# Psychological Aspects of Non-Observance of Work and Civil Safety Regulations

**Dace Brizga**<sup>1</sup> MPA; **Ludis Pēks**<sup>2</sup> Dr.paed., Dr.sc.ing.; **Vija Ozoliņa**<sup>3</sup> Dr.sc.ing., Mg.paed. Latvia University of Agriculture

<u>dacebrizga@inbox.lv</u><sup>1</sup>, <u>ludis.peks@inbox.lv</u><sup>2</sup>, <u>vrozolini@gmail.com</u><sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** It has been found out in the authors' previous reserch that the respondents range health as a value in first place. However, the life skills of the learners and the employees working in the institutions and organisations in many cases do not ensure the observance of work and civil safety regulations, particularly among younger people. The aim of the study was to investigate the psychological aspects of non-observance of work and civil safety regulations. The methodologies used in the research were semi-structured interviews and discussions about the possible psychological causes of non-observance of work and civil safety regulations and the ways of decreasing the negative impact of these causes. The respondents were the participants of a civil safety seminar. The respondents' opinions - the main causes of formal attitude toward work and civil protection are the following: a) the mutual influence of society members' actions (86%); b) low self-esteem and the inability to see oneself as a value. The main solution to minimise the formation of formal attitude is to improve the study process (78%).

**Keywords**: adult education, civil safety, work safety, values, life skills, specialists.

#### Introduction

People's lives and health depend directly on observing definite safety and protection regulations in all spheres of life: at the workplace, in the family, in educational institutions, in formal and informal groups, or individually being engaged in hobbies (sports, ice fishing, etc.), and engagement in active or passive recreation (swimming, sunbathing, etc.). Almost every day the mass media in Latvia report about different kinds of dramatic or tragic incidences where people have been killed, become disabled, or have had health problems affecting their ability to work. A considerable amount of resources are spent for rescuing and saving the lives of those who do not observe the regulations, and at this time the professionals taking part in the rescue operations not only risk, but sometimes also lose their lives.

Road accidents can be mentioned as one of the most typical examples having an upward trend:

there were 166 people killed in reported road accidents over an 11-month period in the year 2013 which is by 8 (or 5.1%) fatalities more compared to the same period in 2012. The number of road casualties was 3220 (by 71 people or 2.3% more compared to the 11-month period in 2012) (Ceļu satiksmes..., 2013). The most typical causes: inappropriate speed and drunk driving.

The conditions mentioned above form a context where personnel's work and civil safety activities take place in institutions and enterprises. This context influences people's experience from the very onset of childhood and as a result of this experience life skills are developed. Thus the solution of psychological problems of work and civil safety in institutions and enterprises are closely connected with the solution of these problems in the entire society from early childhood. One of the ways to deal with the problem is the implementation and improvement of life skills education. It had been studied already in the last quarter of the 20th century and is continuing within the framework of *Education for Sustainable Development*. Life skills education has been characterized in several United Nations Organizations' (United Nations Children's Fund; World Health Organization) documents (UNICEF, 2000; Life Skills..., 1997; Partners in Life..., 1999) which contain the definitions and characterization of the concepts *life skills* and *life skills education*.

The term "life skills" is open to wide interpretation. The United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting participants have agreed on "...a consensus that all participants were using the term to refer to psychosocial skills. The keywords used to describe psychosocial skills were: personal, social, interpersonal, cognitive, affective, universal." (Partners in Life..., 1999, 3).

The United Nations International Children's Fund defines life skills as follows:"Life Skills are psychosocial and interpersonal skills used in every day interactions and are not specific to getting a job or

earning income." (UNICEF, 2000, 29). The World Health Organization describes life skills as "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life." (Life Skills..., 1997, 1).

With the help of life skills an individual can increase the control not only over his/her health but also over life in general.

"Life skills education is designed to facilitate the practice and reinforcement of psychosocial skills in a culturally and developmentally appropriate way; it contributes to the promotion of personal and social development, the prevention of health and social problems, and the protection of human rights." (Partners in Life..., 1999).

It is very important to note that life skills education includes not only giving information but also developing the abilities to adequately use the obtained knowledge in practice. "Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitude and values into actual abilities *what to do and how to do it.*" (Life Skills..., 1997, 4) The quoted UNO documents pertain mainly to children's and teenagers' education both in the educational institutions and outside of them. However, it has been indicated that life skills education can be acquired in adult learning as well (Life Skills..., 1997, 6).

Life skills are significantly influenced by the attitudes and values which the authors have investigated before in the context of work safety (Brizga, Pēks, 2014; Brizga, Ozoliņa, Pēks, 2014). It has been found out in the research that the respondents range health as a value in first place. The significance of values in adults is different in different levels of maturity (Brizga, Ozoliņa, Pēks 2014).

Taking into consideration the increase in the popularity of computers and the time spent at computers, both at work and in everyday life, the observance of ergonomics of computer use has been studied (Brizga, Pēks, 2014). When carrying out self-evaluation of the knowledge on computer use ergonomics, 72% of respondents admitted that the knowledge was sufficient. However, 88% of respondents do not observe the regulations regarding work at the computer to protect their health. As a result, 95% of them (124) felt changes in health or their symptoms (Brizga, Pēks, Bērtaitis, 2013).

As it can be seen, there is a contradiction between acknowledging health as a value and observance of the regulations to save it. Life skills in many cases do not ensure the observance of health safety regulations. Therefore the research on the relations of attitude and values with work and civil safety is topical.

## Methodology

The methods used in the research were semi-structured interviews and discussions conducted within the framework of the Aware & Resilient project (Co-ordinated by the Austrian Red Cross) during the training seminar of Latvian Red Cross. The seminar took place in September 2014 at the municipal educational institution of Jelgava city Zemgale Region Human Resource and Competences Development Centre (ZRHRCDC). The aim of the Centre is to offer and provide lifelong education for each inhabitant of Jelgava city and Zemgale region. The overall aim of the Aware & Resilient project is to raise the awareness of younger citizens of the value and benefits of disaster preparedness, in addition to creating community links. The participants of the seminar were the representatives of the personnel involved in the implementation of work and/or civil safety in institutions or enterprises. The main questions of the research: What causes determine the formation of formal attitude toward work and civil safety? How to minimise the formation of formal attitude toward work and civil safety? The respondents of the semi structured interview were 49 participants of the seminar (57% female and 43% male participants). A part of respondents (16) sent their opinions after the seminar by email. The round table discussions took place in practical class groups. Informal discussions continued during coffee breaks and lunch time. The number of participants in these discussions was 102. At the end of the seminar the participants also evaluated the overall process of the seminar and results – changes in the disaster preparedness. The average evaluation in a five score system was four (the results of the survey conducted by the organisers of the seminar, which characterise also the quality of the data obtained from the research).

### **Results and discussion**

Respondents consider that the work and civil safety fields are quite different. However, the opinions regarding people's attitude toward learning/studies in these fields and the use of this knowledge, skills and competences are similar. This is influenced by several stereotypes of the past. The most significant of them are: a) learning/studies and their results do not provide immediate benefits for the inhabitants and are not connected with everyday situations (the inhabitants ignore the fact that timely discovered acute occupational disease and adequate prevention of harmful work factors can protect people from more serious health problems); b) work and civil safety deal with large scale problems which inhabitants will never have to face (the people of our country also face the risks of epidemics, terror acts, military invasions, floods and fire outbreaks, and recently these risks have become more topical both in this country and on an international scale.

Table 1

Causes of formal attitude formation toward work and civil safety and solutions

The results of the semi-structured interviews

Questions	Respondents' Opinions	Total	%
What causes determine the	People's low self-esteem, they do not consider	36	74
formation of formal attitude	themselves as a value.		
toward work and civil	Influence of society members' mutual action	42	86
safety?	It is difficult to change habits	10	20
How to minimize the	It is necessary to improve learning/studies of work and	38	78
formation of formal attitude	civil safety.		
toward work and civil	Higher fines, because material values influence human	6	12
safety?	behaviour		
	It is difficult to answer, since people are not	5	10
	sufficiently informed about the factors of minimizing		
	the non-observance of regulations		

Semi-structured interviews. It was found out (Table 1) from semi-structured interviews that the formation of formal attitude toward work and civil safety is mainly formed by:

- influence of society members' mutual action (86%)
- people's low self-esteem, they do not consider themselves as a value (74%).

The differences between these factors are not statistically significant – p = 0.50 (Preacher, 2001). The factor *it is difficult to change habits* (20%) is relatively less significant. Its difference from the two previous factors are obviously statistically significant. A small portion of respondents (12%) think that the solution to the observance of regulations could be higher fines since material values influence people's behaviour.

A part of respondents (20%) acknowledged that people are accustomed to ignoring regulations and it is difficult to change these habits. People become aware of the risks only after the recurrence of an accident or trauma. Oftentimes when economizing on several minutes, much more time is lost on recovery. Responding to the question – what to do to minimize the non-observance of regulations in society, 10% of respondents indicated that it was difficult to answer because people are not sufficiently informed about the factors of minimizing the non-observance of regulations. It can be related to insufficient life skills.

When the results of the interviews were discussed, the participants characterised the influence of the mutual behaviour of society's members with typical incidences. For instance, if a pedestrian crosses the street on an inappropriate traffic light signal, most of the people will do the same. All the participants agreed to the oppinion: "most likely nothing bad will happen to me", but unfortunatelyaccidents happen, and the number of casualties is increasing (see Introduction).

**People's low self-confidence and incapability to consider themselves as a value** are influenced by several factors. The researcher of Michigan university Neil Carter classifies values as follows:

- instrumental value the object serves as a means for realising somebody's wishes, for example nature serves people.
- inherent value somebody has acknowledged this value, but it is not the means to realise somebody's wishes, it is a value by itself;
- intrinsic value the value exists by itself, irrespective of whether acknowledged or not.

The cognizance of a human as a real value is negatively influenced by more and more often found word collocations – *human factor, human potential* and *human resources* (Hentig, 1999). Human dignity and honour are not disputable. A human is not an object, but a subject and human's life and health are the highest basic values (Hentig, 1999). Anthropocentrism is based on the viewpoint that it is exclusively a human who has an intrinsic value, nature serves people to provide them well-being and satisfaction (of) humans' needs. In ecocentrism a human as a value is equal to other beings. Anthropocentrism can manifest itself in a lighter and stronger degree. Humans' refusal of satisfying their needs while preserving living species is a lighter degree of manifistation of anthropocentrism (Carter, 2007). In order to save themslves as a value humans must believe in the results of their behaviour and attitude toward health as ensurer of life expectancy.

In the context of our research it is important to carry out the evaluation of the types of people's activities which was done by Imants Bertaitis (2013) in his thesis. The evaluation is based on Hannah Arendt's (1958) proposed *Vita Activa* division: *labor, work and action*. The philosopher Ansis Zunde (1998,53) has presented a concise characteristics of that:

- a human is a living being;
- a human is a social being;
- a human being wants to be free.

Transforming this division to the working inhabitants' work in the context of values, the following *labour, work and action* characteristics are significant.

- *Labour* -humans try to satisfy their vital needs, working is anonymous. The primary thing here is sufficient means to survive. Neither the employee nor the employer consider the human as a value and that negatively influences the employee's self-esteem. The employees are only formally informed about the labour safety requirements, they do not fully comply with them. It is *labour* that most commonly is associated with word collocations *human factor* and *human resources*.
- Work humans are aware of the fact that they create things which are useful for others. It happens in the communication process with others. It makes them feel like humans who have to provide not only their survival but also well being. Humans can be aware of themselves as a value. The personnel understands the importance of work safety.
- Action humans want to be free beings, without any connection with things, without being related to limiting powers, they want to show initiative. Humans are aware of their value. The personnel understands the importance of work safety and does everything in its power to facilitate a safe and healthy work environment where peoples' health is of prime importance condition of the entire physical mental and social well being, not only the abscence of pathology.

The opinion expressed during the discussions was that *labour* is more common in Latvia than *work*, and it can be related to low self-esteem.

Labour as a type of human activity is most often associated with a constant lack of time, stress, overload both in everyday life and at work. The research carried out by the Work Safety and Environmental Health Institute of Riga Stradiņš University indicated that "almost a third of the inhabitants of the EU suffer from stress at work" (Stress darbā..., 2011).

In the USA three quarters of the employed consider that nowadays people have more stress than in the past, and every fourth person thinks that work is their main source of stress in his/her life, but every third person has considered the option to quit work" (RSU WSEHI, 2011,1). Canadian physiologist

Hanss Selye (Selye 1950; Selye, 1956) was the first to define the concept of "stress" as the nonspecific response of the body to a situation dangerous to health (Cox, Griffiths, 2000).

Nonspecific reaction – the reaction will be the same irrespective of what kind of stressors are active. Stress is characterised as the general adaptation syndrome. Stress is created when the situation exceeds human's adaptation abilities, for example – when overcoming difficulties, if the problem keeps repeating.

Imants Bērtaitis (2013) proposed to consider the possibility of clarifying the terminology used in the Latvian language, taking into account the fact that in English the term *occupational safety* 

is currently prevailing. In Europe there is the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), where OSHA stands for Occupational Safety and Health Agency. In this context the comparison of the terms of work and civil safety regulations and explanations of basic terms can cause some reflections on that.

According to Civil Protection Law, civil protection is the set of organisational, engineering, economic, financial, social, educational and scientific measures, which is implemented to ensure response in cases of disasters or when there are threats of disaster, as well as to support the needs of the State defence system, if a military invasion has occurred or war has begun (Civilās aizsardzības..., 2007,1). Civil protection is the skill to handle disasters and emergency situations, the skill to create a system and plans to protect oneself and fellow human beings (both at work and in everyday life).

According to Labour Protection Law: Labour protection is safety and health of employees at work (Darba aizsardzības..., 2002,1). Analysing the name of this Law, a question arises – why should labour be protected, if in reality it is human's protection in the work environment. A human is the main value, but the profession and work are important for a human to lead a fulfilled life. If a person is ill and can no longer work, life does not become less valuable – it obtains some other value, only one should know how to find a new meaning in life.

Improvement of educational/study process in work and civil safety, as the main possibility of minimizing the formation of formal attitude toward work safety (78%) obviously statistically significantly differs from the advice given by the other respondents (Table 1).

Learning and studying process in the 21st century should be implemented within the context of *Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)* which is based on the principles elaborated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) commission at the end of the 20th century (UNESCO, 2009). They are included in the report of the commission: *Learning: The Treasure Within: Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century* (Delors, 1996). In the report *four pillars of learning: learning to know; learning to be; learning to live together; learning to do* are characterised. According to them each person during his/her lifetime has to acquire knowledge which develops, skills which are suitable for a civilisation governed by knowledge. That is the foundation for skills which will be used in the future in order to be adapted to a changing and complicated world where people are becoming more and more interdependent. Daina Lieginiece (2002) also points out that in the society of knowledge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people and their ability to use knowledge in constantly changing conditions play the main role.

At the beginning of the 21st century UNESCO included the fifth pillar – learning to transform oneself and society (UNESCO, 1995-2010). Taking into consideration the fact that each individual's and entire society's changes in attitudes are significant, the actualisation of this pillar is of particular importance when learning and teaching work and civil safety. The entire society consciously or unconsciously takes part in the process of *informal learning* which is a natural accompaniment to everyday life. An essential part of informal learning is social learning. "The term social learning often refers to an understanding emphasizing that learning is always a social process, because it always takes place in a social setting or context... ...cooperation or being part of a certain division of labour is often the situation for learners. Social interaction allows learners to relate or mirror their ideas, insights, experiences and feelings to those of others. "In this process of "relating to" or "mirroring" these personal ideas, insights, experiences and feelings are likely to change as a result. This mirroring

may lead learners to <u>rethink their ideas</u> in the light of alternative, possibly contesting, viewpoints or ways of thinking and feeling". In social learning four elements provide the basis for learning processes: action, cooperation, reflection, communication. (Draft Unece..., 2004, 3). One of the ways to improve learning/studying can be *life skills education* which is briefly described in the introduction of this article.

In the formal and informal discussions which took place within the framework of this research, the following work and civil safety learning/studying process improvement aspects have been emphasized:

- relation with everyday life in order to faster increase the use of the learning results and enhance the learners' interest;
- emphasizing of correct action (ergonomic, traffic, etc.) in social environment but not emotionally dramatic or tragic accident scenes which often have the opposite effect;
- correspondence of learning content to the employee's work;
- information that is seldom or not at all available to the audience;
- enhancing analytical advancement of society's perception, to increase the possibilities to analyse and evaluate accidents and predict their possible cosequences as a result of nonobservance of regulations.

Interesting and attractive process of learning, perceiving and managing the emotional condition of the audience is described.

In order to implement the last point the specialists need pedagogical competence based on teaching/studying results. It should be associated with the professional activity and include adequate components of competence: the ability to form and develop learning environment; the ability to organise and implement the study process in cooperation with other specialists; the ability to manage group work (the emotional condition of participants during the teaching process and manage the teaching process); the ability to evaluate learning results; the ability to organise and manage designing of instructions and teaching materials; the ability to implement teaching quality control and management, the ability to plan and implement one's professional growth (Bērtaitis, Brizga, Ozoliņa, 2014, 2013). When acquiring life skills on preservation health as a main value, both the content and interactive transforming study methods, based on results are significant. Basing on the research findings, it can be concluded that the aim of life skills education is to prepare individuals to make decisions to take positive actions with the purpose of changing the behaviour and the environment, thus improving the safety and implementing preventive health protection.

# **Conclusions**

Basing on the respondents' opinion as well as on the research authors' long term non-structured observations - the following conclusions have been formulated:

- formal attitude toward work and civil safety is formed not only at the work place but also outside of it, beginning from an early chidhood; its formation is mainly determined by:
  - o the mutual influence of action improper for society members' safety,
  - o people's low self- confidence which forms because a working individual is not cosidered a value;
  - one of the possibilities to minimise the formation of formal attitude toward work and civil safety is life skills education, actualising social studies and *learning to transform oneself and society*;
- future research is topical to evaluate the influence of psychoemotional risk factors on people's health and the possibilities of minimizing this influence.

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