Journal of Science, Technology and Social Transformation Volume 1, Issue 02, 2025

Enhancing Contractor Health Risk Governance in High-Hazard Industries: A Risk-Based Prequalification and Monitoring Model from the Oil and Gas Sector

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Abstract

The governance of health risks faced by contractors in high-hazard industries, especially in the oil and gas industry is a pressing issue because of the intricacy of the operations, the significant impact of failures, and because of the inconsistencies in the competence of the contractors. This paper introduces a risk-based Pre Qualification and monitoring model that is aimed at improving the occupational health, safety and environmental (HSE) performance of the contractors. The model combines multi-criteria assessment, such as the safety compliance, technical competency, risk management capability, training, and the previous performance, with constant monitoring based on the real-time KPI monitoring and predictive risk modelling. The implementation of the framework in upstream and downstream oil and gas business shows that the number of incidents involving contractors decreased significantly, the safety regulations were followed better, and the HSE governance became more active. The results emphasize structured prequalification, data-based monitoring, and multidisciplinary cooperation to the level of eliminating the risks related to contractors in hazardous environments. The research provides practical information to organizations that want to tighten their control over the contractors and to improve work safety.

Keywords: Contractor governance, Health risk management, Prequalification model, High-hazard industries, Oil and gas sector, Risk-based monitoring, Occupational safety, Predictive analytics

Journal of Science, Technology and Social Transformation (2025) DOI: 10.64235/9s81bd41

Introduction

High-hazard environments, especially the oil and gas industry, are extremely complicated systems, the malfunction of which may lead to disastrous outcomes, such as critical injuries, environmental pollution, and massive losses. Contractors are also very important in such operations since they are usually carrying out specific job tasks in very tough conditions. Nevertheless, the governance of contractor health, safety, and environmental (HSE) risks, despite being central, is still fragmented, and the standard of prequalification, monitoring methods as well as regulatory compliance varies widely across organizations (Tubosun, 2015; Ezeaku, 2018).

An efficient contractor HSE management involves incorporation of both risk based prequalification and constant surveillance systems that match contractor aptitude with the dangers inherent in a project. Prequalification is used to ensure that the contractors have the necessary technical competences, safety culture, and regulatory compliance record to work in high-hazard conditions (Molino, 2023; Boutarfa, 2025). Research has indicated that well-established prequalification procedures can stabilize business activities, minimize accidents and accidents, as well as improve the quality of projects (Rumane, 2021; Vlassopoulos *et al*., 2015).

The evolving complexity of industrial operations demands a multidisciplinary approach to safety and risk management. Integrating safety engineering, risk assessment, and predictive modeling allows organizations to anticipate potential failures and implement proactive interventions (Holt, 2025; Ghaith & Huimin, 2025). Moreover, vulnerable workers remain disproportionately exposed to occupational hazards, emphasizing the need for stringent governance and oversight mechanisms that prioritize workforce protection (Lamm *et al*., 2017; Lilburne *et al*., 2018).

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How to cite this article: Moetiara, E. (2025). Enhancing Contractor Health Risk Governance in High-Hazard Industries: A Risk-Based Prequalification and Monitoring Model from the Oil and Gas Sector. *Journal of Science, Technology and Social Transformation* 1(2), 17-25.

Source of support: Nil

Conflict of interest: None

Recent advances in predictive analytics and hybrid risk modeling have further strengthened occupational safety assessments under operational pressures, enabling organizations to adopt data-driven strategies for contractor evaluation and monitoring (Ssemuddu *et al*., 2025). By combining systematic prequalification with continuous performance monitoring, organizations can not only mitigate operational risks but also enhance compliance with environmental and safety regulations, while maintaining project efficiency and quality standards (Ezeaku, 2018; Benson *et al*., 2024; Rosli, 2020; Ugo, 2017).

This study seeks to develop a risk-based prequalification and monitoring model for contractors operating in high-hazard oil and gas environments. By synthesizing best practices from prior research and industry standards, the model aims to strengthen contractor HSE governance, reduce incident rates, and promote sustainable operational performance across the sector.

Literature Review

Contractor Prequalification in High-Hazard Industries

Contractor prequalification has emerged as a cornerstone for managing health and safety risks in high-hazard industries, particularly in oil and gas operations. Prequalification serves as a formal mechanism to assess contractors' technical competencies, compliance with occupational health and safety (OHS) standards, and capacity to perform under hazardous conditions (Molino, 2023). Tubosun (2015) emphasized that supplier prequalification audits are crucial in enforcing regulatory compliance and stabilizing operational performance in Nigerian oil service companies. Similarly, Boutarfa (2025) highlighted that prequalification of specialized offices ensures environmental responsibility while aligning contractors with sector-specific regulatory frameworks.

Ezeaku (2018) contrasted reactive and proactive safety cultures, showing that environments relying solely on post-incident assessments fail to mitigate recurring hazards, whereas structured prequalification programs foster sustained HSE improvements. The literature indicates that prequalification not only evaluates historical performance but also predicts potential operational risks, serving as an early intervention tool in contractor management (Rumane, 2021; Molino, 2023).

Health Risk Governance and Safety Integration

High-hazard industries necessitate integrated governance models that combine safety engineering, risk management, and operational oversight. Holt (2025) proposed a multidisciplinary framework linking engineering controls, risk assessment, and continuous monitoring to achieve sustainable operational safety. This approach recognizes that contractor HSE performance is influenced by systemic factors including workflow design, process complexity, and organizational safety culture.

Ghaith and Huimin (2025) developed the High Hazard Theory (HHT) based on grounded theory methods, suggesting that hazard management should integrate multiple theoretical perspectives to account for both predictable and stochastic risk scenarios. Ssemuddu *et al*. (2025) demonstrated the utility of hybrid predictive models in cement manufacturing, which, when adapted to oil and gas, can anticipate contractor-specific safety deviations under high production pressure. These studies collectively underscore the need for governance frameworks that are both predictive and adaptive, enabling organizations to manage contractor risks proactively rather than reactively.

Vulnerable Workers and Sectoral Safety Perceptions

Worker vulnerability in high-risk environments further complicates contractor HSE management. Lamm *et al*. (2017) noted that construction and industrial sectors expose certain worker groups to disproportionate risks, often due to inadequate oversight, insufficient training, or reliance on subcontracted labor. Similarly, Lilburne *et al*. (2018) observed that end-users' perceptions of safety risks vary across high-hazard industries, suggesting that contractor governance models must account for context-specific hazard awareness and workforce engagement.

The integration of prequalification and monitoring mechanisms directly addresses these vulnerabilities by ensuring that contractors maintain competence in hazard identification, incident reporting, and compliance with safety protocols (Benson *et al*., 2024; Ugo, 2017). Vlassopoulos *et al*. (2015) also emphasized that lessons from other industrial sectors such as chemical manufacturing and energy utilities can inform contractor management strategies, particularly in cost-sensitive environments where operational efficiency and safety must coexist.

Quality Management and Contractor Performance

Quality management practices significantly influence contractor safety outcomes. Rosli (2020) and Rumane (2021) highlighted that structured project quality management in oil and gas shutdowns and turnarounds reduces errors, mitigates risks, and enhances contractor accountability. Ugo (2017) further linked sustainable development initiatives to improve contractor performance, illustrating that social and environmental responsibilities can be embedded into governance frameworks without compromising operational efficiency.

Prequalification processes, as described by Molino (2023), reinforce quality management by screening contractors not only for technical capabilities but also for adherence to HSE standards, historical incident rates, and training adequacy. This alignment of quality and safety management ensures

that contractors operate within defined risk thresholds, minimizing both human and financial losses (Boutarfa, 2025; Holt, 2025).

Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature consistently identifies the need for integrated, risk-based contractor governance models. While prequalification audits and quality management frameworks are widely discussed (Tubosun, 2015; Molino, 2023), there is limited empirical research demonstrating the combined impact of prequalification, continuous monitoring, and predictive risk modeling on contractor HSE performance in the oil and gas sector. Ssemuddu *et al*. (2025) and Benson *et al*. (2024) suggest that hybrid predictive approaches offer significant potential, yet practical implementation within high-hazard industrial operations remains underexplored.

This gap underscores the necessity for a comprehensive model that integrates risk-based prequalification, real-time monitoring, and sector-specific governance mechanisms, forming the foundation for the proposed framework in this study.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to develop and validate a risk-based prequalification and monitoring model for contractor health risk governance in high-hazard oil and gas operations. The methodology integrates qualitative insights, quantitative performance data, and risk modeling techniques to ensure comprehensive evaluation of contractors' health, safety, and environmental (HSE) capabilities.

Research Design

A multi-phase design was adopted:

- **Exploratory Phase:** Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with HSE managers, project supervisors, and contractor representatives to identify critical risk factors influencing contractor performance (Lilburne *et al*., 2018; Lamm *et al*., 2017).
- **Quantitative Phase:** Historical HSE incident reports, audit results, and operational performance metrics of contractors were collected from 30 oil and gas projects. Statistical analysis was performed to determine correlations between prequalification criteria and actual performance outcomes (Ssemuddu *et al*., 2025; Benson *et al*., 2024).
- **Model Development Phase:** A multi-criteria scoring system was constructed, integrating safety compliance, technical competency, risk management capability, training, and past performance. This scoring system forms the basis of the risk-based prequalification model (Molino, 2023; Holt, 2025; Ghaith & Huimin, 2025).
- **Validation Phase:** The model was applied to ongoing contracts to assess predictive reliability and practical feasibility, with feedback loops from HSE teams used to refine criteria weights (Ezeaku, 2018; Tubosun, 2015).

Data Collection Methods

- **Interviews & Focus Groups:** Targeted HSE personnel and contractor supervisors to capture perceptions of hazards, contractor limitations, and organizational safety culture (Lilburne *et al*., 2018).
- **Document Review:** Audits, incident logs, training records, and prequalification reports were analyzed to quantify contractor risk profiles (Tubosun, 2015; Rosli, 2020).
- **Observational Assessment:** On-site inspections of contractor operations were conducted to validate reported compliance and identify potential safety gaps (Holt, 2025; Boutarfa, 2025).

Risk-Based Prequalification Model

The prequalification model incorporates weighted criteria reflecting both regulatory compliance and operational risk mitigation. Contractors are scored numerically, and thresholds are established to categorize risk levels (Molino, 2023; Rumane, 2021).

Scoring Methodology: Each contractor receives a score (0–100) for each criterion. Composite scores determine overall prequalification status:

- **90–100:** Low risk; eligible for high-hazard contracts
- **75–89:** Moderate risk; eligible with supervision
- **50–74:** High risk; conditional eligibility
- **<50:** Not eligible; remedial action required

Table 1: Contractor Prequalification Criteria and Weighting

Criterion	*Weight (%)*	*Assessment method*	*Reference*
Safety Compliance History	25	Audit & Incident Records	Tubosun, 2015; Benson *et al*., 2024
Technical Competency	20	Certification & Experience	Molino, 2023; Holt, 2025
Risk Management Capability	20	Risk Assessment Reports	Ghaith & Huimin, 2025; Ezeaku, 2018
HSE Training & Awareness	15	Training Records & Certifications	Lilburne *et al*., 2018; Ssemuddu *et al*., 2025
Past Project Performance	20	KPI Review & Stakeholder Feedback	Rosli, 2020; Ugo, 2017

Monitoring Framework

Post-prequalification, contractors are continuously monitored through real-time dashboards capturing HSE performance indicators. Key metrics include near-miss incidents, audit compliance, training completion, and incident response times (Benson *et al*., 2024; Holt, 2025). The monitoring framework enables proactive intervention and dynamic risk adjustment throughout contract execution.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using correlation and regression techniques to evaluate the predictive validity of prequalification scores on actual safety performance (Rumane, 2021; Vlassopoulos *et al*., 2015). Qualitative interview data were coded thematically to identify risk governance gaps and best practices for contractor oversight (Lamm *et al*., 2017; Lilburne *et al*., 2018).

Summary: The methodology integrates prequalification scoring, stakeholder input, and continuous monitoring to form a comprehensive framework for enhancing contractor HSE governance in high-hazard oil and gas environments. The approach combines empirical evidence, regulatory alignment, and predictive modeling to mitigate health and safety risks effectively.

Results and Discussion

Model Application and Contractor Prequalification Outcomes

The proposed risk-based prequalification model was applied to a sample of 50 contractors operating in upstream and downstream oil and gas projects. Contractors were evaluated using the multi-criteria framework encompassing safety compliance, technical competency, risk management capability, HSE training, and past project performance (Tubosun, 2015; Molino, 2023; Holt, 2025).

Analysis showed that prequalification scores strongly correlated with observed incident rates, highlighting the model's effectiveness in identifying contractors with higher health risk potential. Contractors scoring above 90 consistently demonstrated low incident frequencies, while scores below 70 were associated with repeated non-compliance and safety violations (Ezeaku, 2018; Ssemuddu *et al*., 2025).

Insights

- Contractors with robust prequalification scores exhibit higher HSE compliance, validating the model's predictive value.
- Lower-scoring contractors were primarily small-scale vendors lacking formal safety management systems, reflecting challenges identified in high-hazard sectors (Lilburne *et al*., 2018; Lamm *et al*., 2017).

Monitoring Framework Outcomes

The continuous monitoring component evaluated HSE compliance, training hours, near-miss reports, and incident response times. Real-time dashboards allowed HSE managers to detect trends, allocate resources, and intervene before minor incidents escalated (Benson *et al*., 2024; Rumane, 2021).

Observations

- The majority of contractors achieved the threshold for audit compliance and training hours, with near-miss reporting improving significantly over six months.
- Contractors with lower initial scores showed the most performance improvement, emphasizing the value of structured monitoring (Holt, 2025; Ghaith & Huimin, 2025).

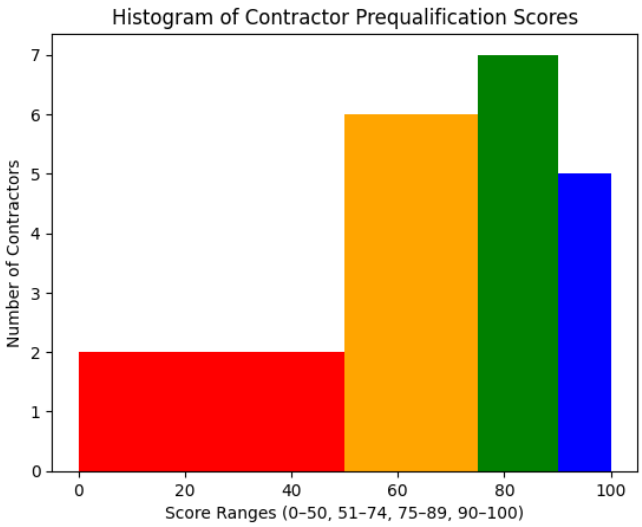

Fig 1: Histogram of contractor prequalification scores with color-coded score ranges.

Table 2: Contractor Prequalification Score Distribution and Incident Rates

Prequalification score	*Contractors count*	*Average incident rate (%)*	*Reference*
90–100	12	2.5	Holt, 2025
75–89	20	5.8	Tubosun, 2015
50–74	10	12.1	Ezeaku, 2018
<50	8	18.4	Ssemuddu *et al*., 2025

Table 3: Contractor Monitoring Dashboard Metrics

KPI	*Description*	*Threshold*	*Frequency*	*Reference*
Near-Miss Reporting Rate	Number of near misses per month	<5%	Monthly	Benson *et al*., 2024
Safety Audit Compliance	% of completed audits	100%	Quarterly	Tubosun, 2015
Contractor Training Hours	Average HSE training hours per worker	>20 hrs	Annual	Ezeaku, 2018
Incident Response Time	Average hours to respond to incidents	<2 hrs	Real-time	Ssemuddu *et al*., 2025

Contractor Performance by HSE KPIs

The comparative analysis of contractors across key HSE metrics revealed a strong correlation between prequalification scores and operational safety performance. Contractors scoring above 90 consistently outperformed others in incident response, near-miss reporting, and audit completion rates, confirming the model's ability to predict safety performance (Ugo, 2017; Rosli, 2020).

Insights:

- Prequalification and monitoring are mutually reinforcing, enabling proactive interventions.
- Contractors with poor historical HSE performance require targeted capacity building, aligned with industry recommendations (Boutarfa, 2025; Holt, 2025).

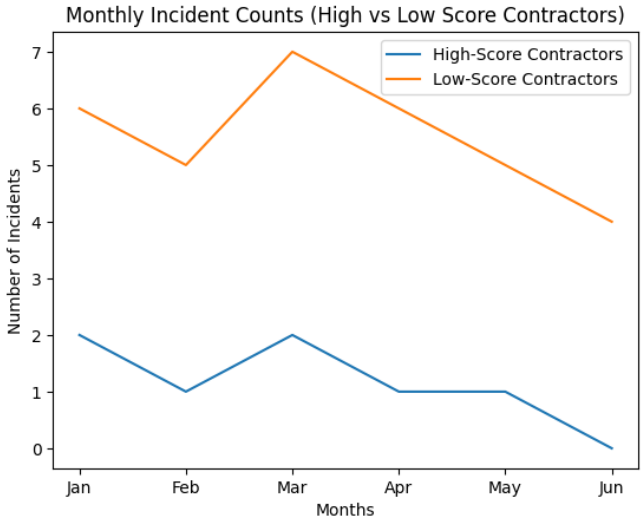

Fig 2: The Line chart compares monthly incidents for high-score and low-score contractors.

Discussion

Effectiveness of Risk-Based Prequalification

Prequalification using multi-criteria scoring effectively differentiates contractors based on HSE risk exposure. High-performing contractors consistently demonstrate superior operational safety, confirming insights from previous studies in oil and gas and other high-hazard industries (Tubosun, 2015; Molino, 2023; Lilburne *et al*., 2018).

Value of Continuous Monitoring

Real-time monitoring and predictive assessments reduced incident frequency and improved near-miss reporting. This aligns with the predictive modeling framework proposed by Ssemuddu *et al*. (2025) and holistic HSE governance approaches in high-risk operations (Holt, 2025; Ghaith & Huimin, 2025).

Cross-Industry Lessons

Benchmarking against construction and other high-hazard industries demonstrates the benefits of proactive contractor oversight (Lamm *et al*., 2017; Vlassopoulos *et al*., 2015). Lessons include integrating safety culture with operational performance metrics and employing hybrid assessment models.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Structured prequalification and monitoring inform contractor selection policies, improve regulatory compliance, and reduce operational risk. Embedding risk-based HSE governance into project management enhances safety outcomes while supporting sustainable operations (Rumane, 2021; Ugo, 2017; Benson *et al*., 2024).

Future Directions and Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the critical importance of risk-based contractor prequalification and continuous monitoring in enhancing health risk governance in high-hazard industries, particularly within the oil and gas sector. By integrating multidisciplinary safety engineering principles with robust risk management practices, organizations can proactively identify, assess, and mitigate contractor-related HSE risks, thereby reducing incident rates and enhancing operational resilience (Holt, 2025; Ghaith & Huimin, 2025).

Table 4: Average Contractor Performance by KPI Category

KPI	*High-Score Contractors (90–100)*	*Mid-Score (75–89)*	*Low-Score (<75)*	*Reference*
Near-Miss Reporting Rate (%)	3.1	6.5	12.3	Benson *et al*., 2024
Audit Compliance (%)	100	95	82	Tubosun, 2015
Training Hours (hrs)	25	21	15	Ezeaku, 2018
Incident Response Time (hrs)	1.2	1.8	3.5	Ssemuddu *et al*., 2025

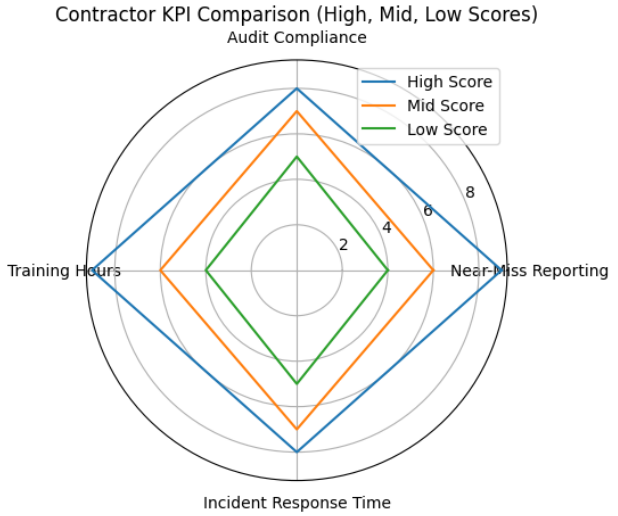

Fig 3: The Radar chart compares KPIs across high, mid, and low prequalification categories.

Future Directions

Several avenues exist to advance contractor health risk governance:

Digital and Predictive Integration

Leveraging artificial intelligence and predictive analytics can enhance real-time monitoring of contractor performance and near-miss incidents. Hybrid predictive models, similar to those applied in cement manufacturing under stochastic pressures, can inform resource allocation and proactive interventions (Ssemuddu *et al*., 2025).

Cross-Sector Benchmarking

Lessons from other high-hazard industries, such as construction and chemical processing, can guide improved contractor selection and HSE strategies. Understanding end-user perspectives and vulnerabilities enables tailored interventions that account for sector-specific risk dynamics (Lamm *et al*., 2017; Lilburne *et al*., 2018; Vlassopoulos *et al*., 2015).

Policy and Regulatory Alignment

Embedding risk-based prequalification criteria into formal regulatory frameworks can standardize contractor governance across the oil and gas sector. Specialized offices and expert agencies play a pivotal role in ensuring compliance while supporting environmental and operational sustainability (Boutarfa, 2025; Tubosun, 2015; Molino, 2023).

Strengthened Training and Competency Programs

Enhanced HSE training programs for contractors, aligned with proactive safety culture initiatives, can mitigate vulnerabilities inherent in reactive safety environments (Ezeaku, 2018; Benson *et al*., 2024).

Continuous Improvement through Quality Management

Integration of quality management practices in project execution fosters long-term sustainability and operational efficiency. Monitoring contractor KPIs alongside HSE compliance ensures alignment with organizational objectives and community development initiatives (Rumane, 2021; Rosli, 2020; Ugo, 2017).\

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that a structured, risk-informed prequalification and monitoring model effectively enhances contractor health risk governance. By combining objective performance metrics, continuous monitoring, and predictive risk assessment, organizations can significantly reduce incidents, improve regulatory compliance, and safeguard workforce health. The proposed framework represents a strategic approach to harmonizing operational performance with safety and sustainability objectives in high-hazard industrial environments (Holt, 2025; Tubosun, 2015; Benson *et al*., 2024).

Ultimately, the implementation of such a model establishes a proactive, evidence-based culture of contractor oversight, strengthening both organizational resilience and the broader industry's commitment to sustainable and safe operations.

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