

EXPLORING THE REASONS FOR KNOWLEDGE, SKILL, ATTITUDE GAPS AMONG SRI LANKAN FRESH GRADUATED HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS: AN INDUSTRY AND ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVE

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1. Introduction

In Sri Lanka, fresh graduated Human Resource Management (HRM) professionals often face challenges in meeting industry expectations, despite the growing demand for proficient HR professionals when seeking jobs. These challenges arise due to gaps in knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSA) among recent graduated HR professionals. Addressing this gap, the study investigated the underlying causes of KSA gaps among fresh HRM graduates from Sri Lankan universities who are currently employed in the industry.

2. Research Methodology

An exploratory qualitative study was conducted, adopting a constructivist paradigm and a case study strategy. Unstructured interviews were held with 30 participants, comprising 11 HR professionals who conducting recruitment, 8 HRM lecturers, and 11 recent HRM graduates employed in the industry. Thematic analysis was employed to identify core themes, and frequency analysis was used to quantify the most significant reasons.

3. Findings and Discussion

The findings revealed unique significant reasons for KSA gaps. The most significant knowledge gap arises from a mismatch between academic theory and practical industry applications, along with inadequate real-world HR exposure. Skill gaps arise most significantly through inadequate hands-on experience and poor communication skills, especially in English. Regarding attitude, the primary gap arises via the resistance in adapting to the organizational culture and a lack of initiative in continuous learning.

4. Conclusion and Implications

The study emphasized the need of enhancing practical exposure through internships, industry-academia collaboration, improving communication skills, and fostering adaptability via soft skills training to bridging the KSA gaps. They have significant implications for Sri Lankan HR education reform and industry-academia collaboration. Theoretical contributions include contextualizing reasons for KSA gaps of Sri Lankan graduated HRM professionals, while practical implications strategies.

Keywords: Employability, HRM education, Significant reasons for knowledge, Skill and attitude gaps