakariya bin Mohd Aris (1987) conducted a research on the effects of gun noise from the Standard 105mm calibre Howitzer on the artillery gun crews' hearing threshold levels.
- b. Atiya Abdul Sallam (1986) conducted an exploratory study on the auditory effects of noise on the Malaysian Air Force's ground maintenance crews.
- c. Azlan Hamzah Sulong Ahmad (1988) conducted an exploratory study on the auditory effect of diving on the Malaysian special service regiment divers.
- d. Othman bin Hj. Siru (1987) conducted a study on low back pain among Malaysian Armed Forces' drivers and infantry soldiers.
- e. Rohani bte Ali (1988) conducted a study on the knowledge attitude and practise of smoking among military personnel and civilians working at the Ministry of Defence.

These past researches do not focus on management issue. As mention earlier that the emphasis of this research is management, therefore we hope the contribution of our present research to fill this gap.

Another factor to consider is that Malaysia has undergone rapid economic growth since the 1970s and this growth is expected to continue into the decades ahead, given the strong economic fundamentals and increasing internal strength and resilience of the economy. Malaysia's vision is to become a fully developed nation by the year 2020. One of the current impacts of vision 2020 is the attractiveness of the private sector to pull workers over the public sector.

Currently, the Malaysian Army is experiencing difficulty in recruiting the right quantity and quality of candidates to join. To further compound the problem of recruitment is the inability of retention of personnel in the Army. The attractiveness of the private sectors maybe one of the contributing factors to the current dilemma. However, we should not ignore occupational hazards as one of the other contributing factors. This research will identify the main occupational hazards that cause negative attitudes of personnel in the Army. By understanding the human factor, needs and motivations, career in the Malaysian Army can be made more attractive. Consequently, this will help Malaysian Army to retain and maintain a professional and motivated group of personnel.

Another reason for highlighting the above is that OSHH in the Malaysian Army occur almost every day.

The most significance of this study lies in its attempt to contribute to a deeper understanding of the problem of OSHH in the Malaysian Army. As this is an exploratory study, it would be able to provide directions and insights for future researches in this particular field.

1.5 SCOPE AND LIMITATION

The military profession can be described as the profession of managing the act of violence. The issue of occupational risk such as result of enemy actions on our troops and injuries causes by third parties actions for example road accidents will not be addressed in this research. Due to time constraint, we will focus on the Malaysian Army fighting arms' working environments that could be influenced and controled by its management.

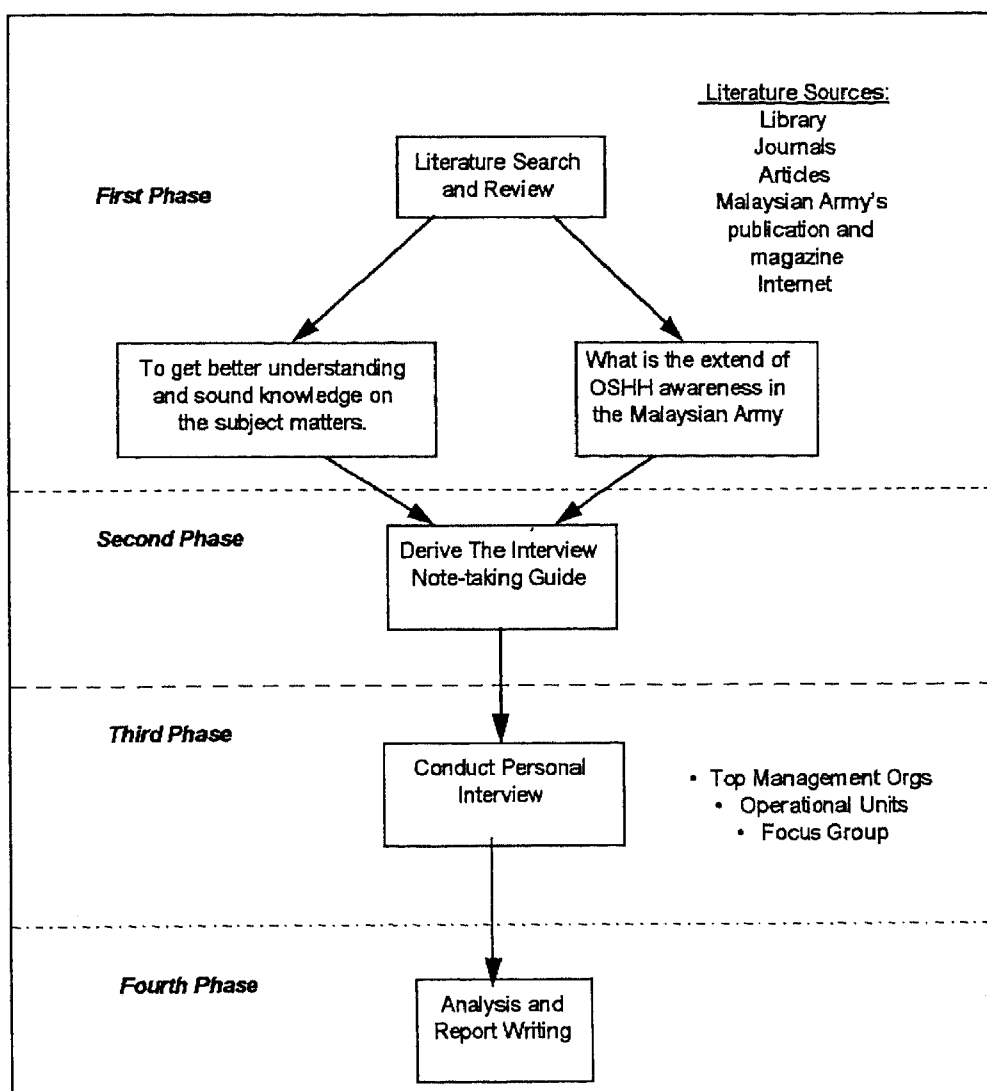
1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main reason why this research is exploratory instead of descriptive or causal, is the ambiguity of OSHH problem in the Malaysian Army. *Ambiguity means that the nature of the problem to be solved is unclear. The objectives are vague and the alternatives are difficult to define* (Zikmund 1997). Exploratory research method is best suited to clarify the ambiguous problems. The methodology used was based on qualitative research using the grounded theory procedures and techniques.

This research begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge. Since no theory or hypothesis was formulated in the beginning, the use of grounded theory method allows us to build theory that is reliable and illuminates the area under study. Grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Figure 1.1 shows the process flow for this research. The first phase of

the process was an extensive literature search on the topic to separate fact from opinion i.e. use of secondary data. Special emphasis was placed on obtaining hard evidence (primary and secondary data) of the extent of OSHH in the Malaysian Army. This is to ensure any conclusion derived in this research are well supported and sustained. The most significant aspect of this phase is to get a good understanding and sound knowledge of the research subject matters.



Source: Research Literatures

Figure 1.1 – Research Process Flow

The second phase was to analyse the secondary data collected and derived the various subjects heading that would be used as our guide during the interviews.

The third phase of the research constituted interviews with various levels of Malaysian Army's management (top and lower) officials' responsible for the day-to-day management of OSHH in the Malaysian Army. In addition focus group interviews were also conducted.

Since no initial theory or hypothesis was formulated, it was felt that personal interview was the most appropriate survey method to be used in comparison to the other types such as telephone interview and self-administered questionnaires. The use of personal interview will ensure the objectives' set out could be realistically achieved. In addition, personal interviews offer many unique advantages such as the opportunity for feedback, probing complex answers, lengthy interview, use of props and visual aids and high participation. The most important advantage of personal interview is the use of open-ended questions, which allow the flexibility to probe the answers given. This will allow us to probe, discover, develop and verify the subject matters in great depth with the respondent.

Four top management organisations were identified as respondent for the interviews. They are the Malaysian Army's Human Resources department (Cawangan Sumber Manusia Tentera Darat), Malaysian Armed Force Medical Directorate, Malaysian Army Logistic Command and 'Pusat Sain dan Teknologi Pertahanan (PSTP)'. These organisations are the main top level managerial organisations with respect to OSHH issues for the Malaysian

Army. All these organisations are located within the Ministry of Defence. Key personnel's of those organisations have been identified as respondents for the interview. Being an exploratory research that focuses on the OSHH management perspective, the interviews conducted on these organisations were sufficient to achieve the objectives of this research.

To correlate OSHH issues from the top management perspectives with actual implementation, the operational units of (1) Hospital Angkatan Tentera, Port Dickson, (2) Rejimen Ke 2 Armour DiRaja, Port Dickson and (3) Sekolah Artileri DiRaja, Port Dickson were selected for the interviews. All the selected units are located at Port Dickson. Although small samples of operational units were selected, they were fair representatives of the entire units in the Malaysian Army.

To fill any gap or lacking of sufficient data, a focus group interview were conducted. To ensure fair representative of the entire Malaysian Army, the focus group consists of officers of the rank of mejar from the various corps of the Malaysian Army. All of them have at least 15 years of working experience.

On the average, the duration for all the interviews was about one and half-hours. Moreover, did not encounter any difficulties or problems during those interviews.

The fourth and final phase of the research process flow were the analysis of the collected data (primary and secondary), followed by the report writing.

Inevitably, a pioneering research of this nature entails various problems during the data collection process. Throughout the research there were very few locally and foreign published materials pertaining to OSHH in military available. Thus, the authors had to rely heavily on OSHH materials pertaining to other industry to obtain background information on the question of industrial accidents, industrial diseases, occupational hazards, industrial safety and safety prevention measures. That is why the present research is more exploratory in nature.

1.7 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 outlines the aim, objectives, significance and contributions of the study, scope and limitation, methodology, and details the outline of the research.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the Malaysian Army and the various Malaysian Army's working environment that are subjected to OSHH.

Concepts' pertaining to OSHH is introduced in chapter 3. Whereas chapter 4 presents the results and findings of the research.

The authors' suggestions on how to eliminate and control the impact of various OSHH will be discussed in chapter 5. Lastly chapter 6 summarises the paper.