FACTORS CONTRIBUTING QUALITY OF WORK LIFE OF EMPLOYEES IN SELECT MAGNESITE COMPANIES: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

New and faster technology, redefined values, and shifting customer demands are changing the way businesses operate in the 21st century. To attract and retain employees, companies need to be exploiting those points of convergence and continuously work with employees to redesign the work, eliminate job stress, increase job autonomy, provide learning and training opportunities and to handle such problems, quality of work life is required. In this context, the researches have made an attempt to study the factors contributing quality of work life in the magnesite companies in Salem district. This study is empirical in nature based on survey method. The first-hand information for this study has been collected from the human resource departments of the select magnesite companies. As an essential part of the study, the primary data were collected from 497 employees with the help of questionnaires. The findings of the study reveals that there is no significant relationship among the acceptance level of the respondents belonging to different genders, age groups, educational status, monthly salary, length of service and company they belonging to towards factors contributing to quality of work life of employees in select magnesite companies in Salem district. Female respondents, respondents in the age group above 55 years, respondents having H.Sc qualification, respondents belonging to monthly salary of Rs.15001-25000, executives, respondents with the length of service of 16-20 years and employees of SRCL have higher acceptance level towards factors contributing to quality of work life of employees in select magnesite companies in Salem district. To ensure a positive outcome, attention to the factors identified in the suggested framework is important for improved quality of work life.
INTRODUCTION

New and faster technology, redefined values, and shifting customer demands are changing the way businesses operate in the 21st century. The success of any organization depends to a large extent upon the capability, competence, efficiency, and level of development of human resources, who being the active agents, accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, and build social, economic and political organizations. No organization can think of viability and effectiveness without the efficient utilization of human resources. Therefore, human resource is the most important resource and is considered the backbone of every organization. Though factors such as exploration of natural resources, availability of physical and financial resources, and international aid contribute to the economic development of a country, none of these factors is more significant than committed manpower. In fact, it may be said that all the development comes from the human mind. Today, organizations operate in an environment characterized by technological changes, which in turn, have an effect on employment opportunities, skill requirement, management policies, strategies and style, expectations and aspirations of employees as well as the physical working conditions. In the industrial world, the thrust is now given to “quality” in order to foster a quality culture. Quality assumes a goal or an objective or even a priority. Quality work cannot be achieved easily. Besides, people's issues move to the foreground and Technical issues take a supporting role. Effective utilization of human resources requires better quality of work life by providing adequate financial compensation, good working conditions, suitable opportunities for growth and development, workers’ participation in management and by ensuring social justice in the organization.

CONCEPT OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

Quality of work life is a philosophy, a set of principles, which holds that people are the most important resource in the organization as they are trustworthy, responsible and capable of making valuable contribution and they should be treated with dignity and respect. The elements that are relevant to an individual’s quality of work life include the task, physical work environment, social environment within the organization, administrative system and relationship between life on and off the job. People conceive of quality of work life as a set of methods, such as autonomous work groups, job enrichment and high involvement aimed at boosting the satisfaction and productivity of workers. It requires employee commitment to the organization and an environment in which this commitment can flourish. The quality of work life means the sum total of values, material and non-material, attained by a worker through his life as a wage or salary earner. The quality of work life is the working conditions’ response to needs and desires of an individual. Cummings and Worley mention that the quality of work life has two meanings. Firstly, it means a good feeling towards work and good mental health experienced from work in terms of incentives, safe working conditions, and growth. Secondly, it means the ways that organizations use to assure the quality of work such as creating the meaning and importance of work responsibility by applying efficient teamwork and management and labour relation systems. For promoting the quality of work life various management strategies such as new designs, quality control circle, and participative management are to be initiated.
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Globalization of the economies and the consequent compulsion of facing competition both in the domestic and international markets pose a serious challenge to all concerned, viz. employers, employees and the society. Though the positive effect of quality of work life has already been established, all parties of the organization still resist to any scheme or procedure to improve quality of work life. The management may feel that the quality of work life at the present level is satisfactory enough and no steps need to be taken to improve it. It leads to poor morale of employees, lack of complete integration between employees and management, demoralization and lack of job security. Employees, on the other hand, resist changes with a preconceived notion that any scheme the management takes up would be to increase production without extra cost. Of course, majority of the public sector undertakings and few private sector organizations have been in the red since 1991 and whenever certain demands arose in the past, the management pleaded its helplessness in meeting such demands because of financial constraint and steadily declining profitability. To attract and retain employees, companies need to be exploiting those points of convergence and continuously work with employees to redesign the work, eliminate job stress, increase job autonomy, provide learning and training opportunities and to handle such problems, quality of work life of employees is required. Examining the perception of the employees and evolving suitable parameters to improve their quality of work life has become imperative. In this context, the researchers have made an attempt to study the factors contributing to quality of work life in the select magnetite companies in Salem district.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the need and importance of quality of work life of employees.
2. To study the perception of the employees towards various factors contributing quality of work life of employees in the select magnesite companies in Salem district.
3. To suggest appropriate measures to improve the quality of work life of employees based on the findings of the present study.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS

The following null hypothesis have been formulated and tested: \( H_0: \) There is no significant relationship among the acceptance levels of the respondents belonging to different demographic profiles towards factors contributing to quality of work life of employees in select magnesite companies.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study is examining the quality of work life of employees in the select magnesite companies in Salem district. There are three large scale magnesite companies in operation in Salem district, namely, the Tamil Nadu Magnesite Limited (TANMAG), Dalmia Magnesite Corporation (DMC), and SAIL Refractory Company Limited (SRCL). The employees working in these organizations were only considered as total population. In the present study, the most common 11 variables that influence the quality of work life of employees such as nature of job, compensation, working conditions, opportunity for growth
and development, social integration of work, constitutionalism in the work organization, work and total life space, occupational stress, workers’ participation in management, grievance handling, and social relevance of work only were studied.

**SAMPLING DESIGN**

This study is confined to the employees of the above said three magnesite companies. The employees working in these organizations are only considered: they are about 1241 as on 31.12.2010. The employees are categorized into executives, supervisory staff and workmen. By adopting the stratified random sampling, 497 respondents (40% of the population from each stratum) are selected. The following table shows the sampling distribution of the present study.

**TABLE 1 SAMPLING DISTRIBUTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPANIES</th>
<th>Executives</th>
<th>Supervisory Staff</th>
<th>Workmen</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SRCL</td>
<td>15 (37)</td>
<td>11 (27)</td>
<td>119 (298)</td>
<td>145 (362)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalmia</td>
<td>11 (27)</td>
<td>20 (49)</td>
<td>147 (368)</td>
<td>178 (444)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TANMAG</td>
<td>9 (22)</td>
<td>27 (67)</td>
<td>138 (346)</td>
<td>174 (435)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35 (86)</td>
<td>58 (143)</td>
<td>404 (1012)</td>
<td>497 (1241)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures in parenthesis refer to population

**TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION**

This study is empirical in nature based on survey method. The first-hand information for this study was collected from the human resource departments of the select magnesite companies in Salem district. The study is mainly based on primary data. As an essential part of the study, the primary data were collected from 497 employees with the help of questionnaire. Taking into consideration the objectives of the study, a questionnaire was prepared after a perusal of available literature. The questionnaire was constructed based on Likert scaling technique. Pre-testing of questionnaire was done during January 2011, involving 25 respondents to know the relevance of the questions. In the light of pre-testing, necessary changes were incorporated in the questions and their sequences. The secondary data were collected mainly from journals, magazines, government reports, books and unpublished dissertations.

**FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS**

The ultimate object of the study is to find out the factors contributing quality of work life of employees in the select magnesite companies in Salem district. In order to study the attitude of employees, analysis of variance, student t test, co-efficient of variation, and multiple discriminant function analysis were employed. To arrive at possible solutions, comprehensive, descriptive and percentage analyses were also employed in this study.
FINDINGS

1. There is no significant relationship among the acceptance level of the respondents belonging to different genders, age groups, educational status, monthly salary, length of service and company they belonging to towards factors contributing to quality of work life of employees in select magnesite companies in Salem district.

2. Female respondents, respondents in the age group above 55 years, respondents having H.Sc qualification, respondents belonging to monthly salary of Rs.15001-25000, executives, respondents with the length of service of 16-20 years and employees of SRCL have higher acceptance level towards factors contributing to quality of work life of employees in select magnesite companies in Salem district.

3. There exists consistency in the acceptance level of male respondents, respondents belonging to 46-55 years, respondents who have H.Sc qualification, respondents drawing salary upto Rs.15000, supervisors, respondents having upto 10 years, and employees of Dalmia towards factors contributing to quality of work life of employees in select magnesite companies in Salem district.

4. Multiple discriminant function analysis was used to study how the different factors contributing to quality of work life of employees measured in terms of level of acceptance discriminate among the executives, supervisory staff and workmen. The MDA technique applied resulted in two discriminant functions, of which the factors such as social integration of work and work and total life space contributed to the first function (Work and Social Life) and the variables such as occupational stress and workers’ participation in management contribute to the second discriminant function (Worker and Work Environment). The efficiency of these functions were tested using classification matrix which predicted 91.10% of the cases correctly. The MDA results further shows that the workmen and supervisors differ more from executives in ‘Work and Social Life’. Supervisors differ in the ‘Worker and Work Environment’ from both workmen and executives.

5. Multiple discriminant function analysis has also been used to study how the different variables contributing to QWL discriminate among the employees belonging to three companies namely SRCL, Dalmia and TANMAG. The MDA technique applied resulted in two discriminant functions, of which the factors relating to opportunity for growth and development, workers’ participation in management contributed to the first function (Employee-Employer Relationship) and the variables such as working conditions and occupational stress contribute to the second discriminant function (Work Environment). The efficiency of these functions was tested using classification matrix which predicted 58.80% of the cases correctly. The MDA results further shows that employees Dalmia and SRCL differ more from TANMAG in ‘Employee-Employee Relationship’. Employees of Dalmia differ in the ‘Work Environment’ from the employees of both TANMAG and SRCL.

6. There has been a low correlation (0.155) between the overall score of the factors contributing to quality of work life of employees and the selected personal variables. Gender, age and educational status of the employees have no significant effect on the factors contributing to quality of work life of employees in select magnesite companies. Monthly salary and length of service of the respondents have a significant effect on the factors contributing to quality of work life of employees at 5 per cent significance level.

7. In regards to factors contributing to quality of work life of employees in select magnesite companies, compensation of employees, nature of job, opportunity for growth and development, workers’ participation in management and social integration of work stand at the first, second, third, fourth and fifth places with a mean rank of 3.16, 3.06, 3.00, 2.98 and 2.94 respectively. Social relevance of work, grievance handling and constitutionalism in the work organization are the other important dimensions of the quality of work life of
employees in select magnesite companies. For occupational stress, work and total life space and working conditions, the respondents assign the least ranks. It means that the employees have problems mainly in these areas.

SUGGESTIONS

1. In government owned organizations, it is very difficult to have a consistent promotional policy due to complying with statutory regulations such as reservations. However, a consistent promotional policy can be followed in Dalmia Magnesite Corporation through meritorious career landmarks. Therefore, it is recommended that besides time bound promotion, about 50 per cent of promotions are to be given to out-performers in Dalmia Magnesite Corporation.

2. About 18.51 per cent of the respondents state that there is lack of measures for improving the standard of living of employees in the select magnesite companies. Provision for better work environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time activities, and social belonging will improve the standard of living of employees in select magnesite companies in Salem district.

3. Work stress is an important barrier in the quality of work life of employees in any organization. About 35.61 per cent of the respondents state that there are inadequate measures to control and lessen stress in select magnesite companies. Therefore, the select magnesite companies can conduct regular health check up, health screening camps, yoga classes and meditation for employees to make them physically and mentally fit. Stress audit and research also could be conducted with the employees working in key areas in the select magnesite companies.

4. In order to develop the creativity of the employees, the select magnesite companies are required to encourage them to experiment with new methods in work places. For this purpose, the management can set up a separate cell to enable employees to experiment with new methods, and employees with creativity can be rewarded.

5. To get better the quality of work life of the employees in select magnesite companies, “Work Assessment Committees” could be constituted, headed by qualified staff in-charge. The Committee shall meet frequently and assess the performance and appreciate the sincere efforts made by the employees. The management of the select magnesite companies must identify dynamic employees and their groups and appreciate them by giving suitable rewards, increment, special pay, family tour, extra leave, holiday home, get together with their families, appreciation letters, highlighting their good work amongst other employees on special occasions, etc. The excellent performances of the employees have to be considered at the time of their promotion.

6. According to 49.49 per cent of the respondents, top management of the select magnesite companies does not understand their problems. Therefore the management of the select magnesite companies may well make use of informal groups by taking them into confidence to mediate as bridges of understanding between the management and the employees. The select magnesite companies should use it along with formal structures to make a workable system to understand the problems of the subordinates in order to ensure the organizational objectives.

7. The company’s commitment to equality should be reflected in its policies and programmes. Therefore, the select magnesite companies shall comply with the constitutional and legal obligations in respect of non-discrimination, equality of opportunity in training, careers prospects, facilities, etc. The select magnesite companies should provide employees with opportunities for personal/professional development and growth and levels.
CONCLUSION

Better quality of work life promotes human dignity and growth, collaborative work, compatibility of people, organizational goals, etc. As a result, employees become satisfied, motivated, involved and committed individuals with respect to their lives at work. In the present study, about 48% of the respondents are satisfied with the prevailing quality of work life in the select magnesite companies. The employees have a few problems with the quality of work life such as inconsistent promotion policy, lack of measures for the improvement of standard of living, inadequate measures for control and reduction of stress, lack of encouragement to experiment with new methods, inadequate counseling, lack of appreciation of the good work of subordinates, lack of top management understanding of subordinates’ problems, injustice and discrimination of employees, absence of strong mechanism for grievance redressal, inadequate training programmes, poor working conditions and lack of employees’ participation. To ensure a positive outcome, attention to the factors identified in the suggested framework is important for improved quality of work life. If this study provokes the people concerned to take some positive measures in order to improve them, the researchers will feel amply rewarded.

REFERENCES