

**ANALYSIS OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ISSUES AMONG
MALE AND FEMALE FRONTLINE WORKERS IN APPAREL
INDUSTRY: SPOTLIGHT ON FEMALE WORKERS**

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Thesis/Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of
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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own work and this thesis/dissertation does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any other University or Institute of higher learning and to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where the acknowledgement is made in the text. I retain the right to use this content in whole or part in future works (such as articles or books).

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The above candidate has carried out research for the Masters dissertation under my supervision. I confirm that the declaration made above by the student is true and correct.

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Nadun Madhushanka

Signature of the Supervisor:

Date: 05 /06/2025

DEDICATION

**I DEDICATE THIS PIECE OF WORK TO
MY BELOVED FAMILY MEMBERS.....**

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ABSTRACT

Garment industry is known for its essential role in manufacturing but is also associated with a high prevalence of occupational-related health conditions among its workforce. Garment factory workers are exposed to a plethora number of occupational hazards, which can lead to chronic health issues. Therefore, many gender -specific research studies should be conducted to address occupational health issues and organizational and policy-level interventions should be implemented to improve wellbeing especially for female workers. However, there are lesser specific studies or comparative analysis has been carried out previously to explore issues. This study aimed to conduct a comparative analysis of occupational health issues, focusing on MSK disorders and psychological stress, among male and female frontline workers in the apparel industry. The research sought to assess the prevalence and severity of these health issues and explore the differences in how male and female workers experience these conditions. Furthermore, gender sensitive recommendations were suggested to overcome or minimize the identified health issues specifically targeting the female workforce. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study collected data through questionnaire surveys across three garment factories in Sri Lanka. The literature reviewed suggested that while male and female workers face occupational health challenges, there are notable differences and disparities between genders. The findings revealed the significant gender-based differences in MSK disorders and psychological stress. Female workers reported a higher prevalence and severity of MSK pain and psychological distress compared to their male counter parts. Additionally, the quality of life among female workers was found to be comparatively lower. This study contributes to a better understanding of occupational health from a gender perspective, informing policymakers, industry leaders, and occupational health professionals on creating safer and more equitable workplaces. Future research should continue to explore these gender-specific differences and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing disparities and improving the overall occupational health conditions of both male and female workers.

Keywords: occupational health, female workers, musculoskeletal disorders, psychological stress, gender differences, apparel industry, gender-sensitive interventions

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
BP	Blood pressure
COPD	Chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases.
CTS	Carpal tunnel syndrome.
CVD	Cardio vascular diseases
HR	Heart rate
HPAA	Hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis

HPA	Hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal
MSK	Musculoskeletal.
OSH	Occupational safety and health
PPE	Personal protective equipment.
UK	United Kingdom.
VAS	Visual analog scale
WHO	World health organization.
WMSD	Work related MSK disorders
WSQ	Work stress questionnaire

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