

From Compliance to Competitive Advantage: Embedding Health and Safety into Corporate Governance Strategy

Dr Constance Ekhoeyayi Ehiozee
Bureau Veritas Group, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

In an era defined by increasing stakeholder scrutiny and dynamic global risks, this research repositions health and safety (H&S) as a strategic governance priority rather than a mere compliance function. The study explores how forward-thinking organizations are embedding H&S into board-level strategy to drive resilience, strengthen stakeholder confidence, and unlock competitive advantage. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining an extensive review of academic and industry literature, policy analysis, and qualitative case studies of FTSE-listed and multinational organizations with mature H&S integration practices. Semi-structured interviews with board members, HSE leaders, and governance experts provided insight into the evolving expectations of corporate leadership. Findings indicate a positive correlation between proactive H&S governance and improved organizational outcomes, including employee engagement, brand reputation, ESG performance, and operational continuity. The research identifies critical success factors such as board accountability, executive ownership of safety metrics, and alignment of H&S indicators with ESG reporting frameworks. The study recommends a governance-driven model that elevates H&S oversight to the strategic agenda, incorporating transparent reporting structures, board-level H&S committees, and performance-linked incentives. It emphasizes the need for boards to cultivate a culture of safety leadership, embed H&S into decision-making processes, and treat worker wellbeing as a material governance risk and opportunity. This research offers practical guidance to senior executives, board members, and HSE practitioners on transforming H&S from a regulatory afterthought to a cornerstone of sustainable business strategy.

Keywords: accountability; culture; ESG; governance; wellbeing.