

Impact of Workplace Burden Due to COVID-19 Pandemic on Employee Performance

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Abstract - The Sri Lankan apparel industry accounts for 7% of the country's GDP and employs 15% of its workforce. Frightening levels of the spread of Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) have captured the attention of the apparel industry not only locally but globally. During this epidemic crisis, identifying the factors that affect the employees' workplace burden in the apparel industry is vital to the GDP of a country like Sri Lanka, as the economy of the country relies on growth in the Sri Lankan apparel sector. Each workplace burden has a distinct impact on employees' job performance. The objective of this study is to determine how the intensity of the COVID-19 epidemic affects employees' workplace burden and performance. Thereby assisting policymakers in responding to how to overcome the workplace burdens of the employees during this epidemic crisis. A mixed research approach, with both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, was used in the research. Considering the past literature and the industry experts' opinions, factors related to workforce burden due to COVID-19 were identified and categorised into four categories. Partial Least Square (PLS) was used to analyse the relationship between the workforce burden factors and employee performance during the COVID-19 pandemic period. As the ultimate findings under the data analysis, exposure to COVID-19 and workplace preparation and work-related relationships have a significant positive impact on employees' performance. The workload has a significant negative impact on the behaviour and results-based employees' performance that has no significant impact on trait-based performance. Job-related uncertainty in the future has no significant impact on employees' performance. Improving workplace safety regulations, developing online employee interactions, and increasing immediate management attention to employees are some of the suggestions to mitigate identified workplace burdens. The findings of this study related to the factors affecting workplace burdens must be addressed promptly by policymakers or employers in the Sri Lankan apparel sector to improve employees' performance and, ultimately, industry performance. The outcome of this research would be useful in the future when a pandemic situation arises.

Keywords - apparel sector employees, COVID-19 pandemic, workplace burden