

Evaluating the Occupational Health and Safety Performance in Compliance to OHSAS 18001:2007: A Study in Food Industry of Sri Lanka

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Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) is a precondition to protect the workers' health whilst fulfilling the social responsibilities. The role of research in improving working conditions is gaining a new impetus. Thus OHS management systems like OHSAS 18001:2007 is one result of this concern. Even though many organizations in Sri Lanka have gained this certification but still safe and sound OHS practices are questionable. Thus it is crucial to evaluate the OHS of an OHSAS certified organization. Nevertheless studies in concern to OHS in the food industry are limited. This study was conducted to access the OHS practices in the food industry in compliance to OHSAS 18001:2007 and to measure the perception of workers on OHS practices. One hundred and thirty two (132) industrial workers and 46 supervisors and executives of a fruit and vegetable processing factory were selected. The study revealed poor accomplishments in certain requirements of OHSAS 18001:2007 like Communication, Participation and Consultation, Documentation, Emergency Response, Incident Investigation, Non-conformity and Corrective action and Preventive action and Continual Improvement. Practices like proposing innovative methods in risk reduction and reporting near misses were poorly performed by the workers. Majority of the industrial workers have encountered minor injuries (68%). Weak relationships were found between safety performance and educational level of the workers, working experience, and attendance of the OHS trainings, safety communication among co-workers, safety communication between supervisors and workers. However, long working hours, Hazard Identification, Training and Competence showed a moderate relationship with safety performance. The most dominant factor that affects safety performance was the Top Management Commitment which was strongly correlated with safety performance. The major constraints identified in promoting the OHS were Organizational constraints (Lack of trainings) and dispositional characteristics of the workers (Staffs' habitual practices). Thus the study revealed that the food industry in Sri Lanka should focus more and strengthen their policies regarding safety concerns.

Keywords: Occupational Health and Safety, Safety performance, OHSAS 18001:2007