The Relationship of Workplace Communication Stress and Turnover Intention of Apparel Industry Workers: Evidence from Colombo District, Sri Lanka

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Abstract: This study was done to identify the relationship between Workplace Communication Stress (WCS) and Employee Turnover Intention (ETI) among the apparel industry workers in Western Province, Sri Lanka. Five (5) apparel manufacturing organisations were selected for this study by representing small, medium and large scale organizations in Western Province, Sri Lanka. Data were collected from 150 workers using a pretested questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed using the Cartwright and Cooper's ASSET Model. Descriptive and Inferential Statistic methods were used for data analysis. Results reveal that 52% of the workers had low level WCS. About 37 % and 11 % had medium and high levels of WCS respectively. The Variables have shown there is a moderate strong positive correlation between WCS and ETI ($\rho = 0.450$, P<0.000). There is a knowledge gap in Sri Lanka to conduct researches on how to minimize WCS in a sustainable manner rather than just using "carrot and stick" tool. A better a strategy to minimize WCS would lead to lower ETI.

Keywords: ASSET model, employee occupational stress, employee turnover intention, stress of workplace communication.

1. Introduction

Human Resource Management (HRM) is the process of acquiring, training, appraising and compensating employees and of attending to their labor relations, health and safety and fairness concerns (Dessler, 2009). Human Resource Management (HRM) encompasses those activities to design to provide, motivate and coordinate human resource of the organization. The human resource of an organization represents its largest investment (Pattanayak, 2003). Even though the employees are the largest investment of an organization, from the other hand the employees' emotions have profound effect on almost everything what employees are doing in their work places. Particularly the employees' occupational stress can be highly influenced in many ways in terms of organizational behavior. High stress is related to increases in turnover intentions (Schults & Schults, 2004). Stress is a physiological and psychological mechanism which prepares a person to adapt or face to a particular situation.

According to the past literature, "Workplace Communication" is one of a major concern of employee occupational stress. It implies employees need and effective communication in order to perform their jobs effectively. According to Daniels and Guppy (1994), open communication in organisations can decrease levels of stress experienced by employees, but organisational communication will only be effective if it provides accurate information, thereby increasing the predictability of the working environment. A deficiency in these workplace stressors have been found to be associated with increased levels of stress (Bowen, Rose & Pilkington, 2016). Workplace communication is a sub-scale of employee occupational stress and it measures the extent to which a lack of resources or communication is perceived by individuals to be a source of stress.

In order to overcome the labour shortage in the industry it needs to clearly identify the factors behind the situation. When the causes are narrow down to the recruitment and retention difficulties there are many reasons behind them which are supporting to generate the labour shortage problem within the industry.

The objectives of the study is to find out the relationship between the stress level of workplace communication and the intention to leave the organization among the apparel industry workers in Sri Lanka and to find out the stress level of workplace communication among the apparel industry workers of Sri Lanka.

According to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, the apparel industry is significant in several aspects in the economy. The apparel manufacturing industry is the third highest national income generator of the entire industrial sector (CBSL, 2017). The contribution made by the industry include employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and generate investment opportunities for local investors. Therefore, the study is significant in several ways. From the industrial side the findings can be used to be aware of occupational stressors particularly the stress of workplace communication among the employees. If there is a positive relationship between these two variables,

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the findings can be utilized to minimize the employees' turnover, which is a burning issue in the industry.

2. Literature Review

According to the scholars (eg. Tett & Meyer, 1993; Price, 1977; Storey, 2001) the workplace communication has substantial impact on employee turnover intension. As literature demonstrates it could be a direct and/or indirect impact. The direct aspect of workplace communication and employee turnover intention bring about that there is no presenting factor/s to mediate the relationship between effective workplace communication and employee turnover intention. As the indirect relationship shows there are certain factors that link the relationship between the effective workplace communication and employee turnover intention. According to the view of Petitt, Goris & Vaught (1997), there is a high positive correlation between job satisfaction and workplace communication. While other scholars (Price, 1977; Tett & Meyer, 1993) articulate that there is an association between effective workplace communication and employee turnover intention.

3. Research Methodology Overviews

In this study scholar focused on WCS and the co-relation of ETI among the apparel industry workers in Sri Lanka and the study is based on Western province in Sri Lanka. To examine the stress level of the apparel workers which is the independent level of the research model the study used the Organizational Stress Screening Tool (ASSET) model develop by (Cartwright & Cooper, 2002). ASSET model has four questionnaires and this study is based on the first questionnaire which uses to measure the employee perception.   Turn over intention which is the dependent variable of the study measured by a three question model adopted from Donnelly and Ivancevich (1985). The sample population of the study was ten (10) selected by small, medium and large scale garment manufacturing factories in western province Sri Lanka. Questionnaires were distributed among the sample by using stratified sampling. Co-relation method was used to specify the relationship between the variables.

A. Research Designing

The correlational research can evaluate the direction and strengths of the relationships and patterns of the relationships among variables in a single group of subjects without controlling the variables. It has wide range of designs to detect simple relationship between variables to complex casual directional designs (Ary & Sorensen, 2006). Correlational research can be either exploratory or confirmatory research. Exploratory research is usually done when the alternative options have not been clearly defined or their scope is unclear (Singh, 2007). In exploratory research design, researchers investigate the possible relationships, causes and effects. Advanced statistical methods such as path analysis and structural equation modelling facilitate the researchers to statistically confirm the findings of the exploratory studies (Hair et. al, 2009).

B. Validity Evidences

In present study, the researcher carefully selected and slightly modified the available tests to measure the originally intended constructs of the tests. Hence, new validity evidences, especially the new evidences based on internal structure and consequences of testing, are not necessary to provide for the present study. All the sub-scales that have been used to measure the variables in the study were published standardized scales or modified versions of them that have been used in prior studies as valid and reliable measures to measure the similar constructs. The measurements and their sub-scales to measure the variables in the present study were selected through the rigorous literature review of existing related theories and empirical studies. By conducting a comprehensive literature review, the researcher has selected standardized instruments that can be able to apply directly or as adapted versions to measure the constructs of the present study. The scales selected for the study is adopted standardize questionnaire developed by earlier researches.

C. Sampling Method

In order to achieve the objectives of the study quantitative research approach was used and data were collected by a sample survey. Hence, the non-probability sampling procedure was inappropriate to select the sample of the study.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

A. Distribution of workplace communication stress among the population

The stress level based on the Workplace Communication illustrates the Table 01. According to the Table 01, the low stress level percentage is 52 while the medium stress level percentage is 37 based on the table. More than one third of the total population exhibits medium level of stress level according to the table. The sum of the percentages of medium and high levels of stress is 48 while the low stress level percentage is 52 according to the Table 01 illustration.

Table 1
Illustrates the distribution of the workplace communication stress among the sample

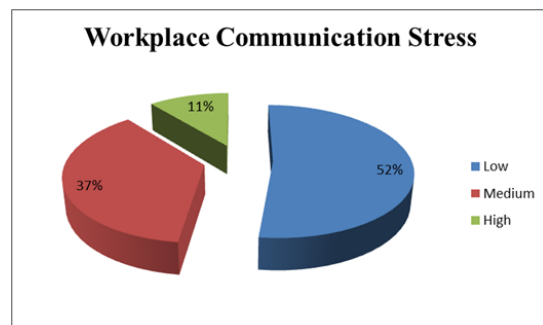| Workplace Communication Stress		
	Frequency	**Percent**
Low	76	52
Medium	54	37
High	16	11
Total	**146**	**100**

Fig. 1. Illustrates the distribution of the workplace communication stress among the sample

B. Distribution of Turnover Intention

According to the Table 2, the majority of the sample shows low level of turnover intention. As a percentage that reflection is 57. At the next the highest level of frequency shows high level of turnover intention. Numerically that amount is 45 while as a percentage that is 32. According to the table, only 11% shows a medium level turnover intention. As shown by the Table 01, the sum of medium and high turnover intention is 43% and that percentage can be considered as a considerable percentage as the low level of turnover intention among the sample shows as 57%.

Table 2
Illustrates the distribution of the employee turnover Intention among the sample

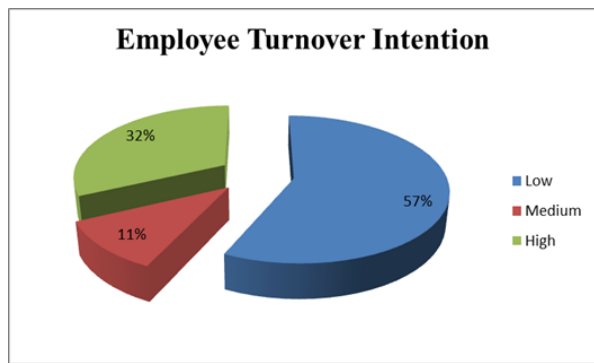| Employee Turnover Intention		
	Frequency	Percent
Low	79	57
Medium	15	11
High	45	32
Total	**139**	**100**

Fig. 2. Illustrates the distribution of the employee turnover intention among the sample

C. Association between the workplace communication stress and employee turnover intention

Table 3
Illustrates the correlation coefficient and association between workplace communication stress and employee turnover intention

Factor	Chi-square Values	Correlation/ Coefficient	P Values	Significant/Not-significant
Workplace Communication Stress	35.114	0.45	.000	Significant

According to the Table 3 Workplace Communication Stress indicate significant association with the employee turnover intention. More over Workplace Communication factor indicates significant moderate correlation with the turnover intention. That moderate level is also closer to strong level correlation over again.

The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between the workplace communication stress and employee turnover intention on apparel industry workers in Sri Lanka. According to the literature there is very limited studies have been conducted in this regard based on Sri Lankan context.

No matter how large the rewards might be, generally many individuals may not enjoy their work, spending in a limited square area with highly monotonous works. Workers who are more satisfied with their job have lower absenteeism and turnover rates than those who are dissatisfied with their jobs (Gray-Toft & Anderson, 1985; Ilgen & Hollenback, 1977; Terborg, et al., 1982).

ETI is the thought of leaving an organisation by employees of a company (Tett & Meyer, 1993). According to the past literature ineffective communication or lack of it clearly has large impact on employee turnover of intention to leave the organization (Nwagbara, Smart, Ugorji & Ennsra, 2013).

The descriptive statistics shows the workplace communication has a strong positive correlation with the above said employee turnover intention. Accordingly, the above literature validates the above findings of this study.

Furthermore, the workplace communication stress always drives the employee towards the occupational stress. Occupational stress has a cost for individuals in terms of health, physical and psychological well-being, and job satisfaction, as well as for organizations in terms of absenteeism and turnover, which in turn may impact upon the quality of care provided for patients (Lambert & Hogen, 2009).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The apparel industry is the largest single employer in the manufacturing industry providing direct employment opportunities to over 300,000 and 600,000 indirectly, which includes a substantial number of women in Sri Lanka. It is should be noted that the major reason for the establishment of the apparel industry in Sri Lanka was provide employment opportunities for local people. It can be considered as one of major employment generator in the economy.

It is expected that the suggestions given by this study will help to bring better insights into workplace communication among the apparel industry workers in Sri Lanka. The findings of this study as well as the past literature clearly demonstrated that the workplace communication stress impacts turnover intension positively.

The industry, face many problems in developing and maintaining the required manpower. It is visible in all categories, particularly in operational grades. Even in the managerial grades. (Dheerasinghe, 2003).

Therefor it is significantly important to examine the factors, which are, generate a mind set to quite the organizations among the employees. This is because when employees frequently leave an organisation, it will disrupt the smooth functioning of such organisation and the overall success of the industry will negatively affected by this ultimately. Employees need adequate effective communication in order to perform their jobs effectively (Viljoen & Rothmann, 2009). According to Daniels and Guppy (1994), open communication in organisations can decrease levels of stress experienced by employees. It is therefore highly recommended that the managements of the industry should quickly respond to the issue of employee turnover intention with a special reference of workplace communication of the employees, lest it should get out of its control.

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