Quality Of Work Life In Private Health Care Institutions – A Case Study Of Selected Private Hospitals of Odisha

Auroshikha Samal*

Abstract

Healthcare sector, presently, is one of the largest service sector employers in the country. It is witnessing the same exponential growth that I.T industry faced some years back. Needless to say, the sector has also inherited the problem of ‘attrition’. According to a report, the attrition rate at health care sector has raised to 14%, resulting in loss of key skills, knowledge and business relationships. Today, people “Work to Live”. An individual, in order to stick to an organization, must have a positive frame of mind about his work life. “Quality of Work Life” is the degree to which members of an organization are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experiences in the organization. In this era where “attrition” is rampant, it is essential for an organization to maintain a high quality of work life, not only to attract, but also to retain its talented manpower. This paper attempts to provide an insight into the attitude of the employees of selected private health care organizations of Odisha, towards their work life. A cross-sectional descriptive and analytical study was conducted among employees of selected private sector hospitals of Odisha. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select respondents as nursing, supportive and paramedical groups. An attempt is also made to put forth certain issues that need attention to make the work life of employees worthwhile.

Key words: - Health Sector, Attrition, Quality of Work Life

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INTRODUCTION

Today, people “Work to Live” and not live to work. Taking home a pay is not all, they want a chance of self-fulfillment in the workplace. And, consciousness has been brought about by the concept of “Quality of Work Life”.

The concept of “quality of work life” has gained huge momentum in the present scenario. In this era, where “attrition” is rampant, it is essential for an organization to maintain a high quality of work life, not only to attract, but to retain its talented manpower. Dissatisfaction with quality of work life is an issue, which affects almost all employees in an organization regardless of their positions and status.

Conceptually, “Quality of Work Life” is the degree to which members of a work organization are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experiences in the organization. It is a comprehensive department-wide program designated to improve employee satisfaction, strengthening workplace learning and helping employees manage change and transition. In simplest terms, we can say that, “quality of work life” is the favorableness and unfavorableness of a job environment for people. The basic purpose of quality of work life is to develop work environment that are excellent for people as well as for productivity. It aims at healthier, more satisfied and more productive employees and more efficient, adaptive and profitable organization. Its focus is on the problem of creating a humane work environment where employees work cooperatively, and, contributes to organizational objectives. Quality of work life is important for job performance, job satisfaction, labour turnover, labour management relations and such other factors which play an important part in determining the overall well-being of any organization. It aims at integrating the socio-psychological needs of the employees. Research has shown that organizational features such as policies and procedures, leadership style, operations and general contextual setting, all have a profound effect on how staff views the quality of work life.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

A study of quality of work life is of paramount importance, mainly because today, “War for Talent” exists everywhere. This in turn, leads to absenteeism and high attrition in organizations.
Be it manufacturing organization or service organization, “attrition” is everywhere. Thus, in order to retain their precious talents, organizations have realized their responsibility to provide a good and enriching quality of work life. In other words, employees should get a positive feel with respect to their experience at their work place. However, though the organizations are continuously making endeavors to justify their responsibility, yet the rate of attrition still remains at the higher end, resulting in problems in ‘employee retention’.

Healthcare sector, being one of the largest service sector employers today is also not spared from the dreaded evil of ‘attrition’. The employees have certain expectations from such institutions too. And, if not fulfilled, new opportunities are there to poach away such talented employees. Hence, it is very important that the management of the healthcare institutions too tighten their seat belts and probe deep to understand such areas which when catered to will help in attracting new talent and retaining them.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study attempts to analyze the feelings and attitude of employees regarding their quality of work life in selected private hospitals and critically examine the measures adopted by the management to ensure a healthy work life for its employees. For this it takes into account 24 different influence work lives greatly. The study focuses to draw out such areas that play important roles in determining what the employees feel about their experiences at their work place. Further, it also attempts to draw the attention of the management to address the various dimensions of ‘quality of work life’ more strategically in order to win in this “war for talent”.

**QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND HEALTHCARE SECTOR**

Health services depend on the capacity and capabilities of the human resources of a healthcare institution. It is no secret that health care institutions in Odisha, as many other places of the world, are experiencing problems with rendering of quality health care services. The quality of care received by patients is closely linked to the quality of work life experienced by the people working in those healthcare institutions.
In an health care institution, “quality of work life” is described as the strengths and weaknesses in the total work environment.

In other terms we can say that, in a service organization (especially in a healthcare institution), the quality of output or service is greatly influenced by the experience the employees have at the workplace.

Research has shown that in hospitals, where there is a lack of quality of work life, the absenteeism and turnover rates amongst employees (especially the Nursing and Supportive ones) is usually very high. This causes inconvenience to the patients who come there for their treatment and also to the institution as a whole.

It has been argued that QWL influences the performance and commitment of employees in various industries, including health care organizations. A high QWL is essential to attract new employees and retain a workforce [3]. Consequently, health organizations are seeking ways to address issues of recruitment and retention by achieving a high QWL. Focusing on improving QWL to increase the happiness and satisfaction of employees can result in many advantages for the employee, organization and consumers. These include strengthening organizational commitment, improving quality of care and increasing the productivity of both the individual and the organization. According to Sirgy and colleagues a happy employee is productive, dedicated and committed. On the other hand, failure to manage these factors can have a major impact on employee behavioral responses (for example, organizational identification, job satisfaction, job performance, turnover intention, organizational turnover and personal alienation) as well as outcomes of the organization.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

The term Quality of Work Life was initially introduced in the late 1960’s as a way of focusing on the influences of employment on worker health and general well being, and a way to increase the quality of a person’s on-the-job experience (Bowditch and Buono, 2005).

Walton (1973) has stated that the major conceptual areas have to be identified viz., adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, development of human competencies,
growth and security, social integration for understanding quality of work life. Delamotte and Walker (1974) have indicated that emphasis have been made in the humanization of work which includes the need to protect the worker from hazards to health and safety. Katz ell et. Al (1975) have observed that an employee may enjoy a high quality of working life when he has positive feelings towards his job and its future prospects, to stay on the job and performs well. A report by QWL taskforce in George Manson University in Virginia, USA assess the quality of their employees work lives and identified that the major source of stress in work and the aspects of satisfaction / dissatisfaction of work affected the QWL of their employees. Glasier (1976) has revealed that quality of work life implies job security, good working conditions, adequate and fair compensation and more even equal employment opportunity all together. Lawler (1978) has suggested that the plan based on participative culture in QWL principles have been found to be more effective than traditionally managed plans. Runcie (1980) has viewed that when an employee have positive perception of the quality of work life in the company, he would further probably strive to further improve the working conditions, increase production and can give quality products. Lawler & Ledford (1982), Buchanan and Boddy (1982) Levitan and Werneke (1984) have demonstrated that the improvement in QWL has definite potential and scope for improving productivity & overall organizational effectiveness. The degree of goal and integration of individual is significantly influenced by the quality of organization climate & work life was the observation made by berrett (1991) while studying the individual goals & organization objectives. Singh (1994) has observed that Indian managers on the meaning of work, the managerial communist assigned higher preferences to psychological rewards compared to monetary rewards. Both employer and employee better appreciate the importance of the quality of work life of an organization. Quality of work life is a recent day topic of organizational psychology, some of the elements that are relevant in defining an individual’s quality of work life would include the task, the physical work environment, social environment within the organization, administrative system and relationship between life on and off the job (Che Rose, Beh, Uli and Idris, 2006). His study further concluded that the most important predictor of quality of work life is organizational climate, followed by career achievement, career satisfaction and career balance. A high quality of work life is essential for organizations to continue, to attract and retain employees (Sandrick, 2003). In a Research report (2010) it is stated that the quality of work life had an effect on employees’ life and working environment. QWL
provides for the balanced relationship among work, non-work and family aspects of life. In a working paper (2011) it is given that Quality of working Life enables members at all levels to actively participate in shaping the organization environment, methods and outcomes.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A descriptive and analytical study was conducted amongst employees of four selected private hospitals of Odisha. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select respondents from nursing, supportive and paramedical groups.

**DATA COLLECTION**

Data were collected by visiting the selected private hospitals. Standard questionnaires were distributed among the employees. The respondents belonged to the categories of Nurses, Pharmacists, Technical Staff and Paramedical Groups. For selecting these employees, stratifies random sampling technique was used. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed. The questionnaire consisted of 25 questions catering to twenty-four different aspects of employees’ work life. The content of the questionnaire was divided into four categories: - Physical Work Environment, Psychic & Social Factors, Health & Stress Symptoms and Family Background & Variables.

**STATISTICAL FINDINGS**

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<td>Career Growth</td>
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RESULTS & OBSERVATIONS

a) From the survey, it is observed that though eighty percent respondents were satisfied with the job content i.e. the work they were doing at the hospital, yet, ‘compensation’ or ‘salary’ still seems to be a problematic area for them. The respondents mainly belonged to the supportive groups and almost all of them felt that the salary they are currently receiving does not seem to justify their work, time and efforts.

b) Seventy-five percent of the respondents were not happy with the occupational health and safety standards at work.

c) Seventy-eight percent of the respondents felt the need for more degree of autonomy to be given during work. Autonomy, for them, is certain degree of freedom to make patient care decisions.

d) Eighty percent of the respondents felt the working hours very demanding.

e) Seventy percent of the respondents were dissatisfied with the workload. They felt that a lesser workload would give them time to attain expertise in present as well as related works.
f) Over twenty percent respondents were dissatisfied with their career prospects.

g) Seventy percent respondents seemed satisfied with the working relationships that existed in the hospitals. This hints towards the presence of good team spirit and mutual respect amongst the employees.

h) Work-related stress is another area that hampered the work life of employees. More that eighty percent respondents opined so.

i) Seventy percent respondents indicated that they did not find their work satisfying enough. This could be due to various reasons such as lack of challenges, monotony, losing interest in current profile, etc..

j) Lack of job satisfaction also led to a lower level of motivation. Seventy-five percent of the respondents felt that their level of motivation is quite low.

k) Recognition for a good job done is also important for giving a good quality of work life to employees. Normally, in health care services this aspect stands neglected, especially for the supportive and paramedical staff. In this survey too it was observed that sixty-eight percent of the respondents felt the need for a sound and transparent reward and recognition system.

l) Health care is such a sector where certain level of involvement is inevitable. However,

m) Eighty percent of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the balance between the time they spent working and the time they spent with family and friends.

n) An individual’s work should be such with which he/she can identify himself/herself and can integrate with it. Generally, our work becomes our identity. It was observed that more than twenty percent respondents lacked integration with their works.

o) Forty percent of the respondents are unwilling to stick to the current organization.

**RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION**

The results of this study were intended to assist decision-makers in identifying key workplace issues, as perceived by employees, in order to develop strategies to address and improve the
quality of work life conditions for employees within each of the individual health care institutions.

Based on the above observations, the following recommendations are made to improve the quality of work life of the supportive and paramedical staff:-

a) Firstly, the management should keep in mind the job-person-organization fit aspect. This means that, such employees should be selected those who truly deserve to be in the concerned posts and can justify their selection. Further, keeping in mind the organizational culture, people with the correct attitude should be taken in.

b) “Compensation” or “Salary” still is a factor that has a king-size role in determining the quality of work life. There should be regular revision of salary, basing on the prevailing external conditions and job of the employee, as these groups of staff are generally the underpaid ones in the hospitals.

c) Nurses are normally the staffs who accompany the patients throughout their treatment at the hospital. This exposes the nurses to a variety of diseases. Hence, the management must provide preventive measures like proper outfits, equipments, immunizations, etc….to ensure occupational health.

d) Also, there should be sufficient space provided for free movement and comfortable workplace of all staffs. It is generally marked that due to lack of space and in order to occupy a place at the heart of a city, hospitals compromise on spaces. This sometimes causes work accidents.

e) When a person is given freedom to do the work as per his ideas, this enables him to use his creativity and talent and is a big cause of satisfaction. In hospitals too, certain degree of “autonomy” should be given to the staff. Autonomy in making certain decisions regarding patient care. If a person has to take approvals and permissions for doing every little thing at workplace, this may create frustration and sense of worthlessness in the minds of the employees. Power to make decisions can be given in areas which do not risk the life of patients.
f) Every organization, be it hospital, should have a clear-cut and systematic career path that every employee must be made aware of. This will create a sense of purpose and instill healthy competition amongst the employees and thus, Motivate them to put their best efforts.

g) Another important aspect to be taken care of by the management is the presence of sufficient number of employees. A hospital must have enough number of staff so that work can be equally distributed. Many a times we find people who actually perform their duties diligently are overloaded with more and more assignments. This in turn, hampers their performance and creates work-related stress and strain.

h) Nowadays, there are many technical courses coming up. Hospitals can also go for tie-ups with certain educational institutions for offering part-time and distance learning opportunities to those staffs who are really interested for higher education. This will give them a sense of development and add meaning to their professional life.

i) Job upgradation and work rotation can help in bringing back the lost interest and enthusiasm and also give the employees a chance to learn new aspects and develop their skills. Hence, the management may consider this step for related jobs.

j) Research has shown that management practices, leadership, operations and general factors of setting, all have a profound impact on the quality of work life. Hence, the management must focus on revising and amending its policies to match the present scenario and employee expectations.

k) An appropriate and transparent performance appraisals and timely feedback system must be a part of the management practices in today’s hospitals. Good performers should be rewarded and recognized. This will give them a sense of achievement. Poor performers must be provided with appropriate training and counseling to encourage them to improve their performance.

l) Like other executives, the supportive staffs should be sent for attending workshops and training programs to various institutions. This is only possible if the hospital has sufficient workforce.
m) Long working hours and tight schedules create imbalance between professional and personal life. The management may consider shorter shifts and flexitime for its staffs.

n) Strain also reigns high when one is over-involved with work and the professional behavioral expectations start affecting the individual’s behavior at home. Long working hours and job stress can be cited as a reason for this. Its solution requires joint efforts from both, the management and the individual himself.

o) Hospitals may have a ‘rest area’ or ‘recreation area’ with latest medical journals and magazines; and some refreshments like tea and snacks, where employees may rejuvenate themselves after a long and stressful working period.

p) Employee retention must be an important part of the managerial policies and well-planned strategies must be formulated to retain the talented employees.

q) Lastly, more social, managerial, professional and organizational support should be provided to the employees, especially to the younger ones, for enriching their worklife.

REFERENCES


