The Quality of Work Life of Employees in Cashew Industry: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Job is an integral part of everyday life of persons. It is the source for the survival of mankind. People spend almost one third of their entire life at workplace. Hence the work and workplace definitely influences the quality of work life. Therefore the job and its environment must give satisfaction, peace of mind and enjoyment to the employees to be constructive and more productive. In order to study the Quality of Work Life of employees, eight important factors are considered viz, Compensation, Working Condition, Motivational Factors, Safety and Welfare measures, Career Development, Work Demand, Social Relevance and Personal Factors. The sample size is 450 employees working in cashew industry in Kollam district. Multi-stage random sampling technique is used for the study. A well-structured questionnaire was prepared to collect primary data from the employees. The tools used for data analysis are Mean score analysis, Standard Deviation, Chi-square Test for goodness of fit and Mann-Whitney U Test.

Key Words: Quality of Work Life, Cashew Industry, Employees, Work Life, Working Condition, Compensation.
1. Introduction

In an interview with Fortune Magazine, Billgates, the founder of Microsoft said that “Take our twenty best people away, and I will tell you that Microsoft become an unimportant company”. It shows how important the human resource to an organisation. Human resource is the factor which determines the uniqueness of an organisation. Therefore it can be say that the success of an organisation depends on how well a company manage, develop and nurture its human resources. To get maximum productivity and commitment from the workforce, today’s organisations need to be more flexible in attracting, recruiting, motivating, and retaining its workforce. Improve the Quality of Work Life (QWL) of employees is one of the critical strategies that organisation can adopt for the better performance of their employees. The totality of the job environment is termed as the Quality of Work Life. It means the overall quality of working life of people at workplace. The extent to which an employee can improve his personal life through his work environment and experience will determine the quality of his working life. It can be said that Quality of working Life is the sum total of the organizational efforts aims to increase the employee satisfaction for enhancing organizational effectiveness. It means any conscious effort for enhancing working conditions, work content and other employee welfare activities initiated by the organisation is termed as Quality of Work Life. It is nothing but create a workplace environment where the activities of employees are highly significant. This means adopting programs, policies and procedures for making the work and workplace more interesting and rewarding for employees. Autonomy in job, recognition, training and development and monetary and non-monetary rewards can be implemented. An organisation with enhanced quality of working life can provide employees a sense of satisfaction and delight in their work. This will gradually create a sense of belongingness among the employees towards the organisation. This feel of belongingness will motivate them to put all their abilities and efforts to reach their maximum productivity (Somashekharappa & Sathyanarayan, 2010)

Objectives of the Study

Following are the objectives of the study.

1. To assess the Quality of Work Life of employees in cashew industry at Kollam district

2. To analyse the difference in the Quality of Work Life of employees in cashew industry based on the nature of organisation.

Significance of the Study

The cashew industry in Kerala is facing an unprecedented decline in terms of cashew cultivation and its processing. The first commercial cashew processing unit in India was established in Kerala at Kollam District. Kollam city was
popularly known as the cashew city of the world. During the period of 1990, Kerala was the leading producer of cashew nut in India. The share of Kerala was 27.56 per cent. The scenario has changed since last decade onwards. Currently the share of Kerala is 10.97 per cent and stands in the fourth place. Kerala’s Cashew Production is decreasing every year. The Literature survey shows that the workers are drain from the industry and started to work in more promising other areas of employment. One of the reasons for this drain is the poor Quality of Work Life maintained by the industry. In this context it is very relevant to learn about the Quality of Work Life of cashew industry employees and its influence on Innovative work behaviour and financial performance of the industry.

**Statement of the Problem**

Quality of Work Life is considered as an important aspect practiced by organisations to motivate employees in order to lure their better performance. Employees have different expectations regarding their workplace. A favourable work place environment and facilities are inevitable in order to exhibit innovative work behaviour by the employees. An employee with innovative work behaviour can definitely contribute to the better performance and growth of the organisation as well as he can remain as an asset of the organisation. The literature review unveils that Kollam district in Kerala was well known for the cashew production. The employment in cashew factories is the main source of income for the people at Kollam district. But now the scenario has been changed. The cashew cultivation and its processing units are slowly vanishing from Kerala especially from Kollam district. And the employees are forced to move to other jobs. In this circumstance, it is very imperative to safeguard and rejuvenate the industry because cashew industry is one of the agro based traditional industries in Kerala. For this purpose it is very necessary to take steps to retain the employees by providing better Quality of Work Life. There are lot of studies conducted regarding the Quality of Work Life of employees in cashew industry in Kerala. But no studies are undertaken with regard to the Quality of Work Life of employees in cashew industry in Kollam district separately. Kollam district has got an immense importance because it was known as the cashew hub of the world. So a detailed and systematic study is required in this area. Therefore there exists a research gap.

**Scope of the Study**

The scope of the study limited to the Kollam district in Kerala because majority of the cashew processing units in Kerala is situated at Kollam district and it is known as the capital city of cashew.

2. **Research Methodology**

The study is descriptive cum analytical in nature. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Primary data were collected from the employees
working in the cashew industry. Secondary data for the study was gathered through extensive and intensive survey of existing literature. Secondary data are collected and augmented from various text books, reports, journals, periodicals, theses and dissertations.

All the items under consideration in any field of study are considered as population or universe of the study. For this study the population is the employees working in the cashew industry at Kollam district. Presently there are 157100 employees working in the cashew industry at Kollam district.

The sample size of respondents is derived by using a sample calculation formula (Yamene, 1967). The formula for finding out the sample size from the given population of employees is \( N/(1+N(e)^2) \) where \( N \) is the Population and “e” is equal to the value of 0.05. The Calculated Sample Size of employees = \( 157100/1+ (157100 * (0.05)^2) \) = 399

But the sample size is raised to 450 employees in order to increase the accuracy of the study.

The sampling technique used for selecting employees for the study is Multi-stage random sampling. There are five stages in the process. In the first stage, the entire geographical area of Kollam has been selected. In the second stage, the Kollam district has been divided into Taluks. There are six Taluks in Kollam districts, out of which three Taluks viz, Kollam, Kottarakkara and Pathanapuram have been selected for the study randomly. In the third stage, there are 12 companies selected from the Taluks randomly based on lottery method. Out of 12 Companies, 9 companies from Kollam Taluk, 2 companies from Kottarakkara Taluk and 1 company from Pathanapuram Taluk have been selected for the study proportionately. In the fourth stage, the units or factories of the companies are selected for the study. There are 24 factories selected for the study. In the fifth and final stage, 450 employees were selected from the factories. Hence the sample size is 450 employees.

Structured questionnaire was prepared to collect primary data from the employees working in cashew industries at Kollam district. Mean score analysis, Standard Deviation, Chi-square Test for goodness of fit and Mann-Whitney U Test are the major tools used for data analysis.

3. Review of Literature

Quality of Work Life defines differently by different people. It refers to the favourableness or unfavourableness of working environment for employees at work (Keith, 1989). According to J. Richard and J. Loy, “Quality of Work Life is the degree to which members of a work organisation are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experiences in the organisation” (Geet, S. D. et.al, 2009).
The definition on Quality of Work Life given by Serey (2006) is somewhat conclusive and best meet the modern work environment. As per his definition, an organisation should give emphasis on four aspects for improved Quality of Work Life of its employees. They are called 4 C’s i.e. Concern, Consciousness, Capacity and Commitment.

1. Concern: An opportunity to exercise one's talents and capacities to face challenges and situations that require independent initiative and self-direction.

2. Consciousness: An activity thought to be worthwhile by the individuals involved.

3. Capacity: An activity in which one understands the role the individual plays in the achievement of some overall goals.

4. Commitment: A sense of taking pride in what one is doing and in doing it well.

The term Quality of Work Life is described by Richard E. Walton in eight broad requirements of an employment that establish a desirable Quality of Work Life. He proposes these eight factors as the criteria or conditions to measure the Quality of Work Life of employees in an organisation. They are Adequate and fair compensation, Safe and healthy environment, Development of human capacities, Growth and security, Social integration, Constitutionalism, Total Life Space and Social relevance (Walton, R. E, 1975).

In this study, eight factors have been identified for measuring the Quality of Working Life of employees of Cashew industry. They are:

a. Compensation: Fair and equitable compensation is considered as the fundamental elements of the concept of Quality of Work Life. Fairness in wages and salary, increment, Parity in salary with industry, Bonus and incentives, Sufficiency of remuneration, Legally fixed pay and pay structure, Dearness Allowance and Medical Reimbursement are the components of the variable Compensation.

b. Working Condition: All the existing physical circumstances in an organisation that affect an employee are termed as the working condition of that organisation. The sub factors of the concept of working condition are Workplace Safety and Security, Hygienic workplace, Dress code or Uniform at Workplace, Sufficiency of air passage and ventilation, Supervisory support, Relation with co-workers and Sufficiency of lighting.

c. Motivational Factors: The factors which motivate an employee to be productively sustained in an organisation are labelled as Motivational factors.
The sub-variables considered for the study under the construct of motivational factors are Job Security, Relationship with management, Relation with supervisors, Relation with co-workers, Work Appraisal, Recognition and Promotion.

d. **Safety and Welfare Measures**: Safety and Welfare measures are other important factors which contribute to the quality of work life of employees at workplace. Maintenance of machine, Cotton mask, Gloves, Sanitation facility, Rest room facility, Drinking Water facility, Canteen facility, First Aid facility and Conveyance facility are the sub components of the variable safety and welfare measures.

e. **Career Development**: Career is an occupation undertaken by a person for his lifetime. The quality of work life will be better when employees get sufficient opportunity for their career advancement. The sub components of the variable Career Development are Training facility, Participation in decision making, Work enrichment, Employee counselling, Making Suggestion, Encouraging higher studies, and Trade Union activities.

f. **Work Demand**: The physical, psychological and social requirements of a job in an organisation are termed as work demand. Work demand is an important determinant of quality of work life of employees. The factors of work demand considered for the study are Work hours, Rest time and Work Knowledge.

g. **Social Relevance**: The societal acceptance of a person because of the employee of a particular organisation will contribute his quality of work life. The social responsibilities undertaken by an organisation contribute to the quality of work life. The factors considered as the sub-variables of the concept of social relevance are Peer Group Acceptance, Management Acceptance, Superior Acceptance, Trade Union Acceptance, Cultural activities and Community activities.

h. **Personal Factors**: There are many personal factors which affect the quality of work life of an employee in an organisation. They are stress level, contribution to the organisational growth, contribution to the family growth, family – work life balance and feeling of worthiness.

4. **Analysis and Interpretation**

This part of the study is deal with the analysis and interpretation of the primary data collected from the 450 employees working in the cashew industry of Kollam district through the structured questionnaire.
Assessing the Quality of Work Life of Employees

Table 1: Mean score analysis of the Quality of Work Life of Employees in Cashew Industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL.No.</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Working Condition</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Safety and Security</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>0.990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Work Demand</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>0.884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Social Relevance</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>0.679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Personal Factors</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Quality of Work Life</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.65</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.9955</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 exhibits the mean score analysis of the variable Quality of Work Life. 2.65 is the mean value of the variable Quality of Work Life. 2.86, 2.96, 2.55, 2.62, 2.85, 2.79, 2.14 and 2.39 are the mean values of the sub-variables of Quality of Work Life viz, Compensation, Working Condition, Motivation, Safety and Security, Career Development, Work demand, Social Relevance and Personal Factors respectively. The mean values of all the variables are below the statistical mean value of 3. Therefore it can be concluded that the Quality of Work Life of employees working in the cashew industry of Kollam is low.

Testing of Hypothesis (H1)

H0: The Quality of Work Life of employees in Cashew Industry in Kollam District is not equal to low.

H a: The Quality of Work Life of employees in Cashew Industry in Kollam District is low

Table 2: Chi-Square test for goodness of fit of Quality of Work Life of employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of Work Life of employees</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Chi-Square Value</th>
<th>P Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>49.56</td>
<td>24.16</td>
<td>&lt;0.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>29.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>21.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ** denotes significant at 1% level

As per the table --Chi-Square Test for goodness of fit shows maximum number and percentage of respondents opined that the Quality of Work Life of...
employees is low and the P Value is less than 0.01 at 1 per cent level of significance. Since the P Value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This means that the Quality of Work Life of employees in cashew industry is low. Hence the hypothesis “Quality of Work Life of employees in Cashew Industry in Kollam District is low” stands accepted.

**Testing of Hypothesis (H2)**

H2: There is significant difference in the Quality of Work Life of employees in Public sector and Private sector companies in Cashew Industry.

Table 3 exhibits Mann – Whitney U Test for Significant Difference in the Mean Ranks based on nature of organisation on Quality of Work Life. The categories are Public sector and private sector companies. The result is explained in the following paragraphs.

Table 3: Mann- Whitney U Test for significant difference in the QWL based on nature of organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of QWL</th>
<th>Mean Rank of Respondents</th>
<th>Mann – Whitney U Test Value</th>
<th>P Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>194.62</td>
<td>252.76</td>
<td>18699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Condition</td>
<td>194.18</td>
<td>253.15</td>
<td>18607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>204.18</td>
<td>244.32</td>
<td>20716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety &amp; Welfare</td>
<td>202.55</td>
<td>245.76</td>
<td>20373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td>154.38</td>
<td>288.29</td>
<td>10208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Demand</td>
<td>175.83</td>
<td>269.35</td>
<td>14734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Relevance</td>
<td>193.51</td>
<td>253.74</td>
<td>18464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Factors</td>
<td>246.21</td>
<td>207.22</td>
<td>20844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QWL</td>
<td>179.44</td>
<td>266.16</td>
<td>15496</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ** denotes significant at 1% level

Table 3 displays that the Mann-Whitney U test for significant difference in the Mean Ranks based on nature of organisation on Quality of Work Life. The P Value for all the variables viz, Compensation, Working Condition, Motivation, Safety and Welfare, Career Development, Work Demand, Social Relevance and Personal factors are below 0.01. Since P value is less than 0.01 the null hypothesis is rejected at 1 per cent level of significance. Hence the hypothesis H2 that “There is significant difference in the Quality of Work Life of
employees in Public sector and Private sector companies in Cashew Industry.

The mean ranks given by employees for both public sector and private sector companies illustrated in the table 1 show that private sector companies exhibit highest ranking with regard to Quality of Work Life. This means that the Quality of Work Life is better in private sector companies than that of Public sector companies.

5. Conclusion

One of the reasons for the better performance of an organisation is its satisfied or delighted work force. A firm that does not assess and improve employee satisfaction may face increased employee turnover, decline in productivity, increased absenteeism and limited ability to lure and retain talented employees in the organisation. This will affect a company’s ability to serve its customers and subsequently it will lead to the low performance and lower profitability of the company. Quality of Work Life is one of the pivotal components which increase the satisfaction level of employees in an organisation. The efforts put on measuring and enhancing the Quality of Work Life of employees helps to enhance the employee productivity and stability of workforce.

The study exhibits that the Quality of Work Life of employees in cashew industry in Kollam district is low. Hence it is very imperative to take measures to improve the Quality of Work Life of employees to get better performance from them. Therefore the cashew industry in Kollam district can regain its royal status and contribute to the growth of the state.

References
