Proceedings of the INMM & ESARDA Joint Virtual Annual Meeting
May 22-26, 2023

Encouraging the Participation of Younger Generation in the Nuclear Industry

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Abstract

Never like before, the Nuclear industry has gotten a considerable attention and a wide spread of interest across the globe. It constitutes a great percentage of the global energy mixture, as it is the main energy source in some countries and occupies a great percentage of the grid in other countries. This trend keep getting increasingly interesting as many countries continue to show interest in Nuclear power technologies. The most exciting thing is even some developing nations are registering their interest and readiness to add Nuclear Energy into their grids. This outburst of interest in Nuclear Energy must be welcomed with expertise, standard knowledge and world class skills especially in developing nations. The coming decades are likely to see an abundance and a wide range of opportunities for employment in the nuclear industry. However, the industry is currently facing a significant challenge, as many of its experienced workforce are approaching retirement age, and there is a need to attract younger generations to join the industry. This paper explores the current state of the nuclear industry and its workforce, the barriers to young people's participation in the industry, and potential strategies for encouraging their participation

1.0 Introduction

The nuclear industry has been a significant contributor to global energy production for over half a century. However, the industry has experienced several challenges over the years, including safety concerns, negative public perceptions, and the cost of nuclear power. Today, the industry is facing a new challenge, which is the need to attract younger generations to replace the aging workforce. This challenge is not unique to the nuclear industry, but it is especially critical given the highly technical and specialized nature of the industry. This paper aims to investigate the barriers that prevent young people from entering the nuclear industry and also suggest approaches and actionable steps to be taken in order to enhance the participation of younger generations in the nuclear industry

2.0 Current State of the Nuclear Industry and Its Workforce:

The nuclear industry is a highly technical and specialized field that requires highly skilled and trained personnel. However, many of the current workforce are approaching retirement age, and there is a need to replace them with younger people. According to the World Nuclear Association, the average age of nuclear industry workers in the United States is 47 years old, and 34% of the workforce is over the age of 50. In Europe, the average age is 47 years old, and 30% of the

workforce is over the age of 50. These figures show that the industry is facing a significant challenge in attracting and retaining younger workers.

2.1 Barriers to Young People's Participation in the Nuclear Industry:

There are several barriers that prevent young people from participating in the nuclear industry. These barriers include negative public perceptions, the high level of education and training required, and the lack of role models and mentors in the industry.

One of the most significant barriers to young people's participation in the nuclear industry is negative public perceptions of nuclear power and the industry's safety record. The Chernobyl disaster in 1986 and the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011 have had a significant impact on public perceptions of nuclear power. These events have reinforced the idea that nuclear power is dangerous and unpredictable, which has deterred many young people from considering a career in the nuclear industry. The negative public perception of nuclear power has also led to a decrease in public support for nuclear energy, which has made it more challenging for the industry to attract young talent.

Another barrier to young people's participation in the nuclear industry is the high level of education and training required to work in the sector. Many nuclear industry jobs require advanced degrees in engineering, physics, or other technical fields. The high level of education required can be a significant barrier for young people who may not have access to these educational opportunities. Additionally, the cost of education and training can be prohibitively expensive for many young people, which can make it challenging for them to pursue a career in the nuclear industry.

The lack of role models and mentors in the nuclear industry is another significant barrier to young people's participation. Young people may not be aware of the opportunities available in the nuclear industry or may not know anyone who works in the industry. Without role models and mentors, young people may not have anyone to guide them or inspire them to pursue a career in the nuclear industry. This can be particularly challenging for young women and people of color, who are underrepresented in the industry.

To address these barriers, the industry needs to improve its public image and promote the benefits of nuclear power. The industry also needs to partner with educational institutions to provide opportunities for young people to gain the necessary education and training. Finally, the industry needs to develop mentoring and training programs to provide support and guidance for young people who are interested in pursuing a career in the nuclear industry. By addressing these barriers, the nuclear industry can attract and retain the talented young people it needs to continue providing clean and reliable energy for generations to come.

3.0 Strategies for Encouraging Young People's Participation in the Industry

To encourage young people's participation in the nuclear industry, several strategies can be implemented. These strategies include promoting the industry's benefits, providing educational and training opportunities, creating mentorship programs, creating more networking opportunities between younger generation and increasing diversity and inclusion in the industry.

3.1 Promoting the Industry's Benefits

One of the most effective strategies for encouraging young people's participation in the nuclear industry is to promote the industry's benefits. The industry needs to communicate the benefits of nuclear power, including its role in combating climate change, its reliability, and its contribution to energy security. By highlighting these benefits, the industry can attract young people who are passionate about environmental issues and want to make a positive impact on the world.

3.2 Educational and Training Opportunities

Another strategy is to provide educational and training opportunities for young people. The nuclear industry can partner with educational institutions to provide internships, scholarships, and training programs. This will give young people the opportunity to gain the necessary skills and knowledge to pursue a career in the nuclear industry. Additionally, the industry can develop training programs that are accessible and affordable to young people, which can help address the high cost of education and training.

3.3 Mentorship Programs

Creating mentorship programs is another effective strategy for encouraging young people's participation in the nuclear industry. The industry can establish mentoring programs that pair young people with experienced professionals in the industry. This will provide young people with guidance, support, and valuable insights into the industry. Additionally, mentorship programs can help increase diversity and inclusion in the industry by providing support and guidance to underrepresented groups.

3.4 Networking Opportunities

Creating more networking opportunities between younger generations is also another way to motivate their participation. Even though each country and local context is unique, there are many similarities in nuclear industry and how to navigate their career path. Therefore, establishing networks of young individuals is worthwhile and could allow them to exchange ideas and provide mutual support for one another.

3.5 Increasing diversity and inclusion

Increasing diversity and inclusion in the industry is also crucial for encouraging young people's participation. The nuclear industry needs to promote diversity and inclusion by recruiting from a wide range of backgrounds and ensuring that the workplace is inclusive and welcoming to all. Additionally, the industry needs to address systemic barriers that prevent underrepresented groups from pursuing a career in the nuclear industry, such as the high cost of education and training.

By implementing these strategies, the nuclear industry can attract and retain talented young people who will help drive innovation and ensure the industry's success for years to come.

4.0 Conclusion

The nuclear industry is essential in meeting the world's increasing energy demands while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, the industry is facing a significant challenge in attracting younger generations to join the workforce. Negative public perceptions about the industry's safety and the lack of role models and mentors are some of the barriers that discourage young people from considering a career in the nuclear industry. Moreover, the high level of education and training required to work in the industry is another significant obstacle.

To overcome these barriers, several strategies can be implemented, such as improving the industry's public image by highlighting the benefits of nuclear power and its role in combating climate change. The industry can also provide educational and training opportunities for young people and establish mentoring programs to provide guidance and support. Mutual support can also be enhanced by creating more networking opportunities between younger. Furthermore, increasing diversity and inclusion in the industry can also attract and retain young talent.

Implementing these strategies will not only address the challenge of attracting younger generations to the nuclear industry, but it will also ensure that the industry continues to provide clean, reliable, and sustainable energy for future generations.

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