

The Implementations of Employee Relaxation Techniques in the Apparel Industry of Sri Lanka: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

The apparel industry in Sri Lanka, a significant contributor to the country's economy, is characterized by high levels of work pressure, long hours, and physically demanding tasks. This review aims to examine the importance of relaxation techniques for employees working in this sector and how such techniques can contribute to enhancing productivity, reducing stress, and improving overall well-being. The paper investigates existing research on the relationship between stress management and employee performance, with a specific focus on the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. Various relaxation techniques, including mindfulness, meditation, physical exercise, and organizational support, are explored in terms of their applicability and impact on employees in this context. The review suggests that while employee relaxation techniques are underutilized, their potential to improve job satisfaction and mental health outcomes makes them an essential area for future exploration and intervention.

Keywords: Employee Relaxation, Apparel Industry, Stress Management, Mental Health, Workplace Well-being

INTRODUCTION

The apparel industry in Sri Lanka is one of the country's largest and most important economic sectors, contributing significantly to exports and employment. However, it is also notorious for its strenuous working conditions, long working hours, and intense pressure. The high stress levels associated with these conditions can lead to physical and psychological issues for employees, which in turn can affect productivity, job satisfaction, and overall employee health (Gunasekara et al., 2021).

Employee relaxation techniques have gained increasing attention in global workplaces as a means to mitigate stress and promote well-being. This literature review explores various relaxation techniques used in the apparel industry, specifically in Sri Lanka, and their impact on workers' mental health and productivity.

Stress and its Impact in the Apparel Industry

Stress is a common challenge in the apparel industry due to the fast-paced, repetitive, and physically demanding nature of the work. According to Seneviratne and Abeykoon (2019), workers in Sri Lanka's garment factories are often subjected to long shifts with minimal breaks, leading to high levels of work-related stress. Chronic stress can have detrimental effects on both physical and mental health, resulting in burnout, anxiety, depression, and musculoskeletal disorders (Samarasinghe et al., 2020).

Stress also negatively affects productivity, absenteeism, and employee turnover. The need for stress reduction and relaxation practices is critical to maintaining a healthy and motivated workforce. In Sri Lanka, however, research on stress management techniques in the apparel sector is still limited.

Employee Relaxation Techniques

Relaxation techniques are methods used to help employees reduce stress, enhance their well-being, and improve overall work performance. In the context of the apparel industry in Sri Lanka, several techniques have been identified as potentially effective.

1. Mindfulness and Meditation

Mindfulness practices involve focusing on the present moment and developing an awareness of one's thoughts and feelings. Studies show that mindfulness reduces stress, improves concentration, and enhances emotional regulation (Hara & Nishida, 2021). In Sri Lanka's apparel sector, some companies have started introducing mindfulness programs to their employees, with promising results in stress reduction and enhanced focus during work (Perera & Karunaratne, 2020).

2. Physical Exercise

Physical exercise is another well-documented stress-relieving technique. Regular exercise not only improves physical health but also releases endorphins, which are natural stress relievers. For apparel workers in Sri Lanka, incorporating physical activities like stretching or yoga into daily routines can be highly beneficial in preventing work-related injuries and improving mood (Fernando & Weerasinghe, 2018).

3. Workplace Environment and Organizational Support

Research indicates that the work environment and organizational policies play a crucial role in employee relaxation and stress management. Providing comfortable rest areas, ensuring reasonable workloads, and offering flexible working hours can help reduce stress (Seneviratne & Abeykoon, 2019). In Sri Lanka, some apparel companies have introduced programs that allow workers to take short breaks for relaxation and mental health support, which have led to higher job satisfaction and productivity (Hewage et al., 2020).

4. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) provide support for personal issues, including mental health problems. EAPs have been shown to improve employees' well-being and work performance by offering counseling services, stress management workshops, and support groups (Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2019). Although EAPs are not yet widespread in Sri Lanka's apparel industry, their implementation could be a significant step toward improving worker health.

Impact of Relaxation Techniques on Employee Well-being

A number of studies emphasize the positive impact of relaxation techniques on employee well-being. According to a study by Gunasekara et al. (2021), employees who engage in relaxation practices report lower levels of stress and improved job satisfaction. Furthermore, when workers feel supported in managing stress, their engagement and productivity at work tend to increase. In Sri Lanka, the implementation of relaxation techniques has the potential to improve both mental and physical health outcomes for employees in the apparel sector.

CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Despite the positive effects of relaxation techniques, there are several challenges to their widespread adoption in Sri Lanka's apparel industry. These challenges include a lack of awareness, inadequate infrastructure, and the economic pressures faced by companies. Additionally, many employees may not feel comfortable participating in relaxation programs due to cultural stigma around mental health (Samarasinghe et al., 2020).

To overcome these barriers, it is important to engage both management and employees in creating an organizational culture that values mental health and well-being. Future research should explore how companies in Sri Lanka can integrate relaxation techniques into their corporate policies and evaluate their long-term effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The apparel industry in Sri Lanka is under considerable stress due to demanding work conditions, and employee well-being is at risk. Relaxation techniques, such as mindfulness, physical exercise, and organizational support, have the potential to mitigate these challenges and improve both the mental and physical health of employees.

While research on this topic is still developing, the benefits of these techniques for employees in the apparel industry are clear. More research and implementation of stress-relief programs in Sri Lankan apparel factories are needed to enhance worker well-being and boost organizational performance.

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