

Vulnerable situation of agency-hired casual workers in the business logistic field in Sri Lanka

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Business Logistics Field (BLF) is a field that is an amalgamation of various business functions. It requires thousands of workers as it is multifunctional in nature. To fulfil the usual turn over, the logistic companies hire ‘casual workers’. The new trend in the casual labour recruitment is “recruiting employees via labour supply agencies”. These agencies are called in layman term as “manpower agencies”, and they come under the category of ‘fee-charging employment agencies’. The study considered the restructured category of employment called “Agency-Hired Casual Workers” (AHCW).

A combined research design was used for the data collection assisted by questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with field and a library surveys and both local and international legal instruments were used.

The field survey reveals that there is a huge demand for AHCW in the BLF. It falls under the sub category of ‘atypical employment’ and there is a high potential for having more vulnerabilities in BLF especially in the warehouse operations for the AHCW. The library research shows that the existing labour laws in the country are insufficient in recognizing the category of AHCW in BLF as well as in the supervision of legal provisions on claiming insurance on behalf of them. There is a salient unawareness on the insurance policy of such workers. Even though there are both international and local laws related to the subject, there is no proper system of identifying AHCW.

Finally the study emphasizes the requirement of identification of the BLF as a specific working field due to its complexity and hazardous nature in particular functions, AHCWs as a sub category of the ‘atypical employment’ by legislation and the quick ratification of the C121; Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964 [(No. 121) and C024; Sickness Insurance (Industry) Convention, 1927 (No. 24) for the betterment of AHCWs.

Finally, the research confirms the hypothesis ‘the existing labour laws do not provide any sufficient recognition and coverage on the insurance policies of agency-hired casual workers in the Business Logistic Field in Sri Lanka’.