

## **EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES AND ABSENTEEISM IN MANUFACTURING FIRMS IN COLOMBO DISTRICT, SRI LANKA**

Sudharshan G.<sup>1</sup> and De Alwis, A.C.<sup>2</sup>

Employee absenteeism remains a significant challenge in the Sri Lankan manufacturing sector, with mental health playing a crucial role in workforce stability and productivity. This study examines the relationship between mental health initiatives and absenteeism in manufacturing firms in the Colombo District. A quantitative research approach was adopted, utilizing structured questionnaires to collect data from 400 employees. The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of mental health programs in reducing absenteeism and enhancing employee well-being. The findings indicate a positive correlation between mental health initiatives and reduced absenteeism, particularly among younger employees (18–25 years) and those with less than one year of job experience. Operational staff and supervisors exhibited higher absenteeism and stress levels compared to managerial employees, highlighting the need for targeted interventions. Family responsibilities and health challenges were identified as primary causes of absenteeism, while mental health programs had limited impact on addressing broader workplace stressors. Despite improving attendance, the effectiveness of these initiatives in reducing stress was constrained by systemic challenges such as heavy workloads and work-life imbalance.

The study concludes that a holistic approach integrating tailored mental health initiatives, improved program accessibility, peer support networks, and flexible work arrangements is essential for minimizing absenteeism and fostering employee well-being. These findings contribute to the discourse on workplace mental health and offer actionable recommendations for improving workforce stability in the Sri Lankan manufacturing sector.

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<sup>1</sup> Undergraduate, Department of Human Resource Management, Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka [Sudhanshan8@gmail.com]

<sup>2</sup> Senior Professor, Department of Human Resource Management, Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka [chamaru@kln.ac.lk]