

AN OBSERVATIONAL STUDY ON RISKS IN FILM AND TELEVISION PRODUCTIONS; SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ART DEPARTMENT WORKFLOWS

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Abstract. The film production is a highly specialized field, characterized by a unique blend of artistic vision, technical expertise, organizational strategy, and psychological insight. It requires the coordinated efforts of diverse workflows across multiple departments, among which the art department plays a significant role in constructing the film's visual world realistically. Within the art department's workflows, the extensive use of human labor exposes crew members to various dangers and risks. Despite the physical challenges and occupational hazards faced by individuals in the art department, there is a notable lack of scientific research focused on health and safety practices specific to this field. This study aims to identify and document potential hazards within art department workflows, focusing particularly on risk factors emerging during the pre-production and production stages. Grounded in observational analysis of three case studies, the research presents five key risk categories thematically extracted and identified within the art department's workflows. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of occupational risks in an art department within film production as a contribution to important local (Sri Lanka) and cross analyze global health and safety regulations.

Keywords: Risks Identification, Art Department, Film Production, Pre-Production Risks, Occupational Safety.

1. Introduction

The art department plays a critical role in the film production process, contributing significantly to a film's visual storytelling (LoBrutto, 2002). Within this department, various tasks—such as set construction, prop fabrication, scenic painting, and set decorating (Barnwell, 2017)—involve substantial physical demands and frequently expose crew members to occupational health and safety risks. For instance, during set construction, crew members are required to use power tools and perform heavy lifting, which can lead to serious injuries and long-term health issues. Similarly, during scenic painting and prop fabrication, they are exposed to a range of chemical substances, including adhesives, paints, and fiberglass materials. Prolonged or unprotected exposure to these substances can result in accidents and adverse health conditions, such as respiratory problems and allergic reactions. Therefore, implementing effective safety practices and risk management strategies within the art department is crucial. This is particularly significant in the context of the Sri Lankan film production industry, where safety protocols for art departments require greater attention and formalization. Addressing these issues is essential for ensuring appropriate risk management and the establishment of safety standards for art department crew members in film and television productions.

Film production involves a wide range of specialized departments, each contributing to different aspects of a film's development and execution. The directing department shapes the overall creative vision, while the camera and lighting departments manage visual composition and lighting design. The sound department captures and refines audio elements, and the production department coordinates logistics, scheduling, and operational management. Costume and

makeup teams define character appearance and help establish historical or cultural authenticity. Among these, the art department plays a crucial role in constructing the physical and visual world of the film through set design, prop fabrication, and scenic artistry (Honthaner, 2001).

Sri Lanka has long been a popular destination for global film and television productions, owing to its diverse landscapes, cost-effective production infrastructure, and skilled local workforce (British Film Institute, 2019). Numerous international projects have been filmed entirely on Sri Lankan soil, employing local crews across various departments. A notable example is the Bollywood film *Bombay Velvet*, which was shot entirely in Sri Lanka. To recreate the urban landscape of 1940s Bombay, the Sri Lankan art department constructed elaborate sets at the Ranminithanna International Cinema Village. While the directing, camera, and sound departments were primarily staffed by professionals from India, the production made extensive use of Sri Lankan locations and depended significantly on the expertise of the local art department. This example illustrates not only the increasing presence of global productions in Sri Lanka but also highlights the vital contribution of Sri Lankan technical departments, particularly the art department, in supporting and realizing international creative visions.

Given the increasing involvement of Sri Lankan crews in both local and international productions, there is a critical need to examine the working conditions and safety practices within departments, and this paper focuses on the art department. The study aims to document and identify potential risks that individuals face within the practices of the art department workflow. To achieve this, an observational research approach is applied. It is grounded in the author's direct experience, providing an insider's perspective on the challenges and risks faced by art department crews and clarifying the data with them. The author, a practising professional within the art department, has extensive experience in film and television productions, both in local and international projects. She has served as Production Designer, Art Director, Assistant Art Director, Standby Art Director, and Prop Master. Over her career, she has participated in the art departments of nine film and television productions, with a national award for one film.

Extracting from her experience, the present study focuses on two films and one television production as the three selected cases. The first case examines the Sri Lankan-produced film *Akasa Kusum* (Flower of the Sky), which was filmed entirely in Sri Lanka with an art department crew composed exclusively of Sri Lankan professionals. The author participated in this project as the Production Designer. The second case is a Canadian production, *Funny Boy*, which was also entirely shot in Sri Lanka, with the full art department crew consisting of Sri Lankan members. In this second case, the author served as the Standby Prop Master. The third case focuses on a television series, *The Good Karma Hospital* (Season Four), produced by a British production company. This series was similarly filmed entirely in Sri Lanka. While a few key roles within the art department, such as Production Designer and Standby Prop Master, were filled by professionals from England while the majority of the art department crew was composed of Sri Lankan members. In this production, the author was appointed as the On-Set Art Director.

These three cases were selected due to the prominent role played by the author as an insider to gain primary data and the production's well-structured organization

within the art departments. Analyzing these cases offers valuable insights into safety and risks within the practices of the art department workflow.

Film production typically progresses through three main stages: pre-production, production, and post-production. Pre-production encompasses all preparatory activities necessary for filming, including set design, prop construction, and location preparation. This study specifically focuses on the pre-production and production stages, as it represents the period of highest activity for the art department, particularly in the construction of sets, fabrication of props, and preparation of filming environments.

The significance of this study is its potential to fill the knowledge gap regarding the risk factors that require safety and risk management within film production focused on the art department. The primary objective of this study is to identify potential risks that members of the art department may encounter within workflows during the pre-production and production stages. Specifically, observing real-world practices in set construction, prop fabrication, scenic painting, and location preparation. The research intends to contribute to the development of better safety standards and practices for art departments, particularly within the Sri Lankan context and similar production environments.

2. Literature Review

The film production process requires a unique blend of creativity, technical expertise, and organizational skills.

While occupational risks are present across all departments involved in film production, the art department, in particular, is uniquely exposed to a broad spectrum of physical and chemical hazards. The art department translates the script and the director's vision into a tangible visual world by designing and constructing sets, props, and environments (LoBrutto, 2002). As a visual medium, cinema has the capacity to simultaneously portray reality and create highly stylized, pictorial environments (Monaco, 2000). One of the most compelling aspects of film lies in its ability to construct diverse story worlds (Egan, 2014), allowing audiences to immerse themselves fully in these imaginative spaces. The art department is central to this process, establishing the film's time period, environment, spatial elements, and social context to align with the narrative (Eder, 2010). Essentially, the art department translates abstract concepts from the screenplay or the director's imagination into tangible environments that support character development and enrich the storytelling experience (LoBrutto, 2002). As a result, the responsibilities and workflows of the art department vary significantly depending on the script and specific production requirements.

The work undertaken by the art department involves activities such as set construction, prop fabrication, scenic painting, and material handling (Barnwell, 2017), each of which introduces potential safety hazards, including exposure to toxic chemicals, working at heights, and operating power tools. To manage these tasks efficiently and to specialize labor, the art department is basically divided into several key subdivisions:

2.1. SET CONSTRUCTION

Responsible for constructing physical structures, including sets, backdrops, and props, based on the production designer's vision. This team works with materials such as wood, metal, and foam, and often operates power tools and works at heights to ensure both aesthetic accuracy and structural integrity.

2.2. SCENIC PAINTING

Focuses on painting and texturing sets to achieve the desired aesthetic. Techniques such as ageing, distressing, and creating faux finishes are commonly used to match the film's period, mood, and setting.

2.2. PROP DEPARTMENT

Sources, fabricates, and maintains props—such as furniture, weapons, books, or personal items—that align with the film's historical and stylistic requirements. This includes the management of hero props (featured in close-ups) and action props (used in stunt sequences).

2.2. SET DECORATION

Enhances the realism of sets by dressing them with non-moveable elements such as curtains, rugs, artwork, and decorative objects. The set decorator ensures that every detail aligns with the film's aesthetic and narrative needs.

Each subdivision within the art department faces its own distinct set of challenges and safety risks, making it one of the most dynamic and physically demanding teams on a film set. For example, the set construction team faces a higher risk of physical injuries due to the use of power tools, heavy lifting, and working at heights. In contrast, the prop-making and scenic painting teams are more frequently exposed to hazardous chemicals, leading to health risks such as allergic reactions, respiratory issues, and sudden accidents. Given the variety and physical intensity of tasks assigned to the art department, more extensive and specialized precautionary measures are required compared to departments with more standardized workflows.

2.3. IMPORTANCE OF HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE FILM PRODUCTION PROCESS

Health and safety are fundamental to maintaining a productive and efficient work environment. A well-structured safety program minimizes workplace hazards, reduces accident risks, and fosters a culture of responsibility and awareness (Anthony et al., 2007). Proper safety implementation not only protects workers but also enhances operational efficiency, reduces costs related to injuries, and improves job satisfaction.

Effective health and safety management requires continuous risk assessment, comprehensive training, and strict adherence to established regulations (Garcia-Herrero et al., 2012). Industries such as construction, manufacturing, and film production rely on structured safety protocols to prevent injuries and ensure smooth workflows. Over the past 50–60 years, health and safety regulations have evolved significantly, placing the primary responsibility for workplace safety on employers (Jorgensen, 2015). This shift has led to the widespread adoption of

occupational health risk management systems, fostering safer work environments (Lanoie, 1992; Okunn et al., 2001).

Film production is inherently demanding, with long working hours (often exceeding 12-16 hours per day) contributing to fatigue, diminished focus, and an increased risk of accidents. The art department involves intense physical labor, exposure to extreme weather, and tight deadlines, which can increase stress levels. Financial constraints further increase pressure, often requiring crew members to multitask, leading to burnout. Additionally, the unpredictable nature of film sets—such as last-minute script changes or technical failures—demands quick problem-solving under high-pressure conditions.

Despite these risks, industry attitudes often prioritize production demands over safety considerations, as reflected in sayings such as “getting the shot is what counts” and “the show must go on.” Immersed in the art of illusion, crew members sometimes overlook real-world dangers, neglecting critical safety protocols (Campbell & Mann, 1987; McCann, 1991). Several incidents highlight the consequences of this mindset.

For example, during the filming of *The Siege of Sidney Street* (1960), British actor Leonard Sachs was injured while performing a scene inside a burning building. Although the room and props, as well as the actor's shoulders and arms, were coated with fire-proof jelly, the special effects crew neglected to apply the jelly to Sachs' head because it would have delayed production by approximately 20 minutes. As a result, Sachs suffered burns to his hair and scalp during filming (Sinden, 1982).

Similarly, during a dress rehearsal for *The Masked Singer* (2019), performer Michelle Williams, appearing as “The Butterfly,” suffered an electric shock when a set piece short-circuited during a CO₂ effect. Although Williams was reportedly unharmed, the force of the shock was sufficient to split one of the boots she was wearing (Entertainment Tonight, 2021).

In a more tragic incident, during the shooting of *Indian 2* (2024), a crane carrying heavy lighting equipment collapsed on set, resulting in the deaths of three crew members, including an assistant director, and injuring ten others. High-profile figures such as Director S. Shankar and actors Kamal Haasan and Kajal Aggarwal narrowly escaped serious injury (The Times of India, 2020; Lakshmi, Sharanya, & Menon, 2022). These incidents underscore the persistent tension between artistic ambition and workplace safety, demonstrating the urgent need for stronger safety practices within the film industry.

2.4. EXISTING HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS IN FILM PRODUCTION

According to safety guidelines issued by the Audiovisual Producers' Association, in collaboration with the European Institute for Health and Safety in the Film Industry and the Technical University of Ostrava – Faculty of Safety Engineering (2021), workplace safety on a film set is primarily the responsibility of the production managers and producers.

These individuals are accountable for ensuring compliance with legal standards and may face criminal liability in cases of injury, death, or property damage resulting from negligence. For instance, the Czech Act No. 40/2009 Coll. (Criminal Code)

stipulates those individuals who negligently harm others due to professional misconduct or cause injury to multiple individuals through gross safety violations may face imprisonment for one to three years. Such legal provisions underscore the necessity of strict adherence to safety protocols in film production.

In Australia, the Victorian Screen Industry Code of Conduct (Film Victoria Australia, 2013) offers comprehensive guidelines for managing location-based production risks. This document includes checklists to assist in identifying potential hazards; however, as these checklists are often generic, Film Victoria recommends involving safety experts to tailor risk management practices to the specific needs of each production.

In Los Angeles, the Industry-Wide Labour-Management Safety Committee (2002), operating under the Contract Services Administration Trust Fund (CSATF), plays a pivotal role in enhancing health and safety standards within the motion picture and television industry. This committee, composed of safety managers from major production companies, along with representatives from trade associations, guilds, and labor unions, developed the General Code of Safe Practices for Production, a foundational safety framework for California's film and television sector. Over the past two decades, the committee has issued 42 safety bulletins addressing a wide range of production-related risks (Santos, de Oliveira, & Rocha, 2018). While some bulletins focus on general safety measures, others provide detailed guidance based on federal, state, and local regulations. These guidelines cover industry-specific concerns, such as the safe use of helicopters and animals, working in cold environments, and the coordination of stunts (Industry-Wide Labor-Management Safety Committee, 2002).

It is widely understood that serious occupational accidents and illnesses can be prevented by adhering to the guidelines outlined in these safety standards. However, most existing safety frameworks primarily focus on risks occurring during the filming phase. These risks are often related to factors such as the physical characteristics of filming locations, the technical demands of capturing sound and images, the type of equipment used, and costume requirements (Industry-Wide Labor-Management Safety Committee, 2002). Notably, these safety standards identify relatively few risks specific to the art department, particularly during the pre-production stage.

Despite the central role of the art department in film production, there remains a significant gap in the academic literature regarding health and safety practices within this area. Much of the existing research focuses on broader industry concerns, with limited attention to the specific hazards faced by art department crews, especially in Sri Lanka. This study aims to address this gap by focusing on identifying the occupational risks inherent in art department workflows during the pre-production stage of film and television production.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to identify potential risks that individuals face within the practices of the art department workflow in film production. Data was collected through (a) systematic on-site observation and (b) narrative interviews with crew members of the selected three cases. The observation is focused on the pre-production and production stages.

3.1. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

1. On-Site Observation

The observation process was conducted by the author, who was part of the art department, through daily journaling. Observations were recorded systematically each day as a note-taking exercise, documenting the tasks completed and any risks or health hazards encountered. Observations were conducted across three case studies and were based on the author's direct on-site observations. The focus of the observation was specifically on identifying occupational risks and health hazards within the art department. Attention was given to activities related to set construction, scenic painting, set decoration, prop making and principal filming activities. Field notes were maintained throughout the pre-production and production stages, recording identified hazards, incidents, and informal safety practices observed during daily operations.

2. Narrative Interviews

Narrative interviews were conducted with crew members responsible for the art department's sub-divisions, including the construction manager, prop master, set decorator, chief painter, and assistant art director. The purpose of these interviews was to explore practical experiences and investigate the causes related to the accidents and health hazards documented through the observational journaling process. Interview data were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis to identify the underlying causes of the observed risks and to further validate the patterns noted during the observation stage.

3.2. CASE STUDY

Three cases were selected due to the prominent role played by the author as an insider (a member of the art department) to gain primary data on the workflow. As discussed in the introductory section, among nine television and film productions within her 15-year career, two films and one television series were journaled for this study. The following are the three cases.

1. Akasa Kusum (film)

Akasa Kusum is a film produced by a Sri Lankan production company and was entirely filmed in Sri Lanka, with an art department crew composed exclusively of Sri Lankan professionals. The primary film sets included a house, a nightclub, streets, a slum area, and a hospital. The hospital, slum, and nightclub settings were created by modifying and redecorating real, existing locations to match the needs of the film's story. In this film, the art department was specifically divided into three main sub-departments: set construction, prop making, and set decoration. The set construction team built indoor sets inside a film studio to represent different locations needed for the film, including a television reality program space, a television office space, and several slum houses. The prop-making department primarily handled the creation of breakable props for action sequences, including real glasses, fake alcohol, and cigarettes for the nightclub scenes. The set decoration team was responsible for dressing the filming spaces, including practical lighting elements such as decorative streetlights for Christmas festival scenes, nightclub lighting, and neon signage. The overall production process for the art

department spanned seven weeks, covering both the pre-production and production stages. The author served as the Production Designer for this film.

2. Funny Boy (Film)

Funny Boy is a film produced by a Canadian production company and was entirely filmed in Sri Lanka, with an art department crew composed exclusively of Sri Lankan professionals. The primary film sets included two main houses, streets, a railway station, a school, a convent, railway tracks, and a beach. The houses, streets, railway station, school and convent sets were created by redecorating existing places. In this production, the art department was specifically divided into four main sub-departments: set construction, scenic painting, prop making, and set decoration. The set construction team adapted parts of existing locations to create a jail and a police station. The prop-making department primarily handled the production of breakable furniture and multiple duplicates of props for action sequences, as well as crafting dummy weapons such as knives, swords, iron rods, wooden poles, and hammers for stunt scenes. The set decoration team redecorated the film sets according to narrative requirements, including replacing shop boards, road signs, landscaping residential properties, and installing practical lighting elements. The scenic painting team created large-scale hand-painted advertisements and film cutouts for use in the street scenes. The overall production process for the art department spanned ten weeks, covering both the pre-production and production stages. The author served as the Assistant Prop Master during the pre-production period and as the Standby Prop Master during the production phase.

3. The Good Karma Hospital (Television Series – Season Four)

The Good Karma Hospital is a television series produced by a British production company and filmed entirely in Sri Lanka. Key art department roles, such as the Production Designer and Standby Prop Master, were filled by professionals from England, while the remaining crew consisted of Sri Lankan professionals. The primary sets included a hospital, a house, a beach bar, and streets, with prominent filming locations specifically allocated to minimize public interaction. The art department was divided into four main sub-divisions: set construction, scenic painting, prop making, and set decoration. The set construction team built a new beach bar directly on the coast and adapted an existing hospital theatre. The prop-making team sourced surgical and hospital equipment, created dummy surgical tools, prepared vital sign monitors, and supplied breakable and replica items such as bottles, fake alcohol, and cigarettes. The set decoration team managed furnishing, painting, and practical lighting installations, particularly focusing on the challenges of the coastal environment. The art department's overall work spanned twenty-four weeks, covering both pre-production and production stages. The author participated as the Assistant Prop Master and Research Assistant during pre-production and as the Standby Art Director during production.

3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

At the end of the observational process, and following analysis, the potential and actual accidents and risks within the art department were identified. The causes of the observed risks and accidents were categorised based on themes that emerged

from consensus discussions with crew members. Each identified accident and its corresponding cause were then tabulated separately for each sub-department.

This tabulation process was applied across all three case studies, enabling a comparative analysis of the observed risks and safety practices. By cross-referencing the findings from each case, common risk patterns and variations were identified. This cross-case verification strengthened the reliability of the categorization process, ensuring that the key risk categories were not isolated incidents but consistently observable across different production environments. The integrated analysis of observational data and interview insights provided a comprehensive understanding of the occupational hazards faced by art department personnel. Ultimately, this process facilitated the categorization of five principal risk areas, which form the basis for the thematic discussion presented in the following sections.

Sub departments	observations	Causes (from interviews)
Set construction (pre -production)	Exhaustions	Long hours working
	Work stress	Working load is unbearable Less man power due to budget concentrates.
	Injuries while using Power tools	Less safety conditions No personal safety gears for workers
	Instant illness like blood pressure, fever---etc.	Bad weather Long hour working
	Food poisoning	No quality assures for food suppliers
	Chemical allergies	No personal safety gears like gloves, overalls
	Heavy lifting injuries	Less man power Work stress Working in very tight schedules
	Falls from heights	Unstable ladders, scaffoldings and less safety grips
	Food poisoning, dehydration	Less water supplying, using water without quality ensured
	Lots of Work stress and anxiety	Working more than 14 hours continuously Less man power Budget restrictions
	Accidents using hammers, hand tools	Due to work stress and fatigue
	Eye infections	Using chemicals using safety goggles Uneducated about the safety guidelines
	Electric shocks	
	Skin allergies	
	Swollen chemicals accidentally	Not have proper organized work shop and stores
Scenic Department (pre -production)	Eye infections	Using chemicals using safety goggles Uneducated about the safety guidelines

Figure 1: Sample of the Tabulation process (Source: prepared by authors)

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings derived from onsite observations and narrative interviews conducted within the art department of three case study film productions. The risks identified through the tabulated data were thematically rearranged into hazards and risk categories. The study categorizes key risk factors encountered by the art department during the pre-production and production stages of film projects into five main areas, as presented in Table 2. These categories are:

1. Physical and Occupational Hazards
2. Chemical and Material-Related Risks
3. Electrical Hazards
4. Special Effects and Stunt-Related Risks
5. Health and Well-Being Risks

Table 1: Identified Risks and Causes in the Art Department (Source: Prepared by author)

Category	Identified Risks	Causes
Physical and Occupational Hazards	Injuries from power/hand tools	Lack of safety training
	Falls from heights, ladders, scaffolding	Unstable scaffolding Unstable Ladders Lack of safety grips
	Heavy lifting injuries	Poor lifting techniques
Chemical and Material-Related Risks	Skin allergies from paints, adhesives	Poor ventilation Less Knowledge about materials
	Eye & respiratory issues from chemical exposure	Lack of protective equipment
	Accidents with artificial materials (foam, plastic)	Direct skin contact less knowledge about how to use
Electrical Hazards	electric shocks (esp. in outdoor/beach locations)	Improper insulation
	Fire risks from faulty wiring	Exposure to moisture and salt
Special Effects and Stunt-Related Risks	Injuries from real glass, weapons, and explosive materials	Lack of safety rehearsals
	Misidentification of real vs. fake props	Poor labelling and storage of hazardous items
Health & Well-Being Risks	Food poisoning, dehydration	Poor food hygiene
	Long working hours leading to exhaustion	Inadequate rest periods
	Lots of Work stress and anxiety	Not enough pre-production period Last-minute requirements
	Lack of immediate medical assistance	No on-set medical support No ambulance on set

4.1 PHYSICAL AND OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS

The most frequently encountered risks included injuries from power tools, falls from scaffolding and ladders, and injuries caused by heavy lifting. These findings align with Barnwell (2017), who identifies set construction and prop handling as particularly high-risk tasks due to the physical nature of the work. Similar hazards

have been noted in construction industries, as discussed by Garcia-Herrero et al. (2012), where working at heights and manual labor are primary sources of workplace injuries.

The lack of proper training and unstable equipment observed in Sri Lankan productions highlights the gap in applying structured safety protocols. Compared to guidelines like the industry-wide Labour-Management Safety Committee (2002) in the U.S., which mandates scaffolding safety and tool handling procedures, Sri Lankan productions appear to lack regulatory enforcement.

4.2 CHEMICAL AND MATERIAL-RELATED RISKS

Exposure to adhesives, paints, artificial materials, and dust presented considerable risks, especially among scenic painters and prop makers. Reported symptoms included skin irritation, respiratory discomfort, and allergic reactions, risks exacerbated by poor ventilation and limited PPE usage. While the literature acknowledges these hazards (e.g., McCann, 1991; Barnwell, 2017), most existing health and safety frameworks (such as those from Film Victoria Australia, 2013) address them only in general terms. The findings from this study suggest a pressing need for production-specific chemical handling guidelines, especially during the pre-production stage, which is often neglected in current safety literature.

4.3 ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

Electric shocks and wiring-related fire risks were identified, especially during location-based shoots such as in beach areas where moisture and salt exposure were prevalent. These risks were compounded by inadequate insulation and hasty setups under time pressure.

As discussed by Campbell & Mann (1987), the urgency of “getting the shot” often compromises crew safety. In contrast, U.S.-based safety bulletins (Industry-Wide Committee, 2002) recommend routine equipment testing and moisture protection practices not consistently followed in the observed productions.

4.4 SPECIAL EFFECTS AND STUNT-RELATED RISKS

Injuries involving breakable props, real vs. fake weapons, and poorly rehearsed stunt scenes were documented across all three case studies. The absence of clear labelling and designated storage areas for hazardous props was a recurring issue.

This supports findings in both academic and trade publications (Monaco, 2000; Lanoie, 1992), which describe how miscommunication and lack of protocol in prop use led to avoidable accidents. Incidents like the Indian 2 (2020) crane collapse reinforce the fatal consequences of neglecting safety rehearsals, paralleling risks observed in local productions.

4.5 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING RISKS

Fatigue, stress, long working hours, and lack of medical support were consistently reported. Symptoms ranged from dehydration and dizziness to emotional burnout, particularly during back-to-back night shoots or compressed pre-production periods.

These findings directly reflect concerns raised by Anthony et al. (2007) and Jorgensen (2015), who link long hours and unsafe working conditions to decreased

focus and higher accident rates. Moreover, cultural norms in the industry—reflected in sayings like “the show must go on”—frequently discourage workers from voicing concerns (McCann, 1991).

5. Conclusion

The literature review revealed a significant gap in research concerning risk identification and health and safety practices within the film and television industry, particularly in relation to the art department. While many international film industries have adopted formal safety protocols for the filming process, Sri Lankan film productions largely lack such structured guidelines. The working environment within the art department involves a wide range of risk factors and potential causes of health issues for crew members, positioning it as one of the highest-risk departments within a production.

This study underscores the variety of risks present in art department workflows and demonstrates how these risks differ across productions depending on factors such as the filming environment, production type, and on-set activities. By documenting these risks, challenges, and underlying causes, this research provides a valuable foundation for future studies and industry discussions aimed at improving safety standards. It is hoped that academics, researchers, and professionals in the film and television industry will use these insights as a practical guide for developing more effective and context-specific risk management strategies for art department operations.

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