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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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 applies to any land used or intends to be used for growing coffee, tea, rubber, cinchona and cardamom. Plantations are 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.

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

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-
iate opportunity to use and develop human capacities (4)
opportunity for continued growth and security, (5) social inte-
gration 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 environ-
ment, 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 back-
ground of women workers in tea plantations in Munnar, Ker-
ala. 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. Kavet-
sa Adagala (1991) studied the life of the plantation workers in
the coffee plantations of Kenya. The gap between labour in-
put and wages received the extreme poverty among the work-
ers and the health and nutrition status of the women and chil-
dren 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 Ni-
geria, Fapohunda Tinuke (2013) concluded that there are
significant gender gaps in satisfaction towards QWL indica-
tors 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 to-
ward 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 be-
tween male and female workers with respect to their percep-
tions 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 work-
ers 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 work-
ners, 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 al-
pha coefficient and it was found to be good with an alpha
of more than 0.8 for all dimensions. Secondary data was col-
lected 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 individu-
als to satisfy his and his family's needs and ensures a decent
standard of living. Factors such as adequacy of wages, exter-
nal 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 con-
tributing to a better QWL is significantly higher when com-
pared to male workers.

2. Welfare Factor including Working Environment: Work-
ers must be provided a safe and healthy working environ-
ment. There are legal provisions in this regard as envisaged in
the Plantation Labour Act, 1951. Factors such as accommo-
dation, basic amenities at workplace, medical aid, child care
facilities, and compensation for accidents at workplace are in-
cluded in this dimension.

H2: Women workers’ perception of their work environment
contributing to a better QWL is significantly higher when com-
pared 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 influ-
ence 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 com-
pared 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 plan-
tation. 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 signifi-
cantly 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:

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

Percentage is shown in bracket

Interpretation of Gender Differences of Perception towards QWL among Plantation Workers:

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

QWL Indicator 1- Compensation: The findings suggest 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 suggest 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 suggest 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 suggest 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.

REFERENCES