

Effect of COVID-19 Epidemic on Health and Safety Management Function in Apparel Sector, Sri Lanka

Senananda, W. H. S. G.¹ and Weerasinghe, T. D.²

Human Resource Department that performs Human Resource Management (HRM) function in organizations must play a key role in fighting against coronavirus while ensuring the sound health and safety of its employees and the sound performance of other HRM functions. Apparel manufacturing industry in Sri Lanka was particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic mostly because most of the industry manufactures for exporting which had to stop because the supply chain had come to a halt. Once the country started emerging out of the pandemic, factories had re orient themselves to the 'new normal', which entailed COVID-19 prevention safety protocols which would be of utmost importance to safeguard health of employees. The research aims to understand the impact of COVID 19 spread on health and safety management function of Sri Lankan apparel manufacturing companies as regards health and safety protocols for prevention of COVID-19 spread. This study is carried out as a qualitative exploratory research work. Further, purposive sampling was used to select the sample. This was carried out as a cross sectional descriptive study comprising of 10 respondents. Data was collected via telephone interviews and the reliability and validity was tested through thematic analysis. The themes of Conceptual Health & Safety Control, Innovative Health & Safety Control, Engineering Health & Safety Control, Administrative Health & Safety Control and Self- disciplined Workforce Control were recurring themes brought up by the respondents. The findings of this research serve as a guideline for every organization, HR practitioners and to all the health and safety practitioners in the country. It is recommended to HR, give more consideration on employee wellness, employee upskilling, identifying key employees and recognizing their efforts, employee counseling and proper communication in order to get the work done from their employees efficiently even within this turbulent period.

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¹ Undergraduate, Department of Human Resource Management, Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka [sachini.g.senananda@gmail.com]

² Senior Lecturer, Department of Human Resource Management, Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka [dananjaya@kln.ac.lk]