Perception of female employees towards the Lean and work culture change in apparel industry in Sri Lanka

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Due to the rapid globalization and competition, different industries are trying adopting new methodologies of manufacturing and meeting the demands in every aspect. Lean Manufacturing or Toyota Production System is one of the systems which have gained popularity as a process improvement technique and to enhance the productivity. Lean endeavours to generate value through eliminating of wastes, reduction of inefficiencies while respecting humanity. Though there are number of studies have been conducted under this domain in various countries and regions, few academic researches have been done in Sri Lanka specially focusing humanistic perspective on lean implementation and changing work culture. This study aims at examining female employees' attitudes towards the lean implementation and changing work culture. A case study was conducted at a one of the Sri Lankan garment factory located in Matale District. Pretested interviewer administered questionnaires for a sample of 45 employees were selected based on the stratified random sampling. Three focus group discussions were held with 30 employees based on convenient sampling to gain in-depth insights. SPSS and thematic analysis were used. The mean age of the study sample was 28 years and majority belonged to the Sinhalese ethnicity. Employees perceived positive attitudes towards the lean implementation though they are not aware much of the whole concept technically. Changes of desirable level of work culture; health and safety procedures, team work, reflections of work performance etc. were positively rated. Moreover, increasing level of understanding using multicultural strategies is vital to develop the work culture.

Keywords: Lean manufacturing; Female worker; Attitudes; Work culture

Biography

Shalika Sewwandi is an undergraduate of University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, reading for BA (Bachelor in Arts) degree specializing in Sociology. She has completed Diploma in Human Rights at the Center for Human Rights, University of Peradeniya and is currently studying Diploma in Counselling and Psychology, at the Institute of Psychology, Kandy, Sri Lanka. She is a member of Sociological association, University of Peradeniya. Her research interests include Sociology of Management, Industrial Sociology, Labour Rights and Welfare.

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