

A Study on Quality of Work Life of Handicraft Workers in Thanjavur



Human Resource Management

KEYWORDS : Handicraft, Paintings, productivity, Quality of Work Life

Dr.D.UMAMAHESWARI

Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Periyar Maniammai University, Thanjavur.

ABSTRACT

The productivity of employees working in handicraft units is influenced by their quality of work life. Thanjavur is famous for handicraft products such as art plates, Thanjavur paintings, terracotta dolls, Rajasthan silk paintings, musical instruments like Veena, Tabla, Mridangam, various icons and bronze lamps. This paper intends to give quality of work life of employees in handicraft workers in Thanjavur.

INTRODUCTION

The term "quality of work life" (QWL) was first introduced in 1972 during an international labour relations conference. Quality of Work Life (QWL) received more attention after United Auto Workers and General Motors initiated a Quality of Work Life (QWL) program for work reforms.

Robbins (1989) defined Quality of Work Life (QWL) as "a process by which an organization responds to employees needs by developing mechanisms to allow them to share fully in making the decisions their design their lives at work".

Quality of Work Life (QWL) has been well recognized as a multi-dimensional construct and it may not be universal or eternal. The key concepts captured and discussed in the literature include job security, better reward system, higher pay and opportunity for growth, participative groups, and increased organizational productivity among others. Regular assessment of Quality of Work Life can potentially provide organisations with important information about the welfare of their employees, such as job satisfaction, general well-being, work-related stress and the home-work interface.

The Indian handicrafts industry is highly labour intensive, cottage based and decentralized industry. The industry is spread all over the country mainly in rural and urban areas. Most of the manufacturing units are located in rural and small towns, and there is huge market potential in all Indian cities and abroad. Handicraft industry is a major source of income for rural communities employing over six million artisans including a large number of women and people belonging to the weaker sections of the society.

According to a Report of Development Commissioner Handicraft Board, (2001) the term handicraft refers to the hand made articles which are produced by the craftsmen with or without the tools, simple instruments or implements operated directly by craftsman mainly by hand. Within the category of hand made goods, some such as handicraft products often have an additional identifying feature such as; the traditional or artistic feature, deriving from the geographical region or country of production, the production by craftsmen, working generally on a cottage industry basis.

Current status of handicraft workers in Thanjavur

- High skilled artisans were earning less than minimum wages because of inadequate capital and exploitation of money lenders and middle men. Many families fallen below the poverty line.
- The working condition is very poor. They don't have proper marketing channels.
- It is a case based occupation in the sense that silk weavers' children get trained by their parents. Skills can be acquired through training.
- Handmade products are costlier than machine made products.
- Due to severe competition and availability of cheap substitutes many artisans are switching their professions for survival.

- There is quality checking mechanism for producing hand made products.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To review the socio-economic background of the employees working in the handicraft industries.
- 2) To identify various factors affecting quality of work life of employees working in the handicraft industries.
- 3) To study whether health of handicraft workers also has a bearing on productivity of the workers like other variables of QWL.

METHODOLOGY

The study is mainly based on primary data, obtained from a well designed interview schedule and open discussion with employees and executives of handicraft industries. For this purpose an interview schedule was prepared, covering all aspects of quality of work life. Present paper focuses on the QWL issues of handicraft workers in and around Thanjavur. The sample size consists of 160 workers. The sampling technique used in this study is random sampling under probability sampling.

The following tools were applied in order to validate the result of the study

- Percentage analysis
- Mean and standard deviation
- Correlation

Variables

- Adequate and fair compensation
- Safe and healthy working conditions
- Immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities
- Opportunity for career growth
- Employees problems and grievances

LITERATURE REVIEW

Alan Price (2007) states that empowering frontline employees and emphasis on team work helps to harness intelligence & energies of employees thus creating potential for success and quality results. This is achieved through giving knowledge and competencies to handle high performance work through team work, team briefings, interpersonal skills, appraisal and information sharing.

Reward and compensation systems must also be aligned to satisfy, motivate and retain employees. Several reward criteria proposed include Rewards based on performance, effort, skill, seniority, job difficulty and discretion time. DeCenzo and Robbin (2004)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quality of Work Life

Table 1 show that the mean score for the quality of work life among the respondent was 2.63, with a standard deviation of .39. It amounted to saying that the respondents perceived themselves as having a medium level of quality of work life. The re-

spondents reported the highest level of quality of their work life in the category of productivity in the work place (M=3.75, SD=.56) and the lowest level in the category of chance of growth (M=1.26, SD=.68).

Table - 1

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Level
Workers compensation	160	1.37	.57	L
Working conditions	160	2.94	.49	M
Career growth	160	1.26	.68	L
Job satisfaction	160	2.55	.53	M
Job performance	160	2.74	.50	M
Job involvement	160	3.37	.65	M-H
Productivity	160	3.75	.56	M-H
Training	160	2.86	.61	M
Total	160	2.63	.39	M

Career Motivation

Table 2 displays the respondents' perceptions of their motivation to work. Overall, the respondents perceived themselves as having medium-to-low levels of job motivation (M=2.23, SD=.32). They reported the highest level for the category of career resilience (M=2.90, SD=.42) and the lowest for career insight (M=1.83, SD=.66).

Table - 2

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Level
Career insight	160	1.83	.66	L
Career identity	160	2.37	.46	M
Career resilience	160	2.90	.42	M-L
Total	160	2.23	.32	M-L

Correlation of Quality of Work Life Categories and Career Motivation

There was a significant correlation between the categories of the quality of work life and career motivation and this was a positive direct relationship ($p < .01$, $r = .72$). In other words, the more the quality of work life is improved, the higher the level of motivation will be. However, the causality between quality of work life and career motivation is not defined. These results are shown in Table 3 below.

Table - 3

Variable	Pearson correlation	Sig
Workers compensation	.51**	.004
Working conditions	.79**	.001
Career growth	.70**	.007
Job satisfaction	.53**	.003
Job performance	.61**	.004
Job involvement	.78**	.001
Productivity	.66**	.001
Training	.84**	.002
Total	.72**	.001

FINDINGS

- About 77% of the artisans are self employed and the rest are wage earners.
- 20% of the artisans are women and school drop-out.
- Their work is mostly based on order only. On the basis of order only they procure raw materials.
- 50% of the workers worked on weekly wage rate system.
- Mostly production is carried out in their residential areas.
- Middle men are exploiting handicraft workers.
- There are no proper marketing facilities.
- There is proper channels to handle grievance and problems of the handicraft workers.

CONCLUSION

Handicrafts items are used in our daily use. So the demand for the products is increasing in trend. Tourists from abroad and other state people are attracted by handicrafts products. There is a bright future for these products. State governments must take steps to increase the wages and improve their working conditions. Handicrafts generally require small amounts of capital; their fabrication is low on energy use and the natural raw materials are easily available. And as for man power, the unemployed rural youth, after a short, simple training, can easily be absorbed into the sector. They need proper support from the State, NGOs, cooperative societies or self-help groups.

REFERENCE

1. Handicraft -Overview, "[http://www.india-craft.com/business-report/Indian handicraft-industry/.htm](http://www.india-craft.com/business-report/Indian%20handicraft-industry/.htm) | 2. DeCenzo & Robbin (2004) Personnel and Human Resource management, 3rd ed, Prentice Hall, India | 3. Allan Price (2007). Human Resource Management, in a business context,

3rd ed, Pat Bond, UK |