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PERCEPTIONS OF IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIFIC SKILLS IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES OF THE CLOTHING INDUSTRY

Purpose. *Small and medium-sized organizations need to resist the challenges of the contemporary business environment. Development of professional skills of employees is seen as important factor, which contributes to overall business improvement [1]. Purpose of this paper is to evaluate difference in perception of employees from small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) of clothing industry about the importance of development of professional skills.*

Keywords: *skills, human resource management (HRM), small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), clothing industry.*

Objectives. Human resource management (HRM) combines people-oriented management practices with the objective to acquire and keep committed and skillful workforce. These HRM efforts are oriented towards reaching competitive advantage by orienting on human resources as one of the main assets of the company [2]. Development of critical competencies of human resources is one of these practices. Main objective of this paper is to consider the differences in perceptions of employees from small and medium sized enterprises of the clothing industry about the importance of developing industry specific skills to improve business.

Methodology. Main research question is: “Do the employees from small enterprises recognize equal level of importance of specific skills development as the employees from medium-sized enterprises of the clothing industry?” Research includes answers of 238 employees from SMEs of clothing industry in Serbia, that assessed importance of development of specific skills. In order to answer the research question employees’ assessments were analyzed using the independent samples t-test within SPSS program.

Research results. Abilities to connect knowledge in the field of textile technologies with other areas of business, use of modern engineering tools, skills and techniques in practice, inventiveness and innovation in work, flexibility in

behavior and the like, are requirements for professionals in the clothing industry [3]. Development of these skills is important in the clothing industry and it is important that entities of different sizes recognize the benefits of their development practice. This research takes into account the difference in perceptions of employees in small and employees in medium-sized organizations of the clothing industry in Serbia. Based on responses provided 167 employees from small and 71 from medium sized clothing industry enterprises, Levene's test for equality of variances within the conducted independent samples t-test shows that the significance level is Sig.= 0.001, as provided in Table 1.

Table 1 – Independent samples t-test results

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Development of specific skills	Equal variances assumed	11.497	.001	-2.306	236	.022	-.29699	.12751	-.54529	-.04869
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.638	103.015	.009	-.29699	.11147	-.51403	-.07915

Based on the result of F test, which is 11.497 and low level of statistical significance (<0.05) it can be concluded that there are no statistical differences between perceptions of two groups of respondents.

Conclusion. Employees of small and medium-sized enterprises have similar opinion when it comes to importance of development of specific skills with the purpose of business improvement. Thus, response to the main research question is that employees from small enterprises recognize equal level of importance of specific skills development as the employees from medium-sized enterprises of the clothing industry. Future research shall cover the question of the core set of skills in clothing industry according to contemporary challenges.

References

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