



Supervisor vs. employee safety perceptions and association with future injury in US limited-service restaurant workers

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: Many studies have found *management commitment to safety* to be an important construct of safety climate. This study examined the association between supervisor and employee (shared and individual) perceptions of *management commitment to safety* and the rate of future injuries in limited-service restaurant workers.

Methods: A total of 453 participants (34 supervisors/managers and 419 employees) from 34 limited-service restaurants participated in a prospective cohort study. Employees' and managers' perceptions of *management commitment to safety* and demographic variables were collected at the baseline. The survey questions were made available in three languages: English, Spanish, and Portuguese. For the following 12 weeks, participants reported their injury experience and weekly work hours. A multivariate negative binomial generalized estimating equation model with compound symmetry covariance structure was used to assess the association between the rate of self-reported injuries and measures of safety perceptions.

Results: There were no significant relationships between supervisor and either individual or shared employee perceptions of management commitment to safety. Only individual employee perceptions were significantly associated with future employee injury experience but not supervisor safety perceptions or shared employee perceptions.

Conclusion: Individual employee perception of *management commitment to safety* is a significant predictor for future injuries in restaurant environments. A study focusing on employee perceptions would be more predictive of injury outcomes than supervisor/manager perceptions.

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1. Introduction

Restaurants are one of the largest employers in the United States. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), restaurants employed approximately 9.7 million workers, which represented about 6.4% of the total U.S. workforce in 2007 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). The BLS also projects that the number of food preparation and service workers will increase by 396,000 over

the 10-year period from 2008 to 2018. This is the fourth largest projected increase in the number of workers among occupational categories.

BLS data ranks the restaurant industry third in total count of injuries and illnesses for industries with 100,000 or more nonfatal cases (after schools and hospitals) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). The California Workers' Compensation Institute reported that restaurant workers accounted for 6.1% of all California job injury claims from 2000 to 2008. Total medical and indemnity benefit payments on these claims in California amounted to just under \$1.1 billion for the 8-year span (Young, 2010). These statistics illustrate the continuing need to identify ways to reduce workplace accidents and injuries and to improve overall workplace safety for restaurant workers.

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