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Work Life Balance Problems of Industrial Workers in Kerala: A Study in the Perspective of Toiling Class Theory

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ABSTRACT

Since human resources are assets to the organizations, it is important to draw attention to their work life balance aspect. It is highly important in the industrial sector where the employees have to devote a lion's share of their time for work and are hardly striving to balance their work lives and personal lives. The Toiling Class theory propounded by late former minister Sri KM Mani, clearly points out the relevance of work life balance. According to this theory, there are two classes of working people which include ruling class and toiling class where the latter (toiling class) is prone to the exploitation of the former (ruling class). Such exploitation probably results in detrimental effect on the work life balance of the toiling class. The researcher aims to analyze the work life balance of industrial workers in Kerala. A convenient sample of 116 industrial workers working in different industries in Kozhikode, Malappuram and Ernakulam Districts of Kerala were selected as a part of the study. Average Score Analysis, Independent sample t test and One Way ANOVA are the statistical tools used by the researcher for analyzing the Work Life Balance problems of the respondents. The results of analysis showed that there is moderate to high existence of work life balance problems or work life imbalances among the respondents. Various concerns of work life imbalance incorporated from the previous studies have proved to be the effect on the employees in the present study also. The findings of the present study provide worthy suggestions to the researchers, academicians and policy makers to understand and consider the work life balance problems of the industrial workers in Kerala

INTRODUCTION

Work life balance is defined as how well an individual is able to handle his work along with his personal interests. It is a crucial concern to be addressed among the industrial sector employees because of its painstaking work process¹¹. The nature of job in the industries is characterized by longer working hours, changing work shifts, increased work load due to changing customer needs and tastes, stiff competition and various other economic parameters. Thus, employees working in industries have the tendency to perceive their job as challenging to meet their family needs and personal interests. Work life imbalances of the employees lead to stress, boredom, anxiety etc. which can badly affect their performance, thereby resulting in retrenchment. This may also have negative effects on the physical as well as mental health of the employees. This concept has been extensively studied by the previous researchers and academicians. The Toiling Class Theory of KM Mani is one of the theories which lay emphasis on the work life balance aspect of the employees.

This theory was propounded by KM Mani, former minister of Kerala. According to this theory, there are both ruling class and toiling class of people. Ruling Class own and control the means of production, while the Toiling Class work hard for their livelihood. Mani has explained in this theory that the Toiling Class is found to be exploited by the ruling class. As a result, they have to work for long hours and spend a considerable amount of time in their work. Apart from working longer hours, they have to work under stringent working conditions and they may not be provided with their expected needs. All these probably lead to work life imbalances among the toiling class. Being a political theory, it explains about the workers engaged in manual labor or physical labor. 'Industrial Workers' is one of the categories coming under this theory. Thus, the present study has been concentrated among the Industrial Workers in Kerala. The research focuses on level of Work Life Balance problems of the Industrial Workers in Kerala and on what dimensions they exist extremely.

METHODS

The study is based on the context of Toiling Class theory of Sri KM Mani. Hence, the study has been concentrated among the Industrial Workers, one of the categories of the toiling class. Full time Industrial Workers in Kozhikode, Malappuram and Ernakulam districts of Kerala form the participants of the survey. The respondents were identified and selected based on the convenience of the researcher. Ernakulam is the district which has highest number of industries established in the state⁹. Kozhikode and Malappuram districts of Kerala also come under the top ten fastest growing urban cities in the world¹⁰. Thus, it is assumed that the workload in the industries in these districts may be complex as well as dynamic in nature. Therefore, the industrial workers belonging to these districts are chosen for the purpose of the study. Primary data was collected from the industrial workers using a structured questionnaire. 140 questionnaires were circulated among the industrial workers, out of which 116 responses found to be genuine and useful for the study. The questionnaire is bisectonal consisting of first section with demographic profile and second section with statements of Work Life Balance problems.

Work Life Balance of the Industrial Workers is evaluated using a self constructed scale with 10 items. The items or statements which are most repeatedly asked in the prior studies were considered by the researcher for framing the questions of the variable. Thus, general statements of Work Life Balance used in different studies have been incorporated for the purpose of measurement. The statements are provided with five point Likert scores of 1 to 5 (i.e. Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) which enable the respondents to answer their level of opinion.

The reliability of the items used in the questionnaire was ascertained using Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test. The Work Life Balance was analyzed using Average Score Analysis to know its level of existence among the Industrial Workers. Independent t- test and One way ANOVA were also used in the study to know whether or not the Work Life Balance of the employees differ according to their demographic characteristics.

RESULTS

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Industrial Workers (n=116)

| Age | | |
|-------------------------------|----|-------|
| 30 and below | 11 | 9.5% |
| 31 to 40 | 75 | 64.5% |
| Above 40 | 30 | 26% |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 93 | 80% |
| Female | 23 | 20% |
| Marital Status | | |
| Single | 42 | 36% |
| Married | 74 | 64% |
| Work experience | | |
| Up to one year | 8 | 7% |
| One to five years | 6 | 5% |
| Six to ten years | 43 | 37% |
| More than ten years | 59 | 51% |
| Number of children | | |
| No child | 11 | 15% |
| One child | 8 | 11% |
| Two children | 18 | 24% |
| More than two children | 37 | 50% |
| Whether spouse working or not | | |
| Yes | 31 | 42% |
| No | 43 | 58% |

Source: SPSS Output from Primary Data

Majority of the industrial workers are aged between 31 and 40 years. A huge percent of the industrial workers are male. Majority of the industrial workers are married and among them 50

percent has more than two children and spouse of the 58 percent are not working. Nearly half of the industrial workers have working experience above ten years.

Reliability of the Scale Items

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

| Cronbach's Alpha Value | Number of items |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| 0.705 | 10 |

Source: SPSS Output Results

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability value says the extent to which the scale used in the study is reliable or consistent. Here, the value of 0.705 indicates that

the scale of items used is reliable. The reliability is interpreted in the sense that the selected items genuinely measure the variable 'Work Life Balance'.

Work Life Balance Level of the Industrial Workers

The average score of 3.88 tells that the Work Life Balance problems are moderate among the respondents. In other words, it can be said that the Industrial Workers in Kerala face certain issues in balancing their personal life with the work life. Statement 4- ‘Lack of understanding by the employer’ (with highest mean score of 4.34) is the most serious concern among the workers in terms of

their work life balance. Statement 3- ‘Monetary policy of the organization in compensating work life difficulties’ (with mean score of 4.283) is the second most concern among the workers. The mean scores of statement 1 and statement 4 also exceed the mean score of overall Work Life Balance. This means that the respondents are also highly concerned about ‘Timing of the work’ (4.162) and ‘Compromising personal affairs due to work’ (4.121).

Table 3. Average Score Analysis

| No. | Statements | n | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|----------------------------------|--|------------|----------|----------|--------------|--------------------|
| 1 | You are not satisfied with the timing of the work | 116 | 1 | 5 | 4.162 | .956 |
| 2 | You compromise your personal affairs due to work pressure | 116 | 1 | 5 | 4.121 | .9615 |
| 3 | The difficulties in the work life are not much compensated by the organizational monetary benefits | 116 | 1 | 5 | 4.283 | 1.028 |
| 4 | Your employer do not understand your family problems | 116 | 1 | 5 | 4.334 | .994 |
| 5 | You find it difficult to take leave | 116 | 1 | 5 | 3.785 | .931 |
| 6 | Your personal life suffers because of your work life | 116 | 1 | 5 | 3.60 | 6.833 |
| 7 | You are concerned about the work under changing conditions in the environment | 116 | 1 | 5 | 3.287 | 1.009 |
| 8 | You experience difficulty in fulfilling your responsibilities due to your work timing | 116 | 1 | 5 | 3.788 | .893 |
| 9 | You are not able to maintain good relationships in the organization due to competition in the work | 116 | 1 | 5 | 3.761 | 1.035 |
| 10 | Increased work pressure makes you physically and mentally distracted | 116 | 1 | 5 | 3.793 | 1.20519 |
| Overall Work Life Balance | | 116 | 1 | 5 | 3.888 | 0.71233 |

Source: SPSS Output of Primary Data

Relationship of Work Life Balance Problems with Gender, Marital Status and Spouse Working Details of the Respondents

H01: Work Life Balance problems do not differ significantly between male and female respondents

H02: Work Life Balance problems do not differ significantly between single respondents and married respondents

H03: Work Life Balance problems do not differ significantly between respondents with spouse working and respondents with spouse not working

Table 4. Analysis of Independent Sample T-Test

| | | n | Mean | Standard Deviation | t-value | p-value | Decision |
|------------------------|---------|----|--------|--------------------|---------|---------|-------------------------------|
| Gender | Male | 93 | 3.7682 | 0.737 | 1.313 | *0.015 | H ₀ 1 Rejected |
| | Female | 23 | 4.2667 | 0.2804 | | | |
| Marital Status | Single | 42 | 3.7976 | 0.86602 | 1.019 | 0.352 | H ₀ 2 Not Rejected |
| | Married | 74 | 3.9405 | 0.6399 | | | |
| Whether spouse working | Yes | 31 | 3.7333 | 0.799 | 1.286 | 0.205 | H ₀ 3 Not Rejected |
| | No | 43 | 3.9844 | 0.484 | | | |

Source: SPSS Output of Primary Data (Significant at 5 Percent Level of Significance)

The p-value in case of gender is below 0.05, which leads to the rejection of H01. Therefore, the Work Life Balance problems significantly vary between male respondents and female respondents. The mean value determined shows that the Work Life Balance problems of female respondents are higher than the male respondents. However, the p-value in case of Martial Status and Spouse Working exceed 0.05. Hence, the researcher failed to reject H02 and H03, which means that the Work Life Balance problems do not differ in case of Marital Status and Spouse Working details of the respondents.

Relationship of Work Life Balance Problems with Age, Work Experience and Number of Children of the Respondents

H04: Work Life Balance problems do not differ significantly between different age groups of the respondents

H05: Work Life Balance problems do not differ significantly between different years of work experience of respondents

H06: Work Life Balance problems do not differ significantly between the number of children of the respondents

Table 5. Results of One Way ANOVA

| | n | F-value | p-value | Decision |
|--------------------|-----|---------|---------|------------------|
| Age | 116 | 1.467 | 0.235 | H04 Not Rejected |
| Work experience | 116 | 21.013 | *0.000 | H05 Rejected |
| Number of children | 74 | 2.092 | *0.031 | H06 Rejected |

Source: SPSS Output of Primary Data (Significant at 5 Percent Level of Significance)

Table 6. Post Hoc Results

| | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|--------|
| Work Experience | Up to one year (2.299) | One to five years (3.4995) | *0.000 |
| | | Six to ten years (4.051) | *0.000 |
| | | More than ten years (3.797) | *0.000 |
| Number of children | No child (3.2545) | One child (3.9875) | *0.042 |
| | | Two children (3.9667) | *0.041 |
| | | More than two children (3.9486) | *0.036 |

Source: SPSS Output of Primary Data (Significant at 5 Percent Level of Significance)

The p-values in case of Work Experience and Number of children are below 0.05, which leads to the rejection of H05 and H06. Therefore, the Work Life Balance problems significantly vary between different age group of the respondents. Also the difference significantly exists between respondents having different number of children. However, the p-value in case of Age exceeds 0.05. Hence, the researcher failed to reject H04, which means that the Work Life Balance problems do not differ in case of Age group of the respondents.

The results of Post Hoc Analysis explain which group exceptionally deviates from its counterparts. The Work Life Balance problems of the workers having experience up to one year significantly differs from that of workers with many years of experience. The problems of Work Life Balance are relatively lower for employees having experience up to one year when compared with others.

Similarly, the Work Life Balance of the workers with no child significantly differs from that of workers having children. The problems of Work Life Balance are relatively lower for employees with no child when compared with workers having children.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the researcher represents the Work Life Balance problems of the Industrial Workers in Kerala. The findings of the present study are concurrent as well as contradictory to the findings of previous studies conducted on Work Life Balance in the industrial or manufacturing sector. As seen in the previous studies^{14&16}, the present study discovered the existence of moderate level of Work Life Balance among the Industrial Workers in Kerala. ‘Lack of

understanding the employer’, ‘Monetary policy of the organization in compensating work life difficulties’, ‘Timing of the work’ and ‘Compromising personal affairs due to work’ are the factors which contribute more to the problems of Work Life Balance among the respondents of the present study. Gender, Work Experience and Number of children of the respondents were found to have significant effect on the Work Life Balance of the respondents. Work Life Balance differs in case of gender and work experience significantly, which is contradictory to the findings of Meenakshi Sundaram & Dr N Panchanatham (2012)¹³. Work Life Balance problems are found higher among the female workers when compared with the male workers. Also, the Work Life Balance problems are significantly lower for workers having experience up to one year and workers with no child, when compared with their counterparts.

CONCLUSION

Work Life Balance is one of the important indicators of an individual’s attachment towards his workplace. Psychological and social safety of the human resource assets is an important consideration in the light of Work Life Balance³. It is viewed as an exceptional perspective in the Toiling Class theory. As discussed in the theory, the exploitation of toiling class by the ruling class creates an unhealthy work life balance situation among the categories of workers. Industrial Workers in Kerala are also exploited by their employers in terms of improper understanding, inadequate monetary benefits and working hours. All these led to the Work Life Balance problems among them which points out that it is difficult for them in matching their personal life with the work life on account of the above said

concerns. Management of the organizations and the state government are recommended to take initiatives to address these concerns in the industrial sector. As emphasized in the theory, the workers are also recommended to bring co-operation among them for collective action to fight for the reckless exploitation by their employers. The theory also suggests that such initiatives can bring fruitful changes in the organizational structure which paves the way for healthy work life balance situations for the employees.

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