Safety Climate: Leading or Lagging Indicator of Safety Outcomes?

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Abstract

A recent meta-analytic study of the safety climate research confirmed positive relationships between safety climate and safety performance (compliance and participation) and negative relationships between safety climate and occupational accidents/injuries (Clarke, 2006a). This study also revealed some important moderators of these relationships including study design, specifically the timing of the measurement of the safety-related variables (i.e., accidents/injuries) relative to the measurement of safety climate with prospective designs yielding stronger relationships than retrospective designs. Building on these empirical findings, we theorize why these differences emerge and how these relationships might be further moderated by the source of the safety-outcome data and/or the time lag between the measure of safety climate and the safety outcomes. Implications for safety climate research, study design, and climate change are discussed.