

Women Executives in IT/ ITES Sectors: Job Satisfaction and Quality of Work Life

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Abstract

This paper is an exploration on the dimensions of job satisfaction and quality of work life as perceived by women executives in the field of information technology and enabled services like (IT/ITES) sector in Chennai, India. The ITES Policy of Tamil Nadu (2005) has envisioned in making Tamil Nadu, the global ITES capital based on its infrastructural facilities as well as its talent pool of English speaking population. The city has a large number of multinational corporations (MNCs) with a significant proportion of its population working in these sectors. The present study is a descriptive and diagnostic study based on both primary and secondary data. The demographic profile of the women executives working in IT/ITES in Chennai were analysed and the data was statistically tested to know whether job satisfaction of the employees has any relation to their quality of work life. The major dimensions on quality of work life like adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, opportunity to use and develop human capacities, opportunity for continued growth and security, social integration in the work organisation, constitutionalism in the work organisation, work and total life space, and social relevance of work life were also examined for the current study. The study was guided by two research questions. 1. What are the dimensions of quality of work life as perceived by the respondents? 2. If there is any relationship between quality of work life and job satisfaction? The study affirms that there was a significant correlation between job satisfaction and quality of work life of

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the women executives in the above mentioned sectors. These findings are of immense organisational significance as it enables the Human Resource department to design programmes to improve the quality of work life of the employees with a focus on enhancing their job satisfaction. It is intended to assist policy makers in identifying the key work place issues to devise strategies to tackle the issue.

Keywords

quality of work life, job satisfaction, women executives, IT sector

Introduction

In the current era women have established their footing in all walks of life. Keeping in mind that Indian culture has been traditionally known to be influenced by patriarchal ideology, it is only recently that women have graced the management positions as corporate entities. The interplay between job performance and job satisfaction, moderated by age, gender and designation has been the focus of many qualitative and quantitative studies. Even today a majority of the managerial positions in Indian organizations are occupied by men. Women play dual role in the work place and at home. The present study tries to analyse what defines job satisfaction and the quality of work life for the women in the corporate sector.

Women are an integral part of the workforce and are significant contributors to the family income. Does the increased work participation of women lead to their economic liberation? Are they happy at the work place? What actually promotes or prevents them from their career advancement?

The IT Policy of Government of Tamil Nadu (2002) defined IT Services as “systems integration, processing services, information services, outsourcing, packaged software support and installation, hardware support and installation. Whereas, the IT enabled services are human intensive services that are delivered over telecom networks or the internet to the range of business engagements which will include medical transcription, legal database processing, back office operations, accounts/financial services, data processing, call centres, Human resources services, insurance claim processing, payroll processing, website services, Business Process Outsourcing (BPOs), etc.

With the introduction of the Information Communication Technology (ICT) policy of Tamil Nadu (2008), the Government of Tamil Nadu is

paying attention to the expansion of these sectors Tamil Nadu has been amongs tthetopthreestatesin India in terms of ICT investments and production. It has emerged as a hub for software, hardware and research and development. The number of Indian and MNCs in Tamil Nadu adds to the significance of the Indian IT industry. ICT production in Tamil Nadu has touched a high of US \$ 5.7 billion in 2006-07 and is expected to rise further and enhance its role in the global IT sector.

The IT Policy 2002 of Tamil Nadu declares that the government will promote Tamil Nadu as a favoured ITES destination. The government has plans to create sector-specific infrastructure facilities, amendment in legal and regulatory frame work, creating a conducive environment by promoting social initiatives like corporate health services, golf courses, international schools, knowledge industry townships, empowerment of rural women etc. The ITES Policy of Tamil Nadu (2005) has a vision to make Tamil Nadu the global ITES capital. It is expected that with the social, physical and civic infrastructure facilities and a large pool of talented, skillfull workforce, Tamil Nadu can become the ITES capital. Under these circumstances when the sector itself has such an over whelming support from the government due to its significant position in the economy, it is necessary to concentrate on its human resources. Hence the women employees working in IT & ITES sectors in Chennai were selected for the study.

The concern for human dimensions of work has been recorded since the 1960s with evidence given in the publications of International Council for Quality of Work Life in 1972 (Dwivedi, 2011). The same year witnessed the first International Conference on quality of work life (QWL) in Toronto. The term QWL was introduced by Louis Davis (Dwivedi, 2011). The concept originated in India during a period of intense labour unrest in mid 1970s but failed to gain roots (Dwivedi, 2011:775). In India, QWL is considered as a concept embracing the dimensions of job satisfaction and job commitment.

Job satisfaction refers to the positive or negative attitudes held by individuals towards their jobs. The authors have also mentioned about the dispositional model of job satisfaction which says, that people who like the jobs they are doing at a given time also tend to like the jobs they may be doing at another time even if the jobs are different.

The work life and behaviour of people are influenced by the satisfaction they derive from their work. This pleasurable emotional state arising from

the appraisal of one's job or job experiences is called job satisfaction (Locke, 1976). The term job satisfaction is viewed as a "positive attitude towards one's work, which is global in nature and which results from many specific job related experiences (Sharma and Bhaskar, 1991 as cited in Kaila 2005:144). Variation in job satisfaction can be observed in terms of the years of experience associated with a particular job, overall work experience, age of the person, emotional and social stability, interest in leisure and recreational activities, family constellation and so on (Kaila, 2005).

QWL of employees in an organization can be assessed on the basis of turn over, absenteeism, and grievances reported and handled (Kumar and Premchand, 2010). The rate of turnover and absenteeism in an organisation shows that both QWL and job satisfaction are co-related to each other. Richard Walton (1973) mentioned eight major determinants for QWL. They are adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, opportunity to use and develop human capacities, opportunity for continued growth and security, social integration in the work organization, constitutionalism in the work organization, work and total life space, and social relevance of work life. The meaning of 'social integration' in the work place, constitutionalism in the work place and social relevance of work life says that every employee should have the right to personal privacy and his/her work schedules and career demand should not interfere with his/her personal life. The organization's social responsibility should add value to their work, there by enhancing the worker's self esteem (Walton, 1973:290).

Since QWL focuses on the financial and non financial aspects of work, work culture and work relations, its understanding depends on the wide coverage of all aspects of work life. Rather a variety of indicators must be pieced together to form a more complete picture of the state of QWL in a given organisation. Kumar and Premchand (2010) believed that the benefits of effective quality of work life programmes would give the organization better productivity and quality, best customer service, engaged work force, reduced absenteeism, heightened morale, reduced attrition and flexibility towards change. In the survey by Kumar and Premchand in 2010 involving 280 IT Professionals in South India (Chennai, Bangalore and Kerala) it has been noted that the need for career growth, health issues due to burn out, compensation and benefits are important factors that affect the employees work life. Kumar and Premchand (2010) suggested customized QWL improvement programmes for organisations and

employees. Sathya Kumar (2011) observed in his study of 203 employees in the IT companies of South India that the employees with excessive job stress tended to find their jobs less satisfying. This study showed the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction.

Sulu Priya (2012) related the quality of parenting, mental health and quality of work life of women in the industries. This review argued for customized HR policies keeping primarily the working mothers in mind. The quality of parenting of working parents has a significant role in creating a productive and mentally healthy labour force. Considerable attention has to be paid while designing programmes to improve the quality of work life of working women. Hundekar and Majeed (2012) observed in a study of 250 IT employees in Hyderabad that the job satisfaction of the employees at work was influenced by factors such as career development, financial benefits, internal opportunities and peer relationship. Although the sample had come from diverse backgrounds, in terms of education, designation, organisations and indicators of job satisfaction, they shared a similar perception towards the issue of job satisfaction among the employees.

All the above mentioned studies have looked at job satisfaction and determinants of QWL based on the perceptions of employees belonging to different sectors. Previous studies have focused on one or a few aspects of the variables—job satisfaction and QWL. In this study we focus our attention on the dimensions of both the variables and their impact on women employees in the IT/ITES sector. The study is an attempt to analyse the views of women employees in the chosen sector.

Methodology

The present study has adopted a descriptive and diagnostic design. The women executives included in the study were above 21 years of age, with a minimum of a year's work experience, working in administration, finance or HR department of organisations in the IT/ITES sector in and around Chennai region. These women employees were called as executives as they were carrying out the administrative functions of the management. The study included 151 IT women employees and 70 ITES women employees. The list of companies was sourced from NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Service companies) and the companies were chosen randomly based on the availability of the women employees.

The study has undertaken both qualitative and quantitative dimensions. Appropriate statistical tools have been used to analyse the data gathered through standardized tools and structured questionnaires. Qualitative

techniques like one to one interaction, observation, in depth interviews and informal group discussions have assisted in understanding the problem under study. A standardized tool called Job Satisfaction Scale developed by Uppal and Dubey (1989) was used to analyse the level of job satisfaction (cited in Pestonjee, 1995). A structured questionnaire based on Walton's (1973) eight determinants of QWL was used to assess the dimensions of QWL. The data was analyzed using SPSS.

Primary data was collected through a well structured and standardized tools distributed among women executives working in IT/ITES sectors located in and around Chennai region. Secondary data was collected from books, newspapers, websources, and journals. The questionnaire had three parts comprising of questions on demographic profile of the respondents, job satisfaction scale by Uppal and Dubey (1989) and questions to analyse QWL based on Walton's dimensions of quality of work life. The companies were selected randomly from the NASSCOM list of companies. The questionnaire was distributed among 300 respondents from 5 IT and 5 ITES companies in Chennai, through their respective HR departments as there were women working in night shifts also. Ten percent of the samples were interviewed over phone to elicit more information on their work life. About 250 questionnaires were returned, out of which 221 questionnaires were received making the response rate of 74%. The structured questionnaire was based on Walton's (1973) dimensions on quality of work life and also had a standardized tool on job satisfaction to elicit information from the respondents. The companies were chosen based on the willingness of the respondents to participate in the study. In addition to the 221 completed questionnaires received back from the respondents, the researcher interacted with 10% of the sample population to elicit more information.

The objectives of the study were to analyse the demographic profile of women executives working in the IT/ITES sector in and around the Chennai region; to understand the determinants of quality of work life of the women executives in the selected sector; and to study the level of job satisfaction among the women executives in these selected sectors.

Findings

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The women respondents from the sector belonged to the age group of between 23 and 45 years. The average age of the respondents was 34 years.

Those belonging to the junior levels of designation are those who were involved in administration, finance and HR department of the organisations namely those who have put in more than one year of service. Juniors constituted 110 (50%), middle level executives 80 (36%), and those in senior positions were 31 (14%). Women in senior positions were few in number. This might be due to the stress associated with the job, especially the high job demands, marriage and family issues. It was observed that 70% of them had professional qualifications and 20% of them had rotating shifts. The sample population consisted of 40% of married women with 30% of them having children. The opportunity to socialise, opportunity to develop skills, adequate and fair compensation, suitability of work hours have been chosen by a significant number of respondents as the determinants of QWL.

Job Satisfaction among Women Executives

Job satisfaction of the women executives was assessed on a standardized tool developed by Uppal and Dubey (1989, cited in Pestonjee, 1995). This is based on 25 -items on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The minimum score is 25 and maximum score is 125. The women executives were classified into three categories based on their scores. Those employees with low job satisfaction had a score of 0-50, score from 51-75 indicated moderate job satisfaction and scores above 75 were considered to be employees having high job satisfaction.

Table 1
Level of job satisfaction

Job satisfaction	IT sector (N=151) (%)	ITES sector (N=70) (%)
High job satisfaction	78.1	64.3
Moderate job satisfaction	17.2	32.9
Low job satisfaction	4.6	2.7
Total	100	100

Table 1 show that 78% of the women executives in the IT sector and 64% of the women executives in the ITES sector had high level of job satisfaction. This finding is supported by the rising number of women employment in the section. We tested the hypotheses that there is no

significant difference in job satisfaction among junior, middle and senior levels of women executives in the sector.

Kruskal Wallis test was done to see whether any significant difference existed in job satisfaction among different designations. The p-value of the level of job satisfaction was found to be 0. 002. Hence the null hypothesis was rejected. That is there was a significant difference in the level of job satisfaction among the junior, middle and senior levels of executives. The mean rank showed that junior level executives had higher level of job satisfaction (86. 90) than middle level executives (70. 27) followed by senior level executives (53. 68).

Designation and Quality of Work Life in the IT Sector

It was hypothesised that there is no significant difference on the QWL among junior, middle and senior levels of women executives in the sector. Kruskal Wall is test on quality of work life and designation, indicated that the p-value for QWL was 0. 127 and was not significant at 1% level. It clearly shows that there was no significant difference in the QWL of women executives in different designations in the sector.

Conclusion

The study was confined to women executives in IT/ITES sectors in and around the Chennai region and therefore the results cannot be generalized to other sectors. However, the findings point towards the general perceptions of women executives in the IT/ITES sector which can form the base for further research.

The study affirms that there was a significant correlation between job satisfaction and quality of work life for employees in the IT/ITES sector. Tamil Nadu's target is to be an industrial and IT hub with its infrastructural and talent pool. But one should not ignore the priorities of the work force and the determinants that make their work life worthwhile and satisfying. A combination of legal and ethical obligations makes it necessary for the companies to design suitable policies for the employees. This is important because some factors related to organizations like stress, and culture contributes to emotional and performance related problems for the workforce. Thus it is imperative that considerable attention should be paid to the factors that the employees find satisfying in their work life. The findings of the study are expected to contribute towards suggestions that would enhance the work life of women executives.

The following suggestions are recommended:

Innovative appraisal systems to suit the age and career stage of the employees can satisfy their career aspirations and aid their job satisfaction.

Those in the initial stages of career are generally given weightage based on task completion whereas those at the senior levels are appraised on the basis of leadership and ability to make things happen.

Involving middle managers in the process of change can reduce resistance to change.

Redefining jobs to suit the employee's satisfaction and a feeling of achievement can help in the betterment of the work life of the employees.

Personal quality initiatives programme extended to spouses can make the family of the employees, understand the requirements of work.

Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) can help employees whose job performance suffers due to physical, mental or emotional issues.

The gender differentials on job satisfaction and quality of work life need to be analyzed to know about the impact on the sector in general so that the policies can be developed accordingly.

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