



Job Satisfaction and Quality of Work Life: Impact on Industrial Relations in Textile Units in Kannur District, Kerala

KEYWORDS

Quality of Work Life (QWL), Job Satisfaction, Workers' Participation in Management (WPM)

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ABSTRACT *Industrial relations play an important role in establishment of industrial peace, industrial discipline and industrial democracy. Good industrial relations not only maintain a cordial atmosphere in the industry but also facilitate production and industrial growth. Good human relations in any industry play almost a decisive role in this respect. Organizations are required to adopt a strategy to improve the employees 'Quality of Work Life' (QWL) to satisfy both the organizational objectives and employee needs. The degree of job satisfaction plays pivotal role for cordial industrial relations system in any organization or industry. It is one of the prime factors affecting industrial growth which leads to the growth of any economy. This paper studies the effect of job satisfaction with respect to quality of work life variables based on models and past research with a focus on textile industry in Kannur district of Kerala State. The variables of quality of work life studied include compensation, encouragement of human relations and competency development, working condition, workers participation in management decision, grievance and occupational stress. The article concludes that high degree of association between job satisfaction and certain quality of work life constructs. Recommendations to improve quality of work life constructs for future research from the perspective of textile industry are discussed.*

1. Introduction

The textile sector occupies a distinct and unique place in the Indian economy, besides being the largest generator of non-farm rural employment. While available statistics indicate an economic sector of considerable size, there is still immense scope for expansion. The textile industry, which encompasses the organized mill sector, the unorganized decentralized sector consisting of handlooms, khadi and power looms, plays a crucial role in the Indian economy today. Taken together, it contributes to 8percent of GDP, 20 percent of industrial production, 35percent of export earnings and employs around 38 million persons.

The Quality of Work Life (QWL) is the degree to which the employees feel a comfortable and enjoyable work life. It is the degree of favorable work situation which will exist within the organization. QWL refers to the level of satisfaction, motivation, involvement, and commitment individuals experience with respect to their lives at work. It is the degree to which individuals are able to satisfy their important personal needs while employed by the firm.

Job satisfaction is important in its own right as a part of social welfare, and this (simple) taxonomy [of a good job] allows a start to be made on such questions as 'In what respects are older workers' jobs better than those of younger workers?' (and vice versa), 'Who has the good jobs?' and 'Are good jobs being replaced by bad jobs?'. In addition, measures of job quality seem to be useful predictors of future labour market behaviour. Workers' decisions about whether to work or not, what kind of job to accept or stay in, and how hard to work are all likely to depend in part upon the worker's subjective evaluation of their work, in other words on their job satisfaction. (Clark, 1998). Job satisfaction is simply how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. It is the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs. (Spector, 1997). The meaning of 'job' as a post or appointment is of primary importance. Every job is an instance of the employment relationship, embodying

a contract (substantive or implied) to exchange an ability to work (labour, provide service, exercise ingenuity, direct efforts of others, etc) for rewards (both material and symbolic). True, performing work tasks provides a stream of experiences, technical and social, that can energise psychosocial responses; any resulting data summarising these reactions are indispensable. However, such data must not be weighted higher than those concerning experience of the overt (or ostensible) contractual terms - above all, those concerning pay and job security. (Rose, 2001).

Employee productivity depends on the amount of time an individual is physically present at a job and also the degree to which he or she is "mentally present" or efficiently functioning while present at a job. Job satisfaction itself depends on the level of intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes and how the jobholder views those outcomes. These outcomes have different values for different people. For some people, responsible and challenging work may have neutral or even negative value depending on their education and prior experience with work providing intrinsic outcomes. For other people, such work outcomes may have high positive values. People differ in the importance they attach to the job outcomes. Those differences would account for different levels of job satisfaction for essentially the same job tasks.

2. Review of Literature

Employees' perception of QWL varies based on demographic and organizational variables. Understanding this perception would help the employers of the industries to work on improving the QWL. Mu.Subrahmanian and Anjani.N have studied the constructs of QWL in their paper in Asian journal of management research. Their study has concluded that QWL from the perspective of Textile and Engineering employees is challenging both to the individuals and organizations.

Ritti (1970) in his study found that lack of opportunity to perform meaningful work is at the root of frustration among

engineers and who have more autonomy at workplace feel more satisfied with their work life. Sirota (1973) found that underutilization of worker's skill and abilities cause low QWL and suggested job enrichment programme to correct the problems of worker's skill and abilities. Allenspach's (1975) report on flexible working hours based on experiments in Switzerland, discussed its advantages and disadvantages, including its effects on job satisfaction and employee and management attitude. Kavoussi (1978) compared the unauthorized absenteeism rates in two large textile factories and recommended that closer attention be paid for improving the QWL. Raghvan (1978), the Ex-Chairman of BHEL, a public sector organization in India, stressed the need for worker's participation in management for enhanced QWL. According to him, "participation of workers in the management of undertakings, establishments, or other organizations engaged in any industry is underscored by Constitution of India".

Bhatia and Valecha (1981) studied the absenteeism rates of textile factory and recommended that closer attention should be paid to improve the QWL. Trist (1981) suggested that there should be optimum level of autonomy according to requirements of technology system. Singh (1983) conducted studies in chemical and textile factories in India that were designed to improve the QWL by reorganizing the work and introducing participatory management. Rice (1985) emphasized the relationship between work satisfaction and Quality of people's lives. He contended that work experiences and outcomes can affect person's general Quality of life, both directly and indirectly through their effects on family interactions, leisure activities and levels of health and energy. The study conducted by Karris and Khurana (1996) found significant correlations of Quality of work life of managers from three sectors of industry viz., Public, Private and Cooperative, with some of the background variables (education qualification, native/migrant status, income level) and with all of the motivational variables like job satisfaction and job involvement.

According to Nguyen, Taylor and Bradley (2003), one of the variables that may be expected to influence job satisfaction is 'the degree of perceived autonomy that workers enjoy in the way they do their job'. The expected relationship is that more autonomy is associated with greater job satisfaction. Marital discord and more children are related to decreased job satisfaction (Rogers & May, 2003). Uncertainty of job expectations, volume of work, incompatibility of expectations, and work-family conflict increase emotional exhaustion, and uncertainty of expectations decreases job satisfaction (Hang-yue, Foley, & Loi 2005). Family stress certainly contributes to job satisfaction (Hang-yue et al. 2005).

2. Relevance and Significance of the Study

In view of the foregoing discussions, it is noted that while the significance of cordial industrial relations is a vital prerequisite for organizational efficiency and productivity as well as individual efficiency and wellbeing of the workers, studies focusing on industrial relations are quite scarce in the Kerala context, particularly in the textile industry scenario. Hence, this study seeks to make a study of job satisfaction and QWL and its impact on industrial relations with reference to textile industry in Kannur District of northern Kerala in India.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To review the major factors influencing QWL of workers with reference to the textile industry in Kannur district of northern Kerala;
- To assess the degree of association between two key factors viz. job satisfaction and QWL;
- To identify challenges to cordial industrial relations with reference to the study area; and
- To suggest suitable measures to improve job satisfaction and QWL of workers, and hence enhanced industrial relations and productivity.

4. Research Methodology

The study was conducted for a period of 6 months from June to November 2012. The respondents were contacted and interviewed in the factory premises during their off-duty hours.

4.1 Research Instrument

A structured, non-disguised interview schedule was prepared for the purpose of collecting the data. The factors of the study were drawn out from the related studies and the statements of the schedule were framed representing the factors. These were given shape in consultation with the field experts.

4.2 Population profile and Sampling

The study was confined to Kannur District of Kerala. This district was selected, keeping in mind that it is well endowed with human resources approximately 10000 in the textile sector which includes handloom and powerloom. It was decided to collect the necessary information from 500 workers spread in 30 medium and small sized textile manufacturing organization, 30 employers / management authority and 10 trade union leaders affiliated to various political parties. A Non-probability, proportionate quota sampling was used for the study.

4.3 Collection and Analysis of Data

For collecting the data the respondents were contacted individually and given a brief description about the nature and purpose of the study. For the convenience of the respondents the statements were translated into vernacular language so that the respondents could give their response with ease. The data collected from the primary sources were analyzed using SPSS 11.0 package. Analysis of the significance of association between the opinions on each factors of QWL of the respondents and the challenges were carried out

5. Findings of the Study and Discussion

5.1 Compensation:

The prime factor which has influence on quality of work life is Compensation. The distinctive impulse to work is to earn a living, it is fundamental and quality of Work Life is affected by how well this aim is achieved and what level of earning is adequate for particular job. The following hypothesis is framed to find the association between job satisfaction and compensation.

Null Hypothesis, H_0 . There is no significant relation between job satisfaction and compensation.

The result shows that there is a significant association between job satisfaction and compensation at 5percent significance level. Among the 540 respondents, 100 per cent of them have the opinion that job satisfaction is highly depends upon compensation package. This includes 500 selected workers, 30 employers and management authorities, 10 trade union leaders. It is concluded that workers are not satisfied with compensation especially for the present minimum wage scale, incentives and bonus. High cost of living in Kannur district of Kerala state is a major hurdle for workers to upgrade themselves for better standard of living.

5.2 Working Conditions:

Safe and healthy working conditions ensure good health, continuity of services, good labor management relations. A healthy worker registers high productivity and confident to prove valuable asset to the organization. The following hypothesis is framed to find the association between job satisfaction and working conditions regarding quality of work life.

Null Hypothesis, H_0 . There is no significant relation between job satisfaction and working conditions.

The result shows that there is a significant association between the job satisfaction and working conditions at 5 percent significance level. Among 94 satisfied respondents

believes that working condition is a reason for job satisfaction and they are getting good working condition at factory premises. Out of 406 respondents, poor working condition like non availability of canteen facility, good ventilation / lighting facility, fire alarm system, fire extinguishers prevails in their organization so they are not fully satisfied as far as job involvement is concerned. Thirty (30) employers and 10 trade union respondents have the opinion of good working condition is an indication of job involvement by the employees. It is concluded that there is a lack of good working conditions which is necessary to improve job satisfaction in textile industry.

5.3 Stress:

Perceived stress refers to the extent to which one perceives one's situation to be uncontrollable and burdensome. Individuals who report high levels of perceived stress generally are manifesting the symptoms that associate with "distress", including nervousness, frustration, irritability, and generalized anxiety. Perceived stress has been linked to job dissatisfaction, depressed feelings, work absence, and turnover. The following hypothesis is framed to find the association between job satisfaction and the steps taken to reduce occupational stress.

Null Hypothesis, H_0 : There is no significant association between job satisfaction and remedial steps for occupational stress.

The result shows that there is a significant association between the job satisfactions the steps taken for the reduction of occupational stress at 5 percent significance level. Among 197 satisfied respondents, never felt about stressful situation in the factory premise but have the opinion of occupational stress causes job dissatisfaction. Out of 303 dissatisfied respondents felt stress related to perfection of work, power failure and machine breakdown results no work and no compensation situation up to some extent. It is concluded that occupational stress happening in the textile industry at Kannur District leads to distress and job dissatisfaction.

5.4 Workers' Participation in Management:

Workers Participation in Management (WPM) has been widely recommended as a means of improving the QWL and increasing the productivity. In theory, participation releases the creative energies and provides workers with a sense of accomplishment. Thus it strengthens the path-goal relationship and also enhances the work environment. It offers a morally attractive solution to many of the problems of industries. The following hypothesis is framed to find the association between the nature of industry and WPM.

Null Hypothesis, H_0 : There is no significant association between job satisfaction and WPM.

The results show that there is a significant association between job satisfaction and workers participation in management at 5 percent significance level. Among the 420 respondents have the opinion of workers participation should be implemented so that it will increase the motivation and productivity? Among the 80 respondents have the opinion of workers participation is not necessary and without that they feel satisfied. Among the 30 employer respondents have the opinion of having workers participation up to certain extent but not all the matters and 10 trade union leaders have the opinion of participation should not only for the workers but also for trade union leaders. It is concluded that workers participation is not actively happening in the textile industries at Kannur and their participation will improve motivation and job satisfaction which is going to be a win-win strategy.

5.5 Grievance Procedure:

Grievance procedure presents a systematic attempt to listen to the problems of the subordinates and take necessary action. It is expected that all organizations would develop their

grievance machinery suited to their technology and environment. The most significant characteristic of any grievance procedure that would make it effective are the urgency and level. Grievance handling machinery does not make sense unless the grievances are processed and decisions are taken in the shortest possible time and at the level at which the grievance have arisen. The following hypothesis is framed to find the association between job satisfaction and grievance procedure.

Null Hypothesis, H_0 : There is no significant association job satisfaction and grievance procedure.

The results show that there is a significant association between job satisfaction and grievance procedure at 5 percent significance level. Among the 440 respondents have the opinion of there is no grievance procedure existing in their organization or present system should be revamped and hence they become dissatisfied employees. Among the 60 respondents are satisfied with existing grievance procedure and there is no need to change it. Even though 100 percent employees and trade union respondents have the opinion of implementing grievance procedure at their factory premise. It is concluded that lack of concrete grievance procedure in the textile industry is a problem for the workers which will sometimes cause job dissatisfaction and there is an urgent need for those who are yet to implement grievance procedure.

5.6 Encouraging Better HR and Competency:

The nature of human relations (HR) between workers becomes an important dimension of QWL. Acceptance of the worker is based on work related traits, skills, abilities and potential without regard to race, sex, physical appearance etc. QWL is ensured by the opportunities provided by the job for the development of the employee and encouragement given by the management to perform the job. An attempt is made to verify the association between job satisfaction and encouraging employees towards better human relations and developing their competencies using the following hypothesis.

Null Hypothesis, H_0 : There is no significant association between job satisfaction and encouragement of workers for better development of their HR and competency.

The results show that there is a significant association between job satisfaction and encouraging employees for better human relations and become competent at 5 percent significance level. Among the 120 respondents realized encouragement from management towards better human relations but not for competency development. Among the 380 workers and 10 trade union respondents have the opinion of an urgent need of encouragement from management towards not only better human relations but also upgrading themselves which will improve job involvement, but so far they didn't get such encouragement? Among the 30 employer respondent, have the opinion of giving enough encouragement for better human relations and their development. It is concluded that workers are not so happy for the degree of encouragement from management side for better human relations and development of workers in the textile industry will cause job dissatisfaction.

6. Job Satisfaction and QWL: A Model

Based on the findings of this study, it is attempted to develop a conceptual model that shows the relationship between the two vital factors under study viz. Job satisfaction and QWL. Figure 1 depicts such a relationship and is self-explanatory. (Figure 1).

7. Suggestions based on Study Findings

Moderate wages should be incorporated. State Government should take initiative to implement moderate wage system. The fixation of minimum wage in India depends upon various factors like socioeconomic and agro-climatic conditions,

prices of essential commodities, paying capacity and the local factors influencing the wage rate. Minimum wages are expected to cover the essential current costs of accommodation, food and clothing of a small family. Education for children, medical requirement, minimum recreation including festivals/ceremonies and provision for old age, marriage etc. should further constitute 25 percent of the total minimum wage⁶. In spite of vast number of workers in textile sector, and their substantial contribution to the national economy, they are amongst the poorest sections of our population. It is therefore imperative that urgent steps are taken to improve their condition. Infrequent revisions and inadequate cost of living adjustments have been a marked feature of minimum wages in India. Table I shows the minimum required items and their respective costs for a nuclear family comprising of father, mother and two children.

Table I: Minimum Requirement and Respective Costs

Minimum required Items	Per month cost
Food	3800
Fuel	250
Light	150
Washing	250
Social expenses	400
Travel	500
Education	400
Clothing	400
Treatment	400
Newspaper	150
Entertainment	200
Total	6000

(Source: Survey Data).

An average worker in textile industry gets Rs.4004 / month (Rs.154/day * 26 days=Rs.4004/-) which is approximately two third of cost of living requirement. (Table I). Now, the main factors to be considered while fixing or revising the minimum wage rate should adequately address the following two cardinal objectives:

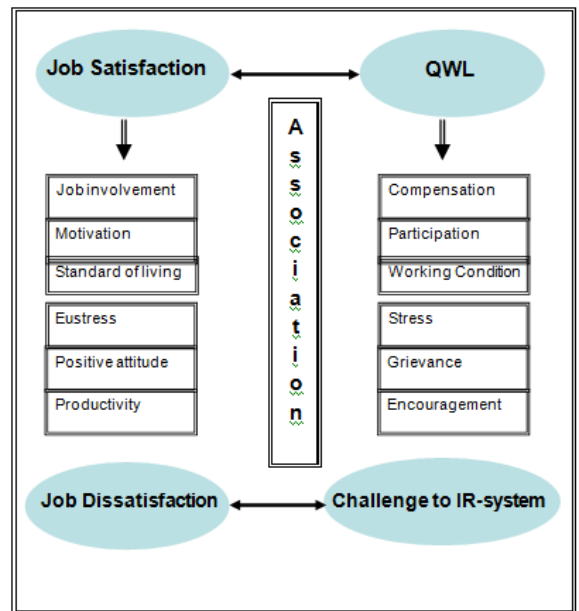
- (1) **Social Objective:** One which provides sufficient purchasing power to the worker, thus enabling him/her to have a basic standard of living. In the long run such a step would help in abolishing labour exploitation and poverty;
- (2) **Economic Objective:** The rate of minimum wage should be fixed at such a level that would motivate workers and enable them to enjoy the benefits of economic growth, and so contribute to the economy.

Employers must ensure creating and maintaining good working condition so that the employees may feel more comfortable, more variety and less fatigue in their jobs. This lead to more job involvement from the employee side eventually aims at higher productivity. It is suggested that special attention may be given to employee counseling and refresher training as and when required. Imparting democratic man-

agement style would enhance employee motivation which leads to job satisfaction. There is no systematic grievance procedure mechanism and hence management should ensure constituting works committee to resolve any grievance from employees. Quantitative workload and qualitative perfection of work, personality traits, lack of group cohesiveness and no work no compensation situation creates distress, adversely affects the employee's behaviour. Distress makes employee sick affecting efficiency and organizational objectives. Research evidence shows that increase in stress level till its mild level serves as a stimulus to activate employees to respond to the challenges to task and in turn facilitates employee's task performance (eustress). It is recommended that employer has to give attention about this situation and reduce the degree of stress level into optimum.

Insufficient minimum wages, poor working conditions, non-democratic style of management functions, lack of encouragement and grievance procedure and occupational stress ultimately affect behavioral consequences like anxiety, nervousness, frustration and irritability which is correlated with job dissatisfaction depressed feelings, work absence and turnover. Job satisfaction is the prime factor for cordial industrial relations in any industry and it is a hallmark for the textile industry at Kannur District.

Figure I: Association between Job Satisfaction and QWL – A Model.



(Source: Developed by the Authors based on the Findings of the Study)

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