

HR Practical Session

HR Practical Papers

Example

Accident Prone Employees in Small and Medium Scale Wooden Industry in Colombo District: Analysis of Reasons behind their Accidents

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1. Introduction

There is no argument that the survival of any kind of business depends on the competent and skilled employees. Competent and skilled employees are the key to gain competitive advantages in the turbulent environment today. This scenario is common for the large scale business organizations as well as the small and medium scale business organizations. The majority of the business organizations in the wood industry in Sri Lanka is small and medium size and the owner of the wood business or the person who has sole authority of managing human resource as well as physical resources of their business. There is invisible of executive level in the organizational structure in most of the cases. However, operational workers in this sector play significant role to attain the customer requirements as well as maximize the wealth of the owners.

In many cases, workers are having low educational qualifications. The entry level of the operational workers in the wood industry is trained or unskilled labourer. On-the-job training method is the main method of developing the workers from the unskilled labour level for the skill labour level in the wood industry. Training is not simple. It is hard in nature. Their working conditions remain the low level quality compared with other industry. While salary level of the operational workers is low level, working hours of them are more than eight per day. There is no properly defined scope of job and role ambiguity is there.

The accident rate of the operational workers in this sector seems high rate and the lost of working hours due to the accidents lead to loss of the profit of the owner and the compensation given to the workers who injured as a result of accident are also high level. Therefore, the accidents rate of the operational workers in this industry has become a serious issue today.

2. Problem and Objective of the Study

There are few symptoms of the accident prone environment in this sector, that are listed below.

1. There is a high level absenteeism rate due to the accident (source past practices).
2. There is high level turnover of young workers (source past practices).
3. Delaying of handing over the jobs for the customers on owing to dates (source past practices).
4. More customers complain are there (source past practices).
5. Compensation for the accidents is high rate (source past practices).
6. Loss of profits and cash inflows are normal thing (source past practices).

All these symptoms mentioned above lead to create different major problems such as lack of attractiveness of the job & industry, new comers negative attitudes regarding the job and career, accident prone situations, etc. Among these problems, accident prone incidents of the wood industry record more and it becomes a significant issue. This is common problem among younger workers, newly recruited workers as well as experienced workers. Therefore, the problem concerned with this study is; “What are the factors behind the accident prone employees in this sector?”

The main problem of this study is to explore the reasons behind of accident prone employees in the wood industry in Colombo District.

3. Method

3.1. Sample of the Study

The study considers the all operational workers in the small and medium scale wooden industry in Colombo District. It is difficult to find out the clear population of the sample because of its informality. There is no proper registration or records maintained by any government body or other institutes regarding this sector. However, this study was done using 25 wood industries in Colombo District and considered all current operational workers as well as few resigned workers as the sample. A lot of information and data were gained from the owners of the wood companies in this sample.

3.2. Data Gathering

The major methods of data gathering to explore the reasons of accident prone employees in this sector were listed below.

1. Available secondary data: Documents maintaining by the owners of small and medium scale wooden industry is not a practice. Therefore, clear and accurate secondary data on the accidents of employees in this sector was crucial and critical. However, there were few unclear and unorganized data on employee accidents having in few owners of wooden companies and those data were used to find the reasons of accident prone of the wooden employees.
2. Owners experiences: The most reliable and valid method of data gathering is the experiences of the owners of the small and medium scale wooden companies. They have first hand experiences of each and every incident on employee accidents in the workplaces. 25 owners of small and medium scale wood companies were involved to discuss the gathered data regarding study objective.
3. Employee experiences: Past and present employees were interviewed in various ways to gather the data. Three categories of employee were involved in discussions in this study. One category was past employees who resigned from the company on different reasons. The second category of employee was the newly recruited unskilled workers. The third category of employees was the employees who have more experiences in this sector.
4. Incident analysis: One best way of gathering primary data of this study was incident analysis. Incidents were collected from owners, past employees and present employees. All stories were asked individually and analyzed critically to find out the reasons of accidents of employees.

5. **Observations:** Observation is the best way of confirming the data collected from various ways. Tools used by the workers, working conditions, the general behavior of workers were observed in different time periods.

3.3. Data Analysis

Simple qualitative data analysis methods were used. All analysis of primary data leads to qualitative judgments.

4. Findings of the Study

Through the analysis of the primary data, I found few reasons of employee accidents in this sector, which are listed below.

1. Unawareness of handling the machines and tools: Unawareness of handling the machines and tools are very serious of newly recruited workers in this sector. Comparing to the experienced workers, newly recruited workers presented either carelessness or more carefulness. Carelessness is a major course and more carefulness seems a cause of accidents in some cases. Newly recruited workers were most of the time unskilled workers and they are engaging to learn the job duties and responsibilities on-the-job training method.
2. Appointing workers to oversee all site operations: All workers in the company play multi roles in the workplace. It means that lack of a specific job description for each level of the worker. Specially on the demand of the customers, owner or the in-charge of the the workplace asks to do all kinds of works of all workers without specifying the newly recruited workers or physically un-matching workers. Various demands of different work roles lead to carelessness or businesses in this sector. This is one of serious issues that may help to keep the high rate of employee accidents.
3. Careless thinking behavior: Most of the owners and workers think that they are working with safety manner. This thinking pattern leads to carelessness of workers when doing their work at danger machines or unsafe machines.
4. Lack of technical knowledge: Most of the young and newly recruited workers face for the accidents due to lack of technical knowledge of the machines.
5. Lack of safety method and safety precautions: All kinds of workers in this sector have very little knowledge about the safety strategies and safety precautions. They are avoiding harmful situations using their own experiences.
6. Lack of monitoring: The major reason of the high level of accidents in this sector is the lack of monitoring system. Human protecting system as well as the electronic protecting system is not practiced by the workplace. The majority of owners are incapable of investing money to hire electronic protecting system. Observations or supervisions for protecting employees from the safety places are also not a practice in the companies.
7. Layout of the workplace: The work layout of all wooden workshops is unplanned. Different machines as well as storing the different kind of timbers are in the single large same place. Materials as well as finishing goods are also stored in this area. Therefore, in the workshop of the wooden company looks like a mess. This may help to high rate of accidents among the wood workers.
8. Poor training: There is no proper training practice for the workers. All workers started their career as unskilled workers and learn the job from the on-the-job training method. On-the-job training method seems the only training method used by all owners to train

the workers. However, proper training practices of workers demands high cost generally. More investment in training is unbearable for owners of small and medium scale companies in Sri Lanka. Usually retention levels of workers in this sector remain very low level and it helps to attention of investing money for the comprehensive training for the workers in this sector. The majority of the workers believes that the best of learning of the job is on-the-job training method and they use this training method as a habit.

9. Worker faults: There were a few accidents due to the faults of the workers, who may be either newly recruited workers as well as experienced workers.
10. Habit: Careless behavior of the workers is common in the workshops. They seem the unsafe and dangerous machines or unsafe places in the workshop as natural. Therefore, they are not fear for the unsafe and dangerous machines and places in the workplace. This habit becomes a serious problem for high rate of accidents among the workers.
11. Cost of preventive strategies: Many owners are unable to invest money to install highly safety protective machines or repairing the unsafe parts of the existing machines. They always installed safety and risk machines or machines which are not properly covered of the dangerous parts. All small and medium scale owners run their businesses with limited capital and their customer category is also limited to significant low level segmentations.
12. Sharp instruments: Compared to the past in the wood industry, today there are few speed machines which are shaped in nature. This becomes a significant reason of employee accidents.
13. Lack of general motivation: Workers motivation in this sector remains at a very poor level and workers feel that carpenter job is not respectable in society. Their dress is seemed as dirty. Addressing way of owner and customers are not attractive. Therefore, they behave with lack of motivation in the workplace.
14. Dust and noise: Dust and noise in the workshop are comparatively high. Dust is the results of wood cutting and noise are the results of machine operations. All dust and noise lead to safe less situations in the work place.
15. Insufficient lighting: There were few incidents of accidents resulted in the lack of sufficient lighting in the workshop.
16. Repetitive work: The major reason of the high rate of accidents in this sector is the job itself. The job itself is repetitive in nature and it brings carelessness.
17. Experience level: More experienced workers work with less care. Therefore, it leads to help more accidents among the experienced workers.
18. Age: Young workers in this sector prone to more accident than the older workers. However, it doesn't mean that old workers are always free from the accidents.

Following (figure 01) conceptual framework is developed based on the above reasons of the employee accidents.

Figure 01: Conceptual Framework

