

COVID Prevention and Working Environmental Risk Prevention and Buisness Continuety among the Sme's in Selected Districts in Sri Lanka

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Abstract : Introduction: Covid 19 pandemic was badly hit to the Sri Lankan economy during the year 2021. More than 65% of the Sri Lankan work force is engaged with small and medium scale businesses which no doubt that they had to struggle for their survival and business continuity during the pandemic. Objective: To assess the association of adherence to the new norms during the Covid 19 pandemic and maintenance of healthy working environmental conditions for business continuity. A cross sectional study was carried out to assess the OSH status and adequacy of Covid 19 preventive strategies among the 200 SME'S in selected two districts in Sri Lanka. These two districts were selected considering the highest availability of SME's. Sample size was calculated, and probability propionate to size was used to select the SME's which were registered with the small and medium scale development authority. An interviewer administrated questionnaire was used to collect the data, and OSH risk assessment was carried out by a team of experts to assess the OSH status in these industries. Results: According to the findings, more than 90% of the employees in these industries had a moderate awareness related to COVID 19 disease and preventive strategies such as the importance of Mask use, hand sainting practices, and distance maintenance, but the only forty percent of them were adhered to implementation of these practices. Furthermore, only thirty five percent of the employees and employers in these SME's new the reasons behind the new norms, which may be the reason for reluctance to implement these strategies and reluctance to adhering to the new norms in this sector. The OSH risk assessment findings revealed that the working environmental organization while maintaining the distance between two employees was poor due to the inadequacy of space in these entities. More than fifty five percent of the SME's had proper ventilation and lighting facilities. More than eighty five percent of these SME's had poor electrical safety measures. Furthermore, eighty two percent of them had not maintained fire safety measures. Eighty five percent of them were exposed to heigh noise levels and chemicals where they were not using any personal protectives nor any other engineering controls were not imposed. Floor conditions were poor, and they were not maintaining the occupational accident nor occupational disease diseases. Conclusions: Based on the findings, proper awareness sessions were carried out by NIOSH. Six physical training sessions and continues online trainings were carried out to overcome these issues, which made a drastic change in their working environments and ended up with hundred percent implementation of the Covid 19 preventive strategies, which intern improved the worker participation in the businesses. Reduced absentees and improved business opportunities, and continued their businesses without any interruption during the third episode of Covid 19 in Sri Lanka.

Keywords : working environment, Covid 19, occupational diseases, occupational accidents

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