Research Paper Management

A Perceptual Analysis of Workers and Their Quality of Work Life : A Study of Gender Differences in The Coffee Plantations of Kodagu District of Karnataka

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ABSTRACT

Plantation plays a very crucial role in the export of agricultural produce. They occupy only one per cent of the total cropped area but contribute 15 per cent of the total export earnings. Plantation workers are as important to the plantation industry as producers and consumers. The production and productivity of plantations depend heavily on the performance of the workers employed therein. Therefore, the welfare, morale, and motivation of these workers must be accorded importance by the planners and promoters of the plantation industry.The aim of the study is to understand the various parameters of Quality of Work Life in the plantation sector and assess the quality of work life among women in comparison to the male workers in the Coffee plantations of Kodagu. Quality of Work Life is measured using eight dimensions and sixty items scale. The research reveals that the female workers have a favourable perception towards quality of work life when compared to the men.

KEYWORDS | Quality of Work Life, Coffee Plantation, Gender Differences

INTRODUCTION

Quality of Work Life (QWL) is the degree to which individuals are able to satisfy their important personal needs while employed by the firm. It refers to the level of satisfaction, motivation, involvement and commitment that individuals experience with respect to their lives at work. Quality of Work Life refers to the quality of the relationship between the employees and the total working environment. The term "Quality of Work Life" was first introduced in 1972 during an International Labour Relations Conference. It is defined as the favorable conditions and environment of a workplace that support and promote employees' satisfaction by providing them with rewards, job security and growth opportunities. It can also be looked at as the employees' perceptions of their physical and psychological well-being at work.

The term 'Plantation' has been defined under the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 to include any plantation to which the Act, whether wholly or in parts, applies and includes offices, hospitals, dispensaries, schools and other premises used for any purpose connected with such plantation. Section 1(4) of the Act applies to any land used or intends to be used for growing tea, coffee, rubber, cinchona and cardamom which measures 5 hectares or more and in which fifteen or more persons are employed or were employed on any day of the preceding twelve months

A study of QWL in the Plantation sector has been attempted because the workers reside in the plantations and hence their quality of life is closely related to their QWL. In labor intensive sectors such as agriculture and plantation, workers have thoughts and feelings that greatly influence their behavior on the job. In the plantation sector there is very little scope for mechanization. Hence both labor and management must be responsive to each other's needs and the onus lies more on the management especially so because they are at a higher bargaining level. Thus, for maintaining the major plantation asset—'the human asset', at an optimum productivity level, factors influencing the same, like the quality of the workers' lives at home, their life in the community, their relationship with the management/employer, their housing and sanitary conditions, availability of medical facilities, their education, skills and training, and status of women workers, among other such issues need to be addressed. Majority of the workers in the plantation are women (>55%). Hence understanding the perceptions of women workers towards the Quality of Work Life parameters is important.

Brief Profile of Coffee Plantation Sector

India contributes about 4.5 per cent of the world production of coffee and it is pre-dominantly produced in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Karnataka accounts for nearly 70 per cent of the coffee production in the country. Kodagu, Chikmagalur and Hassan districts are the coffee growing districts of Karnataka. Due to its labour intensive nature (labour costs account for 65% of total costs), it is an important source of rural employment for men and women. Plantation directly employs more than 2 million workers in the country. Plantation plays a very crucial role in the export of agricultural produce. About 15 per cent of the total export earnings of agriculture products come from crops like tea, coffee and rubber though these occupy only one per cent of the total cropped area.

Table 1: Planted Area & Production of States (2013-14)

State	Planted Area (Ha)	Production(MT)	% to India
Karnataka	229658	211100	69.30%
Kerala	84948	66675	21.8%
Tamil Nadu	31344	18755	6.10%
Non-Traditional areas	58600	7760	2.50%
N-E Region	5140	190	0.06%
	409690 Hectares	3,04,500 MT	100

Source: Coffee Board of India

LITERATURE REVIEW

Walton (1974) proposed eight major conceptual categories relating to Quality of Work Life as (1) adequate and fair compensation, (2) safe and healthy working conditions, (3) imme-

diate opportunity to use and develop human capacities (4) opportunity for continued growth and security, (5) social integration in the work organization, (6) constitutionalism in the work organization, (7) work and total life space and (8) social relevance of work life.

According to Mirvis & Lawler (1984), a safe working environment, equitable wages, equal employment opportunities and opportunities for advancement are the factors associated with a good QWL.

Kurian (1990) conducted a study on socio-economic background of women workers in tea plantations in Munnar, Kerala. Most of the workers were women and they get housing facilities, day care and certain social security benefits. Despite these, their socio-economic status is found to be poor. Kavetsa Adagala (1991) studied the life of the plantation workers in the coffee plantations of Kenya. The gap between labour input and wages received the extreme poverty among the workers and the health and nutrition status of the women and children in the plantations all were a matter of grave concern.

Male employees reported significantly different mean scores in health & safety needs, actualization and knowledge needs whereas economic, family, social, esteem and aesthetic needs were not statistically different. This conclusion was put forth by studies on the gender difference study towards the QWL in a Five star Hotel of Turkey (Derya Kara, 2012)

In a quality of work Life study in four establishments in Nigeria, Fapohunda Tinuke (2013) concluded that there are significant gender gaps in satisfaction towards QWL indicators chosen for the study. Singhai & Garg (2014) conducted a comparative study of quality of work life in the education and banking sector and they concluded that there is a significant difference in the perception of male and female employees toward the quality of work life indicators chosen for the study. Female employees perceived their quality of work life better than male employees.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the socio demographic characteristics of the respondents.

2. To identify suitable constructs which influence quality of work Life in the Plantation Sector.

3. To assess and compare the perceptions of men and women workers towards their quality of work life factors.

HYPOTHESES

Null Hypothesis (H0) : There is no significant difference between male and female workers with respect to their perceptions about different dimensions of quality of work life.

Alternate Hypothesis: There is significant difference between male and female workers with respect to their perceptions about each of the dimensions of quality of work life selected for the study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was confined to fifty male and fifty women workers in fifteen plantations of Kodagu district selected by using convenient sampling technique. The methodology involved collecting primary data through a well designed interview schedule consisting of eight constructs and sixty variables. To evaluate the quality of work life among the plantation workers, the opinion of respondents was put under Likert 5-point scale varying from "Highly Satisfied" to "Highly Dissatisfied" as well as "Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree" on eight dimensions. The reliability was measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient and it was found to be good with an alpha of more than 0.8 for all dimensions.Secondary data was collected from earlier research work, various published journals, magazines, websites and online articles. Simple statistical tools like percentage analysis, Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation and independent t- test were used as tools for analysis and interpretation.

Quality of Work Life Indicators :

1. Compensation Factor: Remuneration helps an individual to satisfy his and his family's needs and ensures a decent standard of living. Factors such as adequacy of wages, external equity in wages, overtime pay, incentives and monetary benefits, advance payments are a few constructs used in this dimension.

H1: Women workers' perception of their compensation contributing to a better QWL is significantly higher when compared to male workers.

2. Welfare Factor including Working Environment: Workers must be provided a safe and healthy working environment. There are legal provisions in this regard as envisaged in the Plantation Labour Act, 1951. Factors such as accommodation, basic amenities at workplace, medical aid, child care facilities, and compensation for accidents at workplace are included in this dimension.

H2: Women workers' perception of their work environment contributing to a better QWL is significantly higher when compared to male workers.

3. Work Characteristics: Conditions of work such as work load, duration of work, rest intervals, weekly rest days, leave facilities, provision of implements and safety equipments influence quality of work life in the plantation sector and these are the variables used in this dimension.

H3: Women workers' perception of their work characteristics contributing to a better QWL is significantly higher when compared to male workers

4. Social Orientation at Work Place: Healthy relationships between the workers and between the supervisor and the workers, respect at work place, absence of prejudices and harassment are few indicators of a good quality of work life. Hence opportunities must be provided for formal and informal interactions

H4: Women workers' perception of their social orientation at the workplace contributing to a better QWL is significantly higher when compared to male workers

6. Constitutionalism at the Work Place: Efforts must be made to see right norms are formed and followed in the plantation. It means norms that accommodate the privacy of an individual worker, freedom of speech, equity and freedom to dissent on some aspects and grievance resolution machinery.

H5: Women workers' perception of the constitutionalism at the work place contributing to a better QWL is significantly higher when compared to male workers.

6. Work Life Balance (Relationship between work and Personal Life): Plantation work is tedious and cumbersome. It can cause psychological and physical strains which can impact family life. Factors such as spending quality time with family, respect and support from family for the work done are a few indicators chosen for this dimension.

H6: Women workers' perception of the balance between work and family life contributing to a better QWL is significantly higher when compared to male workers.

7. Social Relevance of work: Plantation workers' views of their nature of work, the level of pride in their work, their per-

ception of their standing in society as a result of the kind of work they do, their family's perception towards their occupation are the factors to assess this dimension.

H7: Women workers' perception of the social relevance of their work contributing to a better QWL is significantly higher when compared to male workers

8. **Life Comforts as a Work Outcome**: This unorganized sector employs unskilled labour from economically and socially weaker sections of society, for whom work is a means of satisfying the physiological needs of food, shelter and clothing. Hence they perceive quality of work life as good if their work is able to improve their material possessions

H8: Women workers' perception of the life comforts as a work outcome contributing to a better QWL is significantly higher when compared to male workers

DISCUSSION ON THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

TABLE 1: Respondents' Profile:

GROUP	CLASSIFICATION	MALE	FEMALE
Type of employment	Permanent	15 (30)	19(38)
	Contract	15(30)	17(34)
	Temporary	20(40)	14(28)
Age	<25 years	2 (04)	3(06)
	25-35 years	13(26)	25(50)
	35-45 years	22 (44)	16(52)
	45-60 years	12 (24)	6(12)
	>60 years	1(02)	0 (0)
Marital status	Married	47 (94)	45(90)
	Unmarried	3(06)	5(10)
Experience	0-5 years	19(38)	25(50)
	6-10 years	14 (28)	19(38)
	11-18 years	11(22)	3(06)
	19-25 years	6(12)	1(02)
	>25 years	0(0)	2(04)
Income level	< Rs.5000	15(30)	23(46)
	Rs.5000-Rs.10000	35(70)	27(54)
	>Rs.10000	0(0)	0(0)
Housing	Own House	15(30)	17(34)
	Rented	9(18)	4(08)
	Provided by Planter	26(52)	29(58)

Percentage is shown in bracket

Interpretation of Gender Differences of Perception towards QWL among Plantation Workers

QWL INDICATOR	Male		Female		T value	T critical	P value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Compensation Factor	2.9	0.37	3.38	0.51	-2.129	-1.77	0.0264
Welfare Factor	3.04	0.42	3.7	0.6	-3.017	-1.724	0.0034
Work Characteristics	2.93	0.45	3.6	0.28	-3.172	-1.753	0.0006
Social Orientation at workplace	3.39	0.32	3.8	0.51	-1.917	-1.782	0.0396
Constitutionalism	3.32	0.14	3.32	0.14	0	-1.812	0.5
Work Life Balance	3.31	0.26	3.83	0.05	-4.335	-2.131	0.00614
Social Relevance of their Work.	3.32	0.21	3.7	0.08	-3.656	-2.015	0.00732
Life Comforts as Work Outcome	2.55	0.39	3.22	0.44	-2.761	-1.812	0.01004

QWL Indicator 1- Compensation: The findings suggests that female workers (M=3.38) have a favourable perception towards the compensation being fair and adequate than when compared to the male workers (M=2.90) at 5% level of statistical significance (t=-2.129, p<.05). So H1 is accepted

QWL Indicator 2- Welfare & Work Environment : The findings suggests that female workers (M=3.70) have a favourable perception towards their working environment when compared to the male workers (M=3.04) at 5% level of statistical significance (t=--3.017, p<.05). So H2 is accepted.

QWL Indicator 3- Work Characteristics: The findings suggest that female workers (M=3.60) have a favourable perception towards their job related factors when compared to the male workers (M=2.93) at 5% level of statistical significance (t= -3.172, p<.05). So H3 is accepted

QWL Indicator 4- Social Orientation at the Work Place: The findings suggest that female workers (M=3.80) have a favourable perception towards the Social Integration Factors at the work place when compared to the male workers (M=3.39) at 5% level of statistical significance (t=-1.917, p<.05). So H4 is accepted

QWL Indicator 5- Constitutionalism at the Work Place: The null hypothesis is that there is no significant difference between Quality of Work Life between male and female workers. The obtained t=0.0 which is more than the table value of -1.812 at 5% level, which is statistically insignificant and hence the null hypothesis (H0) is accepted.

QWL Indicator 6- Work Life Balance: The findings suggests that female workers (M=3.83) are able to manage both their work as well as family life when compared to the male workers (M=3.31) at 5% level of statistical significance (t=-4.335, p<.05). So H6 is accepted.

QWL Indicator 7- Social Relevance of Work :The findings suggests that female workers (M=3.70) have more pride in their work when compared to the male workers (M=3.32) at 5% level of statistical significance (t=-3.656, p<.05). So H7 is accepted

QWL Indicator 8- Life Comforts as a Work Outcome: Female workers (M=3.22) expressed that their work helped in enhancing their material well-being when compared to the male workers (M=2.55) at 5% level of statistical significance (t=-2.761, p<.05). So H8 is accepted

CONCLUSION:

This study attempts to find the gender differences on perceptions of workers on the quality of work life in coffee plantations of Kodagu district of Karnataka. The main contribution of this research to the existing knowledge is the identification of gender issue in quality of working life in this sector which is not much explored for such studies. Using an independent t-test, significant gender differences were investigated on perceptions of workers' quality of working life. The study results suggest that female workers reported significantly higher mean scores in all the quality of work life parameters studied. The findings of this study are preliminary and should be considered as preliminary as no much study is done to establish the role of moderating variables.

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