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Analysis of empowering workforce performance of sewing machine operators at an export oriented apparel factory

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The Sri Lanka garment industry has experienced phenomenal growth during the past twenty-five years and has emerged as a major contributor of the economy. The study focused on the performance of sewing machine operators. The training provided and the extent to which sewing machine operators are empowered were tested with their performances. The overall objective of the study was to analyze the improvement of the quality and efficiency level of the performance of sewing machine operators. Specific Objectives were to identify the standard skill profiles of sewing machine operators, to identify the increase of awareness level of sewing machine operators on quality and efficiency at work, to analyse the improvement of the multi skill levels of machine operators and to find out the improvement of quality and efficiency of production lines.

Two modules/production lines of a leading apparel manufacturing factory were selected for the study. Operators were exposed to training and practice of new techniques independently. Data collection was conducted by administering a Questionnaire. Key individuals were interviewed and observations were made to verify the findings. EXCEL computer packages was used for data analysis. Key variables were tested for relationships. Majority of the sewing-machine operators had awareness on achieving the planned efficiency. Almost half of them were aware of the methods which could be implemented to increase the efficiency of the module. Operators expressed their ability to perform multi-operations and half of the operators could perform three operations within the target standards. Majority of the respondents were confident of operating without supervision and they perceived to be highly satisfied in their jobs. The skills profiles of the sewing machine operators had increased considerably and majority were aware of the quality aspects at work. Operators had shown improvement in efficiency and standards of performances. Understanding of the quality and efficiency concepts at work had facilitated their progress. Machine operators could be empowered by giving responsibilities and comprehending on related activities, targets and goals. It could be concluded that acquiring of multi-skills levels had contributed to the empowerment of operators had increased the overall performances.

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