

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF SAFETY
COMPLIANCE FRAMEWORK FOR
FOREIGN LABOUR IN THE
MALAYSIAN CONSTRUCTION
INDUSTRY**

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ABSTRACT

The influx of foreign labourers in the Malaysian construction industry can be attributed to the reluctance of the local labourers to participate in demanding, strenuous, and hazardous working conditions. The ensuing variations in beliefs and safety practices among foreign labourers have led to unsatisfactory work, safety non-compliance, and a surge in reported accident cases by the Department of Operational Safety and Health annually. Previous research has predominantly approached these issues from a managerial perspective, neglecting the operational level. In addition, there is no specific framework that can assist foreign labourers in reviewing their capability requirements to improve themselves in conforming to proper safety practices in the workplace. This study aims to address this gap by developing a safety compliance framework for foreign labourers in the Malaysian construction industry. The objectives are to identify the factors of reluctance to practice safety among foreign labourers, determine the key attributes required by foreign labourers in practising safety in construction sites and develop a framework of safety compliances among foreign labourers. The study employs a comprehensive multiple holistic-case studies methodology for data collection, with cases selected from three distinct construction sectors namely: (1) Construction of buildings with 10-unit cases, (2) Construction of Infrastructure with 10-unit cases and (3) Industrial Manufacturing with 10-unit cases. Each unit case comprises one respondent who works closely with foreign labourers at the operational level to share their views, experience, and perspective toward this study. Thematic analysis is utilized to scrutinize gathered data, extracting codes to generate sub-themes and main themes. The findings reveal a spectrum of factors of reluctance to practice safety among foreign labourers, including misconceptions, emotional distraction, incompetence, cultural diversity, bewilderment, oversight, carelessness, ignorance, overconfidence, and censure. The key attributes to enhance safety compliance among foreign labourers include safety welfare, safety work routines, supervision execution, emotional evoke, effective communication, coherent work conditions, leaders as examples, and positive influence. Based on existing behavioural theory, the Safety Compliance Framework for Foreign Labour in Malaysian Construction Industry has been developed. This research provides insights into the factors that affect foreign labourers' safety compliance and highlights the enabling factors required to enhance their compliance. The framework can guide and assist the industry players in developing policies and practices to improve the safety culture in the Malaysian construction industry.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Malaysia is a rapidly developing country as skyscrapers, highways and bridges are built to promote economic expansion and prosper. This rapid development requires a large workforce who are willing to work under dangerous, dirty, and difficult circumstances. Undeniably, the construction industry can be categorized as the most dangerous area as the construction sites are exposed to numerous potential hazards and vulnerabilities. Most local labourers are reluctant to work on construction sites, which contributes to the increasing reliance on foreign labourers in the construction industry. Moreover, most foreign labourers originate from various countries with varying levels of understanding in safety practices and work ethic, this diversity often leads to unsatisfactory work and safety non-compliance. Nevertheless, accidents, incidents and injury levels showed no sign of degradation each year. Hence, site safety culture is the set of beliefs, behaviours, norms, attitudes, roles, and social practices concerned with reducing the exposure of foreign labourers to conditions considered dangerous or injurious. Therefore, it is vital to ensure the safety practices in the workplace are at a satisfactory level, as it would reduce the level of accidents and injuries among foreign labourers. This research addresses the practice of safety culture at the operational level, specifically in construction sites. This chapter provides the overview of this research as it presents the sections of the thesis by integrating the research design to highlight the issues of safety compliance among foreign labourers. It would start by briefly explaining the current safety practices in the construction industry together with the recent increment in accidents and injury rates in the construction site. Then, the research problems are highlighted, followed by the research questions, aims and objectives. Furthermore, the research methodology is briefly explained to chart the research direction. In addition, by the end of this chapter, the scope and limitations of the research will be formulated. Finally, the thesis structure is provided to conclude the whole chapter.