

Report on

**Health and Safety of female workers during COVID-19 in Rehash Accessories and Sourcing Limited**

By

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An internship report submitted to the BRAC Business School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Business Administration

BRAC Business School

BRAC University

October, 2020

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## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

1. The internship report submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The report does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The report does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Subject: Submission of internship report on “Health and Safety of female workers during COVID-19 in Rehash Accessories and Sourcing Limited”

Dear Sir / Madam,

This is my pleasure to display my entry level position in Rehash Accessories and Sourcing Limited regarding 'Health and Safety of female workers during COVID- 19 in Rehash Accessories and Sourcing Limited', which I was appointed by your direction.

I have attempted my best to finish the report with the essential data and recommended proposition in a significant compact and comprehensive manner as possible.

I trust that the report will meet the desires.

Sincerely yours,

---

Maliha Tabassum

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Date: 3/10/2020

## **Non-Disclosure Agreement**

This agreement is made and entered into by and between Rehash Accessories and Sourcing Limited and the undersigned student at BRAC University

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## Acknowledgement

I would like to begin with showing my utmost gratitude to the Almighty. Without His blessings it would have never been possible to complete the report in the time frame due to the ongoing pandemic. At the same time doing the internship physically and working on the internship report was a very challenging task to complete keeping the recent COVID-19 situation in mind. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude towards my internship advisor, Shamim Ehsanul Haque (Assistant Professor), who became my academic supervisor and provided me proper guidance and effective feedbacks for writing this report.

Also my heartfelt thanks to my onside supervisor, Md. Ali Jinnah (Assistant General Manager) and Sharif Md. Abdullah (Managing Director) who continuously motivated and assisted me in learning different functions of HR department and entrusted me with challenging HR activities over the past three months. At last but not the least I would like to thank and show my gratefulness to BRAC Business School. Along with all my faculty members and my family support I have accomplished my three months of internship in a well reputed multinational company.

Regards,

Maliha Tabassum

BRAC Business School

BRAC University

## Executive Summary

REHASH basically gives an idea of pieces of writing or pieces of films into a new method but without any excessive change. The naming concludes the foundation of the standard, rather improved products and supplies to fulfill the need of present day garments. Under the guidance of Shamim Ehsanul Haque (Assistant Professor-BRAC Business School), this report has been prepared to analyze the Health and safety of female workers during COVID- 19 situation in Rehash Accessories And Sourcing Ltd, which is a sister concern of Sharif Enterprise.

In Chapter 1, I mentioned the objective of producing this report, which is to conduct a detailed analysis on the Health & Safety situation in workplace of RMG industry of Bangladesh. Few limitations that I faced during my internship is not being able to visit the company physically. In chapter 2, I have written about the overview of the company. The products and their different certifications have been provided. Furthermore, I mentioned about the company's different corporate social responsibilities and health and safety activities. In Chapter 3, I tried to define health and safety of workers during this ongoing pandemic from different perspectives. And what are the impacts of the pandemic on the workers and company itself. I also briefly stated manager's actions for the female workers. This chapter also covers the literature review, the manager's actions and the recommendation about how they can be more careful with their health and safety of the workers in this pandemic.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Objective

- Since I completed my 3 months internship in Rehash Accessories and Sourcing Ltd, this report has been prepared as part requirement of my degree completion process
- To conduct a detailed analysis on the Health & Safety situation in workplace of RMG industry of Bangladesh
- To present necessity of Health & Safety policies in workplace & establish the devised application in developed countries.

## 1.2 Methodology of data collection

**Primary source** – Due to pandemic, it was not possible to physically visit the office and collect primary data from management or from the workers as the office was physically closed and only had online platform.

**Secondary source** – For this report, all the information has been collected through company website, related articles published in renowned journals and through newspaper clippings.

## 1.2 Limitations

- As stated before, data could not be collected by physically visiting the company due the ongoing COVID- 19 pandemic.
- Since I was an Intern, several important confidential data was not shared with me during the internship.

## **Chapter 2: Overview of the Organization**

### **2.1 Company mission**

The main objective of Rehash Accessories and Sourcing Limited is to deliver a one-stop solution in the field of sourcing clothing accessories through new and eco-friendly efforts maintaining topnotch quality in order to bring satisfaction to consumers.

### **2.2 Company Vision**

The vision of the company is to pursue quality in manufacturing cloth accessories and to achieve the assurance of different type of diversified global and multinational brands.

### **2.3 Product**

The following are the products offered by the company:

- Carton Sticker
- Drawstring
- Hangtag
- Imitation Leather Patch
- Jacron Paper Patch
- PU Leather Patch
- Photo Inlay
- Pocket Flasher
- Polyester Button
- Price Tag
- Printed Care Label
- Pure Leather Patch
- Screen Print
- Transparent Sticker
- Twill Tape

- Waist Belt
- Woven Label



**Figure 1: Products of Rehash**

## 2.4 Service

Rehash provides constant services to their clients. Their client’s demands are always given maximum priority.

## 2.5 Clients

Rehash Accessories and sourcing ltd has national clients as well as international clients for their products quality. Some of their clients are. ABA Group, New Asia Group, Tusuka etc. They are very much concerned about their client service and clients comfort. And they take client feedback very seriously.

## 2.6 Certification received

Rehash Accessories and Sourcing Limited has received several renowned and important certifications for its operation. The details of these certifications have been provided below.

**1. Oeko-Tex Certificate Standard 100, Class 1, on PU Leather Patch**



**Figure 2: harmful substances excluded certification**

**2. Oeko-Tex Certificate on PU Leather Standard**



**Figure 3: Leather Certification**

**3. Oeko-Tex Certificate Standard 100, Class 1, on PU Leather Patch**



**Figure 4: Harmful substance excluded certification**

## 2.7 Operations/branches

Rehash is currently operating in as a sister Concern of **Sharif Enterprise**. The head office is located in Tongi, Gazipur.

## 2.8 Company values

In this part, a detailed analysis has been done on company values of Rehash Accessories and Sourcing Limited. As an Intern, I have tried to observe the company's main principles and culture that it maintains. Details have been provided below.

The main values offered by Rehash Accessories and Sourcing Limited to the customers are the following:

- A promise to provide the best quality product and on time delivery.
- Production of best quality leather patches and garments accessories.
- In terms of product development swift response to customers.

Rehash Accessories and Sourcing Limited offers a good working environment to all its staffs. It focuses on achieving goals through teamwork for which most of the time employees are to conduct their work activities through self-managed work teams. This empowers and as well as motivates them to be a part of the organization and to strongly remain committed towards company values and objectives. The company is also very concerned about continuous learning and development

of the employees for which educational training programs are being offered. Moreover, for career development additional supports are also being provided to ensure proper nurturing of the employees.

## **2.9 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

### **2.9.1 Building Safety**

The factory building is planned with adequate fire safety, helping defender and so on. For fire security, ordinary preparing on the utilization of fire quenchers and clearing plan are given to the laborers. Satisfactory fire exits have likewise been considered in the structure plan. The processing plant is additionally worked with sufficient light and ventilation offices

### **2.9.2 Health**

Sanitation facilities and having suitable access to purified water are essential to the workers. Regular health check from nearby clinics are mandatory, and as per the instruction of BGPMEA and code of conduct of Social compliance they have been medically insured.

### **2.9.3 Working Conditions**

Approach to every one of laborers with respect and dignity and allow all administration, staff and specialist – creating reasonable, inviting and healthy work environment. The organization doesn't use corporal punishment or some other type of physical or mental pressure. Basic eating, prayers, games/sports and different social exercises leads to a better work environment for all. Satisfactory cleanliness is kept up in and around the working environment to give a sterile workplace to the workers.

#### **2.9.4 Exemption of Child Labor**

Child labor is extremely prohibited as defined by the ILO and United Nations conventions and/or by National Law. Irrespective of male or female gender no person who has not been 14 years of age are not allowed to recruit and employ of any nature of job.

#### **2.9.5 Environmental Issues**

This organization is dedicated to agreeing to all significant/relevant environmental of the Bangladesh Government to guarantee environmental security during the time spent utilizing unpolished materials, fabricating items, and releasing wastes. The organization observes the rules and standard techniques for different parts of the environmental preservation and rules of the concerned administrative bodies. Different squanders of the fabricated items are offered to different makers as an aspect of the reusing cycle. It doesn't just stays away from carbon outflow yet additionally all the substance squanders are discarded as per local environmental laws. In this way, the organization guarantees insignificant harm to nature and takes care of the environment.

#### **2.9.6 Safety in Operation and First Aid**

By briefing them about the safety in operations regularly and also monitored and supervised closely by the supervisors during employing in the machine operation. In addition, appropriate uniforms along with aprons are provided to the workers for safety purpose. Sufficient first aid kits are kept in areas of the factory that are accessible easily and workers are regularly given updates and briefing on their use.

## Chapter 3: Health and Safety

### 3.1 Health and Safety at workplace

According to WHO, ““A healthy and safe workplace is one in which workers and managers collaborate to use a continual improvement process to protect and promote the health, safety and wellbeing of all workers and the sustainability of the workplace.” -WHO 2010.

Health and safety of the workers in an organization is one of their fundamental rights. Occupational health is a multidisciplinary field of healthcare concerned with facilitating an individual to undertake their occupation, in the way that causes least harm to their health. It aligns with the promotion of health and safety at work, which is concerned with preventing harm from hazards in the workplace. It means making the workplace more favorable for the workers by reducing all kinds of risks. Ensure safe work environment for the employees. Risk can occur in many forms such as repetitive tasks, long work hours, exposure to harmful substance's like gas and fumes ,damage due to use of equipment's, psychological and physical oppression. A safety and health management system, or safety program, can help to focus on efforts at improving work environment. Also, employers are to some extent responsible for health and safety management. This means making sure those workers and others are safe from anything that may cause harm, effectively controlling any risks to injury or health that could arise in the workplace.

Occupational health and safety basically means the programs, guidelines and procedures that protect the safety, welfare and health of any person engaged in work or employment. When health and safety measures are followed correctly, they can help to prevent accidents and reduce the risk of employee injury and illness. The health and safety issues are very much related to the working environment on the organization. To prevent the emergence of occupational risks and protect the physical and mental health of the workers, both at work and home, to speed up and maintain the productive activity of the workers and to ensure an uncontaminated environment to the community outside the working places, in a word maintenance of healthy environment in the industrial areas is essential. Safe and healthy workplace is considered to be a right of any worker. Since people spend major portions of their days in workplaces, the nature and scope of safety and security remain a major issue.



## 3.2 Health and safety at workplace in Bangladesh

Bangladesh as a developing country has largest democracy with the continuous economic growth 6%- 7.5%. Resilient high growth economy leads to new businesses, every day in every possible sector. Taking Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) into account Bangladesh is the 44th largest economy in the world. JP Morgan has included Bangladesh among their shortlists of “transitional states likely to succeed”. Bangladesh is also listed in the N-11 (next 11) by the Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. RMG, the mainstay of Bangladesh economy, accounts for 78% of country’s export economy. Bangladesh became the 2nd largest apparel exporting country in the world. During the fiscal year 2010-2011 RMG export totaled USD17.91 billion, a 43% increase over previous year. Recently RMG is playing a significant role to alleviate poverty through skills development and employment generation. Around 20 million people are directly and indirectly depending on this sector for their immediate livelihoods. It has brought benefit and blessings for millions of people in the country (Farzana, 2013). Workers’ health and well-being should also become more important concerns because of the growing awareness that other elements in the workplace pose risks for workers. For example, workplace characteristics ranging from health and safety practices by the organization (Patterson, 1997) to work design issues associated with basic ergonomics (Hoke, 1997) can have major consequences for workers (Farzana, 2013).

The occupational health and safety service in Bangladesh is still in the developmental stage. Here the occupational health & safety refers mainly to needs of workers of industries or some manufacturing processes but does not completely cover all occupations of the country. The main laws related to occupational health & safety in this country is the Factory Act 1965 and the Factory Rule of 1979. There are a number of other laws and regulations that are also have some provisions related to occupational health and safety. These laws have provisions on occupational hygiene, occupational diseases, industrial accidents, protection of women and young persons in dangerous occupations and also cover conditions of work, working hours, welfare facilities, holidays, leave etc. But most of the laws are lacking in standard values and not specific rather general in nature (Farzana, 2013).

### 3.3 Health and safety condition of women worker in Bangladesh

WTO has ranked Bangladesh as the 4th largest exporter of readymade garments in the world. Textiles and Readymade Garments sector contributes 13% of GDP and employs more than 3.6 million people; including 80% of them is women. The industry has created a platform for 2.8 million women to engage in new productive role in the society and empowering the Female workers in the garment factories (Farzana, 2013). The larger part of the industrial facilities doesn't have a different bathroom for the female. As female and male workers work together at a similar spot caused unwanted physical contact. Sometime it is also evident that female workers have been sexually harassed by the supervisors or male workers in the garment factory. In this manner, female workers suffer from various sorts of sexual disease. In addition, the garment owners do not have any wish to give jobs and are uncertain to proceed with the activity of female worker when they become pregnant or came to know about having their child. Consequently, when a female specialist became pregnant she does an abortion to hold the job and that outcome in long-lasting poor health conditions. As indicated by Paul-Majumder (1998) the pace of premature delivery among garment workers is high and the greater part of them experience abortion more than once. Paul-Majumder (1998) likewise found that female garment workers face a ban on having babies on account of fear of losing the employment. In spite of the fact that having a baby is a basic human right but they are denied of it.

The female workers in the garment industry are consistently under substantial working tension in their factories. They have to fulfill their work target on each day; else, they are penalized. Therefore, they pass time with the remaining task at hand and mental weight. Hence, workers in the garment industry suffers of various kinds of diseases and sicknesses like migraines, blacking out, eye stain, cut injury, fatigue, frustration, coronary illness, etc. Alam (AFP, 2009) found in his study that excessive workload and mental pressure at the workplace increased the health problems and medical expenses. On the other hand, Jana (2008) found that because of excessive workload and awkward postures, forceful exertions, repetitive motion, and heavy lifting may have exposure to excessive physical pressure, strain, and overexertion, including vibration.

Female workers involved in the garment industries in all types of knitwear, woven and sweaters are generally suffering from malnutrition, anemia, gastric, dysentery, diarrhea, respiratory problem, gynecological problems, tuberculosis and urine infection etc.

In addition, gender equity status and existing difference; denying female workers of the public medical care system which they have right for. Garment workers are working in the urban center and live on the slums of urban and semi-urban areas. It is common that when workers are sick, they go to the public medical care. They can't afford to get medical services from private centers. Then again, they are even not ready to get legitimate medical services from public emergency health care. It is exceptionally hard for a female worker to get admitted to the public health care except if she goes through a decent amount of cash through broker and corrupt officials. Along these lines medical care in the public division is additionally very excessive for low-paid female workers. Therefore, over 87% of female workers experience various sorts of illnesses and diseases. Married female workers experience different type of issues. They don't get maternity leave with pay for over 30 days, sometimes a limit of 60 days. These pregnant female workers suffer of unhealthiness, paleness, alongside different other complications. Akhter, Salahuddin, Iqbal, Malek and Jahan, (2010)

### **3.4 Literature Review**

A numerous literature was found on Health and safety of female workers in garment industry during the COVID- 19 pandemic. According to the article of (Ahmed and Raihan, 2014) in the garment factory female workers have to work in a noisy environment. Mehta (2012) Hearing disability was attributed due to noise from the machines and when numbers of sewing machines are compounded it makes the environment noisy for the workers.

According to a research, by Nanthavanij (2002) an analytical methodology for surveying hazard or risk in industrial work environments is examined. The creator attempted to discover the impact of commotion as tinnitus with an explosion and hearing loss tragedy. Laborers work in a position of ceaseless high commotion may encounter hearing misfortune generally quicker than others in

light of the fact that the stronger the sound the lesser it time it takes for the harms to happen (OSHA, 1995).

Also recently idea of activity levels in health and safety in workplace legislation and rules, especially concerning noise exposure has been applied in certain nations (Burgess and Williams, 2006).

According to a report from human rights watch, the government of Bangladesh, appears to have been cracking down on free speech since the middle of March 2020. There was no preparedness in the Bangladeshi health system even though they had 2 months period since COVID-19 began spreading (Guerrero, 2020)

The COVID -19 pandemic has caused disruptions in various sectors such as, global trades, business and education. Bangladesh is equally affected by this. The consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak on economic aspects are tough to handle as the entire global supply chain has been disturbed due to worldwide transportation shut down because of the lock down. Till now, the Bangladesh readymade garments (RMG) industry has received work order cancellations of nearly 3 billion dollars also Around 2 million workers in the industries will be affected by this. Around 4 million people are directly engaged with the RMG sector (Bhuiyan, 2020).

Defined as “Multi layered and multidimensional, created as a result of culture, economic and political norms found in specific places and at specific times”, vulnerability can be understood to be not only artificial, but context specific. Therefore any policies to address this vulnerabilities must also be context specific. Current evidence shows that although COVID-19 infect men and women equally, there seems to be sex differences in terms of morality with more men than women dying of the disease. With women comprising of the bulk of the world’s frontline help workers, both formally at work and informally at home, they are at significant risk of infection.

According to Social Science & Medicine, Gender differences in health risks and implications are likely to be expanded during the Covid-19 pandemic. Efforts to foster equity in health, social, and economic systems during and in the aftermath of Covid-19 may mitigate the inequitable risks posed by pandemics and other times of healthcare stress

## **Chapter 4: Impact of COVID- 19**

### **4.1 impact of COVID- 19 on employee health and safety**

#### **4.1.1 Global perspective**

First discovered in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, the COVID-19 global pandemic has spread to 216 countries, areas or territories with over 14.5 million cases and more than 600,000 deaths reported worldwide as of July 2020. Like most humanitarian crisis, this pandemic too magnifies existing inequalities, including that of gender inequality and thus has a disproportionate impact on women. The Covid-19 pandemic is straining healthcare systems globally, which has wide-reaching implications for health. Women experience unique health risks and outcomes influenced by their gender, and this narrative review aims to outline how these differences are exacerbated in the Covid-19 pandemic.

There was an outbreak of pneumonia of an unknown kind that was first reported in Wuhan on December 2019, there, Hubei Province, China. Following the outbreak, a novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, was identified as the causative virus for the pandemic in China and other parts of the world by the World Health Organization (WHO). By 12 February 2020, there were 43,103 confirmed cases of COVID-19, and of these, 42,708 cases (99.1%) were from China. As these data indicate, China has been severely affected by the COVID-19, which has been a major public health disaster. Zhang and Feei Ma (2020)

Since the COVID- 19 outbreak started and the pandemic caused lockdown in many countries every industry in every country is severely affected. Gender is a social determinant of health, unique from but entangled with different genders there seemed to be a different outcome. And an axis along which the Covid-19 pandemic is widening health differences. Outside of the pandemic, it is seen that the women on average report more physical and mental unhealthy days per year than

men. Women also have outcomes that are worst for prevalent health conditions including many types of diseases

#### 4.1.2 Bangladesh perspective

According to a report from Human Rights Watch, the government of Bangladesh appears to have been cracking down on free speech since the middle of March 2020. Instead of providing accurate and timely information about the virus, the police are arresting people, including students, activists and even doctors, and charging them for spreading rumors and misinformation about the impacts of Covid-19 on the population. The Information Ministry is now using a draconian Digital Security Act to monitor social media and various television outlets for “rumors” about Covid-19 cases. - (Guerrero, 2020)

There were no preparations in the Bangladeshi health system regardless of the 2-month time frame since Covid-19 started spreading in Asia. The extra pressure of the COVID pandemic has made things inevitable. There is an absence of sufficient numbers of tests. Because of absence of testing the quantity of individuals on record as testing positive doesn't mirror the genuine circumstance. It appears to be that the government is likewise attempting to conceal the genuine numbers. Activists are considering the administration strategy a 'No test-No Corona' strategy. Numerous specialists and medical attendants don't have personal protective equipment (PPE). Countless numbers of doctors don't feel safe and secure to work in clinics. A few doctors are being forced to treat corona patients with no safety measures. As a result an expanding number of attendants have just been discovered contaminated with Covid-19

The government as well as business enterprises should prepare to assess the situation and chalk out a long-term plan to control damage that is caused by the ongoing pandemic. It is notable to say that, instead of starting blame game rather than should ask for assistances from the government only due to the limitations and scarcity of resources of different agencies of government. But the prime role of the government should be clear any unwanted obstacles and create opportunities among the economy by the way of sound and clear directives like monetary & fiscal policies as well as tax structure to face the catastrophic situation. Also the banking sector is the key player of

the economic activities of any countries. As a developing country Bangladesh government needs to be more watchful in terms of planning to get rid out of the impact of COVID-19 outbreak.

### **4.1.3 RMG Perspective**

The Readymade Garment (RMG) Sector is the main source of earning foreign currencies in the economy of Bangladesh; Covid-19 pandemic has caused disruptions to global trade, business, and education. Bangladesh is equally affected by this contagion. The economic consequences of the Covid-19 outbreak are tough to handle as the entire of the global supply chain has been interrupted due to worldwide transportation shutdown. Bangladesh RMG sector is one of the most established sectors. Most of Bangladesh's economy is benefited and profited from the Garments Industry. The government has already announced bail-out packages for the recovery. Like, due to cancellation of nearly \$3 billion worth of work-orders, Bangladesh RMG industry got the attention quickly. Around 2 million workers in the industries may be affected by this and on the other hand, around 4 million people are directly engaged with the RMG sector e.g. backward linkage industries, accessories and packaging factories and transportation sector.

Lately, garment workers coming back to Dhaka between the government-imposed shutdown and the risk of getting infected only revealed that due to difference in wealth distribution these people are unable to stay at homes without work for their survival, thus, they are concerned much more about their job rather than COVID-19.

### **4.1.4 COVID -19 impact on Rehash Accessories And Sourcing Ltd**

Because of COVID- 19 pandemic garments industry is highly affected. All international orders were cancelled due to cancellation of shipments and strict lockdown. The demand of garments clothes and products reduced drastically in this period. This resulted in a huge loss for the garments sector. Rehash also faced a significant loss due to these situations. During this situation as the employees and workers could not work physically at the factory and office that resulted in lower productivity.

## 4.2 Management Action

During this tough time of pandemic Rehash Accessories and Sourcing Ltd responded to COVID-19 by taking many measures.

- All office works are made online based
- Interns are recruited through online
- Workers accommodation arranged inside the factory area
- A certain period of time all production was completely shut down to take proper safety measure
- Providing the personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Arrangements for cleaning hands often. Soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand rub provided.
- Strictly Maintenance of a safe distance between workers who are staying there.
- Wearing mask is mandatory

## 4.3 Recommendation

- Maintenance of standards of cleanliness.
- Suitable lighting, ventilation & temperature.
- Control of elements risky to health like dusts, gases, fumes, etc. associated with particular operations for the workers who are staying there.
- Requirement of certificate of fitness for young persons from certifying surgeons.
- Requirement of periodical medical examination for persons engaged in risky tasks.



- Requirement for making available adequate first-aid facilities.
- Length of working hours & night work for young persons and women, and prohibition of employment for operating dangerous machines
- If any of the worker goes out of the accommodation area they should be bound to stay in quarantine for a certain period of time
- Requirement of disinfecting and sterilizing of machinery, casing of new machinery in order to not contaminate the workers

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, I would like to say that working in Rehash Accessories and Sourcing Ltd is a remarkable experience which has actually helped me to gain comprehensive knowledge and thorough understanding of how different functions of a particular department works. Although my work in Rehash was online based but I got the opportunity to work with a supportive supervisor who helped me to learn things online. HR is one of the key support system in any organization and therefore must be operated based on the company's welfare. Also I learned about employee health and safety during these three months, I got insight into professional practice that helped me in different ways.

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