

# SUSTAINABLE HUMAN CARE AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR ENHANCING WORKER PRODUCTIVITY IN THE TEA INDUSTRY OF SRI LANKA

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The tea industry plays a prominent and strategic role in Sri Lanka due to its significant impact on national output and employment generation, the society and the national culture. Therefore, the overall worker productivity in the tea industry plays an integral role in terms of national income and foreign exchange earnings. However, today, the tea industry in Sri Lanka is facing the issue of declining worker productivity which has been recorded as the lowest among the tea producing countries in the world. In order to enhance the present level of worker productivity, simply applying conventional Human Resource Management (HRM). The practices are not adequate, the need for a unique and sustainable HRM model is a vital requirement as a strategy for dealing with this crisis and sustaining the tea industry in the competitive global marketplace. Therefore, this paper aimed at proposing a strategic relationship between human care practices (HCPs) and knowledge management practices (KMPs) as sustainable human resource management practices (SHRMPs) towards enhancing worker productivity in the tea industry of Sri Lanka. The study specifically focusses on the tea industry, since tea is the key contributor for the overall performances of the plantation industry. This research further elaborated the relationship of HCPs and KMPs as intermediate factor on the quality of the work-life (QWLs) and quality of life (QLS) that in turn enhance worker productivity. Un-structured interviews of 15 randomly selected senior level managers of well performing tea estates in Sri Lanka reported that, HCPs and KMPs as sustainable HR practices has strong relationship with worker productivity in tea plantations while enhancing the level of their QWLs and QLs as an intermediate relationship. The responses of selected plantation managers were coded and a list of sustainable human care and knowledge management practices were identified. According to the findings, this relationship provides a strong foundation for stable and consistent enhancement of worker productivity in the tea industry of Sri Lanka, in terms of long-term benefits. The findings were well supported by the premises of psychological contract and social exchange theories. The study also proposes future research on further validation of identified human care and knowledge management practices as sustainable human resource management practices which have direct relationship on worker productivity.

**Keywords:** Human resource management practices, Knowledge management, Quality of work life, Productivity, Plantation industry