

Exploring Occupational Health and Safety among Workers in Katunayaka Export Processing Zone, Sri Lanka

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Free Trade Zones (FTZ) were promoted in Sri Lanka as an essential part to the economic development. The oldest FTZs in Sri Lanka being the Katunayake and Biyagama. Companies in FTZs are expected to boost export earnings. At present there are about 39000 workers employed in the Katunayaka FTZ. Occupational Health and safety (OHS) is an important aspect in Human Resource Management and in Sri Lankan context, studies regarding to OHS is limited. Based on this back ground, objective of the study was to exploring Occupational Health and Safety among workers in Katunayaka Export Processing Zone, Sri Lanka.

A qualitative approach was adopted to the study. This study was conducted in Katunayaka Export Processing Zone (EPZ), Sri Lanka. The study was consisted into two phases. Knowledge on OHS, implementing policies regarding to OHS in work place, and participation for OHS among workers were explored. Focus Group Discussions and In-depth Interviews with workers were conducted to data collect. Purposive sampling method was used to select participants among workers based on the inclusion criteria. Workers were selected from different factories in the zone. Initially twenty workers (n=20) from different factories were selected to the study. Saturation method was used as the guiding method of data collection. Data were analyzed using framework analysis.

Awareness about rights and responsibilities of OHS was found to be good in some extent and awareness about Manager's rights and responsibilities on OHS was found to be poor among workers; awareness about safety methods while working was found to be good; implementing policies regarding to OHS in work place is remaining at better status and participation for OHS activities was found to be good in some extent.

In conclusion, it is needed longitudinal research to better understand of OHS among factory workers. A well-planned promotion intervention to improve OHS is essential.

Keywords: FTZ, Health, Occupational Health, Safety