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Utilization of AR & VR for the Development of Safety Training and Risk Mitigation

Dwi Puspita Anggraeni
Universitas Budi Luhur, Indonesia

Email: dwi.puspita@budiluhur.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) can be utilized to develop safer and more effective safety training while supporting performance assessment and behavioral change for risk mitigation in high-risk work environments. The background of the study arises from persistent workplace accidents in sectors such as construction, mining, healthcare, emergency response, and industrial processing, where conventional training methods often fail to provide realistic experiential preparation. This research employs a qualitative library research design by analyzing recent accredited journal studies on AR/VR applications in safety training. Data were collected through systematic documentation and analyzed using thematic content analysis focusing on immersive simulation, experiential learning, performance measurement, and behavioral outcomes. The findings show that AR/VR create zero-risk training environments that significantly improve hazard recognition, procedural skills, emergency readiness, and safety awareness compared to traditional approaches. In addition, AR/VR systems enable data-driven performance assessment by tracking user errors, response times, and compliance with safety protocols, fostering continuous improvement. The study concludes that AR and VR function as integrated systems for simulation, evaluation, and behavioral reinforcement, positioning them as strategic technologies for proactive risk mitigation in modern occupational safety management.
Keywords: Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, Safety Training, Risk Mitigation, Immersive Learning

INTRODUCTION

Workplace accidents in high-risk industries remain a persistent global problem despite decades of safety regulation, procedural standardization, and classroom-based training. Sectors such as construction, firefighting, healthcare, heavy manufacturing, and hazardous materials response routinely expose workers to environments where rare but catastrophic events can occur. Traditional safety training relying on lectures, manuals, videos, and occasional drills often fails to reproduce the intensity, complexity, and unpredictability of real hazards. As a result, trainees may understand procedures cognitively but lack the experiential readiness required for rapid decision-making under pressure. This gap between theoretical knowledge and embodied preparedness forms a critical phenomenon in contemporary occupational safety. Emerging evidence indicates that Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) can bridge this gap by enabling realistic simulations of fires, disasters, robotic operations, surgical procedures, and emergency responses without exposing trainees to physical danger, while allowing unlimited repetition and lower logistical cost (Misiurek & Müller, 2025; Suriawan et al., 2025; Faiz et al., 2024; Bęś & Strzałkowski, 2024; Adami et al., 2021; Hancko et al., 2025).

The urgency for safer yet effective training is particularly evident in industries where live simulations are either too dangerous, too expensive, or ethically impossible to conduct. Studies on demolition robots and construction operations demonstrate that VR-based training significantly improves operational knowledge, procedural skill, and safety behavior compared to conventional face-to-face instruction (Adami et al., 2021). These findings suggest that immersive technologies do not merely supplement training but transform how safety competencies are formed. By placing trainees inside simulated hazardous scenarios, VR fosters experiential learning where decisions, mistakes, and corrective actions occur in real time without real consequences.

Beyond safety replication, AR and VR introduce a paradigm shift in how learning occurs through immersive, experiential engagement. VR creates fully controlled three-dimensional environments where high-risk procedures such as firefighting, HAZMAT response, robotic teleoperation, and surgical practice can be rehearsed repeatedly (Kayaalp et al., 2025; Asoodar et al., 2024; Faiz et al., 2024; Bęś & Strzałkowski, 2024; Hancko et al., 2025). In contrast, AR overlays digital guidance onto the real environment, making it particularly suitable for tasks requiring physical manipulation such as welding, assembly, and live medical procedures through situated learning (Misiurek & Müller, 2025; Lin et al., 2024; Daida et al., 2025). Research indicates that AR often enhances skill transfer because it operates directly in the real workspace, reducing material consumption while improving task precision (Suriawan et al., 2025; Faiz et al., 2024).

These technologies also open new possibilities for risk mitigation beyond training delivery. AR/VR systems can track user behavior, measure response time, record procedural compliance, and capture error patterns for feedback and performance assessment (Faiz et al., 2024; Bęś & Strzałkowski, 2024; Daida et al., 2025). This data-driven assessment capability transforms safety training into a measurable, iterative process where performance analytics inform continuous improvement. Moreover, immersive exposure to simulated hazards enhances hazard awareness, safety attitudes, self-efficacy, and long-term retention of safe behavior (Adami et al., 2021; Faiz et al., 2024).

Despite growing evidence of effectiveness, limitations persist. Cross-sector reviews reveal challenges related to high development costs, limited haptic realism, motion sickness, and insufficient long-term evaluation of behavioral impact (Misiurek & Müller, 2025; Familoni & Onyebuchi, 2024; Tene et al., 2024; Cheng et al., 2024). Many studies emphasize technical performance gains but pay less attention to how AR/VR contributes to sustained behavioral change and risk culture within organizations. This creates a research gap where the potential of AR/VR for safety training is acknowledged, yet its broader role in performance assessment and behavioral transformation remains underexplored.

The novelty of this study lies in integrating three perspectives that are often treated separately: safer experiential training, immersive learning technology, and behavior-based risk mitigation. Rather than viewing AR/VR solely as training media, this study positions them as comprehensive systems for simulation, assessment, and behavioral reinforcement in high-risk environments. This integrative perspective highlights how immersive technologies contribute not only to knowledge and skill acquisition but also to measurable safety performance and long-term behavioral change. Based on this background, the objective of this study is to analyze how AR and VR technologies can be utilized to develop safer, more effective safety training while simultaneously enabling performance assessment and behavioral change for risk mitigation in high-risk work environments.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative library research design to analyze how Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) can be utilized to develop safer and more effective safety training while enabling performance assessment and behavioral change for risk mitigation in high-risk work environments. The data sources consist of recent peer-reviewed journal articles that examine AR/VR applications in safety training across sectors such as construction, firefighting, healthcare, manufacturing, and robotics, as cited in the introduction. Data were collected through systematic documentation and literature tracing, focusing on empirical findings, experimental studies, reviews, and conceptual models related to immersive simulation, experiential learning, safety performance measurement, and behavioral outcomes. The selection prioritized accredited and up-to-date sources to ensure relevance to contemporary occupational safety challenges.

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis with a thematic approach. The collected literature was coded into three major analytical themes: the role of AR/VR in creating safe immersive simulations, their function in experiential learning and skill transfer, and their capacity to support performance assessment and behavioral change for risk mitigation. Through iterative reading, comparison, and synthesis across sources, recurring patterns, effectiveness indicators, limitations, and strategic implications were identified and organized into an integrative conceptual understanding. This process enabled the study to explain how AR and VR technologies function not only as training media but as comprehensive systems for safety learning, evaluation, and risk-oriented behavioral reinforcement.

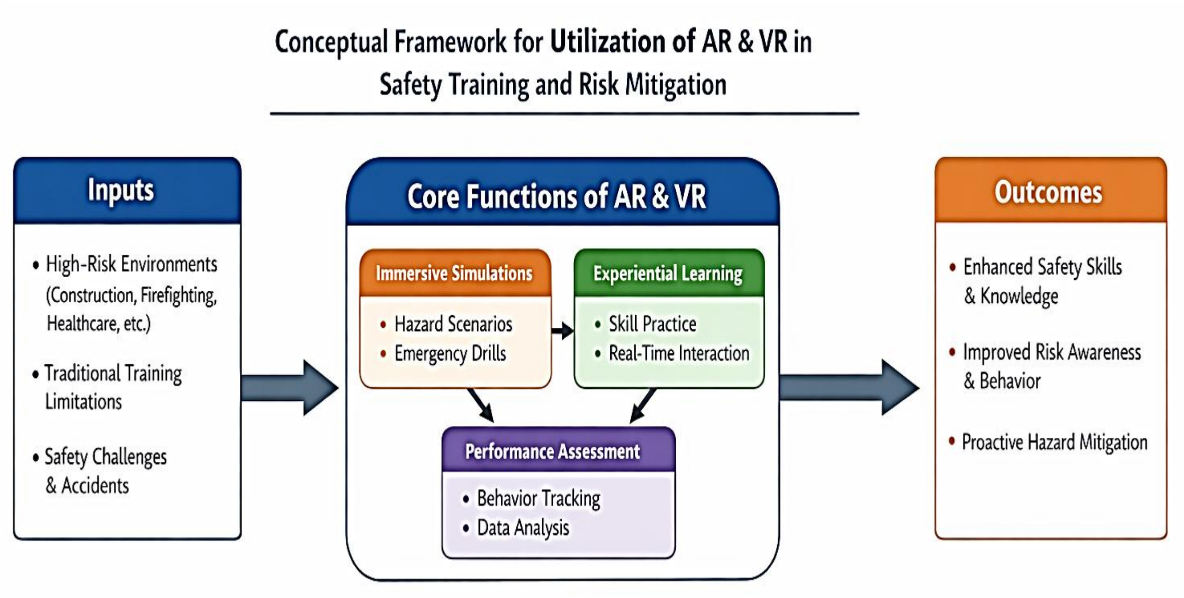

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework This Research

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the thematic content analysis of the reviewed studies, the findings show consistent evidence that AR and VR contribute not only to safer training environments but also to measurable improvements in skill acquisition, hazard awareness, performance monitoring, and long-term safety behavior. The synthesis below organizes how immersive functions of AR/VR translate into concrete safety training outcomes and risk mitigation benefits across high-risk sectors.

Table 1. Synthesis of AR/VR Functions, Training Applications, and Risk Mitigation Outcomes

AR/VR Function	Training Application in High-Risk Contexts	Measurable Performance Indicators	Risk Mitigation & Behavioral Outcomes	Key Sources
Immersive VR Simulation	Fire drills, HAZMAT response, demolition robot operation, surgical procedures	Response time, procedural accuracy, error frequency	Improved emergency readiness and hazard recognition	Kayaalp et al. (2025); Asoodar et al. (2024); Adami et al. (2021); Hancko et al. (2025)
AR Situated Guidance	Welding, assembly tasks, real-time medical procedures, field operations	Task precision, material efficiency, compliance with steps	Better skill transfer to real workspace and reduced operational mistakes	Misiurek & Müller (2025); Lin et al. (2024); Suriawan et al. (2025)

Experiential Learning Environment	Repetitive practice of rare but critical scenarios	Knowledge retention, decision-making under pressure	Increased safety confidence and procedural memory	Faiz et al. (2024); Bęś & Strzałkowski (2024); Adami et al. (2021)
Performance Assessment & Analytics	Tracking user behavior, time logs, protocol adherence	Behavioral data, feedback loops, performance scoring	Continuous improvement of safety practices	Daida et al. (2025); Faiz et al. (2024); Hancko et al. (2025)
Behavioral Reinforcement	Simulated exposure to hazards without physical risk	Safety attitude scale, self-efficacy indicators	Long-term change in safety awareness and behavior	Faiz et al. (2024); Bęś & Strzałkowski (2024); Cheng et al. (2024)

The table demonstrates that AR and VR function as integrated systems combining simulation, experiential learning, and data-driven assessment. Their contribution extends beyond knowledge delivery toward measurable performance evaluation and behavioral reinforcement. This indicates that immersive technologies can serve as strategic tools for proactive risk mitigation, enabling organizations to cultivate safer work practices while minimizing exposure to real hazards during training.

Discussion

The objective of this study is to analyze how AR and VR technologies can be utilized to develop safer, more effective safety training while simultaneously enabling performance assessment and behavioral change for risk mitigation in high-risk work environments. The reviewed literature strongly confirms that AR/VR adoption in safety training is not experimental or marginal; it has become a validated approach across multiple high-risk sectors with outcomes that frequently surpass traditional methods. Evidence from construction, mining, electrical work, maritime operations, healthcare, emergency response, and industrial processing consistently shows that immersive training environments provide safer, more repeatable, and more impactful learning experiences than lectures, videos, or occasional drills (Duarte et al., 2025; Lampropoulos et al., 2024; Dodoo et al., 2025; Makransky & Klingenberg, 2022; Vercelli et al., 2024; Hancko et al., 2025; Faiz et al., 2024).

A central advantage repeatedly emphasized in the literature is the creation of a **zero-risk training environment**. Workers can experience scenarios such as explosions, fires, falls from height, chemical exposure, equipment failure, and emergency evacuations without exposure to real hazards. This allows repeated practice of procedures and decision-making under pressure in ways that are impossible or unethical to replicate physically. Such immersion fosters embodied learning where participants do not only memorize procedures but enact them in realistic contexts (Lampropoulos et al., 2024; Makransky & Klingenberg, 2022). This experiential repetition significantly strengthens hazard recognition and procedural memory.

Sector-specific studies reinforce this point. In construction environments, VR simulations of working at heights and heavy equipment operations significantly improve hazard perception and safe work behavior compared to conventional instruction (Akindele et al., 2024; Babalola et al., 2023; Abotaleb et al., 2022; Alzarrad et al., 2024; Adami et al., 2021). In mining and rescue operations, VR provides realistic disaster simulations where trainees practice navigation, communication, and rescue coordination under crisis conditions (Duarte et al., 2025; Dodoo et al., 2025). Similar effectiveness is observed in oil refineries, electrical maintenance, maritime safety drills, and emergency response teams, where rare but critical incidents can be rehearsed safely (Pribadi et al., 2024; Vercelli et al., 2024; Lampropoulos et al., 2024; Hancko et al., 2025).

Healthcare and paramedic training also benefit significantly. AR and VR simulations allow medical personnel to rehearse complex procedures, oncology pharmacy protocols, and emergency response without endangering patients (Monaco et al., 2025; Atalor & Enyejo, 2025; Cogiel et al., 2025). This demonstrates that immersive technologies enhance both safety and ethical training practices in sensitive contexts.

Beyond safety replication, AR/VR improve **knowledge and skill acquisition**. Studies on electrical operators and construction workers show statistically significant improvements in understanding occupational safety, hazard identification, and operational skill after VR-based training (Lampropoulos et al., 2024; Pribadi et al., 2024; Abotaleb et al., 2022). The immersive nature of VR encourages deeper cognitive processing and situational awareness, enabling learners to internalize safety procedures rather than merely recall them.

A second key contribution is **behavioral change and readiness**. Research indicates that VR training increases safety motivation, preparedness perception, and confidence in handling emergencies (Dodoo et al., 2025; Makransky & Klingenberg, 2022). Workers report feeling more ready to face real hazards because they have "experienced" them virtually. This psychological preparedness is crucial in crisis situations where hesitation can lead to injury or loss of life.

AR contributes uniquely through **contextual instruction**. By overlaying digital instructions and hazard warnings directly onto the real environment, AR supports situated learning where workers apply safety knowledge in real time (K et al., 2024; Babalola et al., 2023; Daida et al., 2025). This enhances skill transfer from training to workplace because learning occurs in the actual physical context where tasks are performed.

Another major advantage is **performance assessment through data-driven feedback.** VR/XR systems automatically record errors, response times, evacuation paths, personal protective equipment compliance, and even physiological indicators. These data enable evaluation at Kirkpatrick's Level 3 (behavior) rather than merely knowledge recall (Pooladvand et al., 2025; Dodoo et al., 2025; Vercelli et al., 2024; Monaco et al., 2025). Trainers can identify patterns of mistakes and provide targeted feedback, turning safety training into a measurable and iterative improvement process.

The comparison between AR, VR, and XR reveals complementary strengths. VR is most effective for complex emergency simulations and repetitive procedural practice (Lampropoulos et al., 2024; Akindele et al., 2024). AR excels in real-world task guidance and long-term memory reinforcement (Babalola et al., 2023; Daida et al., 2025). XR combines both for a full safety chain: scenario rehearsal (VR), real-time workplace assistance (AR), and continuous monitoring (XR analytics) (Dodoo et al., 2025; Vercelli et al., 2024; Monaco et al., 2025).

These findings clearly answer the research objective. AR/VR are not merely training tools but integrated systems for simulation, assessment, and behavioral reinforcement. They enable proactive risk mitigation by allowing organizations to prepare workers thoroughly without exposing them to danger. Moreover, the data generated by immersive systems support continuous safety improvement and evidence-based training strategies.

Despite limitations such as cost, realism constraints, and motion sickness, the overall evidence strongly indicates that AR/VR produce superior outcomes compared to traditional training, particularly in high-risk environments where experiential learning is critical. Their ability to combine safety, realism, repetition, assessment, and behavioral change positions them as strategic technologies for modern safety management.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the evidence shows that AR and VR technologies play a strategic role in developing safer and more effective safety training while enabling measurable performance assessment and sustained behavioral change for risk mitigation in high-risk work environments. By providing immersive, zero-risk simulations of hazardous scenarios, these technologies enhance knowledge acquisition, operational skills, hazard recognition, and psychological readiness beyond what traditional methods can achieve. Their capacity to record user behavior, analyze errors, and deliver data-driven feedback further transforms safety training into a continuous improvement process rather than a one-time instructional activity. The complementary strengths of VR for complex simulations, AR for contextual real-world guidance, and XR for integrated monitoring demonstrate that immersive technologies function as comprehensive systems for simulation, evaluation, and reinforcement of safe practices. Thus, AR and VR are not merely supportive tools but essential components of modern risk mitigation strategies in occupational safety..

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