

GENDER IMBALANCE IN SRI LANKAN LABOR MARKETS AND THE CONCERNS OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The employment conditions in Sri Lanka are at the optimal in statistics for a period of time since independence. According to the Central Bank statistics, the employment rate is 95.3% while the labor force participation rate is 53.3% in 2014. Sri Lanka is now experiencing the lowest unemployment rate in comparison to previous periods. But, it does not mean that the labor force is performing perfectly. Even though, there are no major issues in Sri Lankan labor markets today, it is expected such issues in future which will result unfavorably from the Human Resource Management perspective. That hidden issue is emphasized as the gender imbalance in Sri Lankan labor markets which simply means women participation rate to the labor force is gradually increasing while men participation rate is slightly decreasing. This is a review paper which investigates the reasons affecting to this gender imbalance in Sri Lankan labor markets, analyzing the employment contribution by gender in Sri Lankan economy, future trends in economy's labor force. Further, this features the role of Human Resource professionals and the strategies to be adopted in addressing the aforesaid imbalance. This paper fostered with the information obtained by secondary sources and this is the first review carried out in emphasizing such an issue in Sri Lankan labor force blending with the HRM perspective.

Keywords: *Gender imbalance, HRM perspective, Labor markets, Labor force*

1. INTRODUCTION

The sustainable development of any economy depends on the quality of its human capital. Even very high sophisticated technologies which can boost the efficiency and the quality of products will be useless, if the employees do not possess sufficient knowledge and expertise to operate it. Therefore, the most prioritized action is human capital development. Second, all the other physical matters.

Population in Sri Lanka stood at 20.675 million in 2014 (mid - year) and further, male and female populations were respectively 10.033 and 10.642 million (CBSL, 2014). But, the labor force was limited to 8.805 million out of the entire population which is defined as the economically active population, whose age is 15 years and above. But each one who is representing the labor force cannot be an economically active person, because house wives, full time