

Changing Dimensions of Quality of Work Life of the University Teaching Faculties: A Sociological Analysis

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ABSTRACT: *In the recent times, the rising incidence of stress and work pressures amongst the academics due to a variety of factors has led to an increased importance of research regarding the issues faced by university teaching faculties. Work life balance is a significant issue which requires attention to enhance teacher effectiveness as well as satisfaction. Various studies across the world have proved that a good quality of work-life balance results into the wellness of the faculty and also improved student learning outcomes. Work-related stress has been variously identified as one of the largest problems in any working environment. According to a study by Kinman & Jones (2003), job stress has often been linked with adverse effects on employees' psychological and physical wellbeing in many occupations, including academics. The present study investigates the changing dimensions of the concept of quality of work-life and the issues of work related stress among teachers serving in different academic stream across universities on the basis of review of relevant literatures.*

KEYWORDS – academics, quality of work life , stress, teacher effectiveness, work pressure

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I. INTRODUCTION

Higher Education sector constitutes an important segment of society that can contribute to the overall development of human capital as well as the nation. Within that higher education system, University is the highest institutional mechanism and the University faculties constitute the human resources in the system who can contribute to the attainment of this goal. However, in the higher education sector, pressures are increasing on the academic staffs due to various factors such as low recruitment of faculties, increasing number of students, increasing teaching responsibilities and a higher emphasis on research and publication along with administrative responsibilities.

For the overall development of a nation, higher education plays a pivotal role. It acts as a link by nurturing young minds for engaging in research and development and at the same time produces efficient work force as per the requirements of the industry. It is a responsibility on the faculties who are engaged in teaching and research at the University level to perform this task by thoughtfully considering and channelizing the interest and knowledge of the students by giving them a sense of direction. The efficiency of the education industry is dependent on the employees who are engaged in this industry. Quality of work life (QWL) is a concept which is becoming increasingly important in the recent times and it focuses on holistic wellbeing of an employee as a person and not just the work done by him/her. QWL focuses on the fact that an individual's life is not compartmentalized into various segments and issues arising in any one domain may affect that of the other. A good quality of work life balance ensures that an employee is motivated to work and contribute significantly in the work place and also gets to spend quality time with the family. Organizations today have also started to focus on work life balance issues for the overall development of the employees by maintaining their motivation levels and reducing stress levels so that organizational health is also maintained. Taylor's principle of scientific management which focused on specialization and efficiency has undergone change giving way to human resource management practices. Taylor's scientific management approach was severely criticised and later on Human Relations approach developed. Sociologist Elton Mayo studied at Western Electric's Hawthorn plant in 1933 which tried to ascertain the influence of environmental factors on plant workers' performance. Mayo's results mitigated the Taylorian performance rules applied until then. Since then a policy of humanizing employees' work conditions can be seen.

The processes of liberalization, privatization, automation and globalization are also facilitating it. These processes are also affecting the educational institutions thereby changing organizational structure and functioning. It becomes a challenge for the employees to successfully deal with the newer advancements so that the newer generations can also match with the requirements. This necessitates that the organisations also provide a better and flexible working environment so that the employees can give their best to the institutions.

It is an area which has been given considerable attention in various public and private organizations but not much research has been conducted in the educational sector. Higher Education plays a critical role in removing the inequalities in society. So the wellbeing of the employees engaged in educational sector must be given due consideration for the overall development of the nation.

II. OBJECTIVES

The paper addresses the following objectives:

1. The present study investigates the meaning and nature of quality of work-life balance for higher educational institutions.
2. The study delves into the issue of work related stress among teachers serving in different academic stream across universities.

III. THE CONCEPT OF WORK LIFE BALANCE

Work-life balance is a broad concept which has been variously defined by different researchers from diverse dimensions. For an individual's psychological well-being, increased self-worth and in order to derive satisfaction from both work and life, it is important to strike a balance between work role and family role successfully. Clark (2000) defines work-family balance as "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict". Hill et al. (2001) defines work life balance as the degree to which an individual is able to simultaneously balance the temporal, emotional, and behavioral demands of both paid work and family responsibilities (Mukhtar, 2012). Quality of Work life (QWL) is a concept which defines the overall quality of an individual's working life. The concept of Quality of Work Life (QWL) is in use for quite a long time and since then, various definitions and theoretical constructs have been developing with the aim of modifying the many problems facing the concept (Martel and Dupuis, 2006). Work continues to occupy a major part of an individual's life beyond the official working hours for a large proportion of working population. QWL has a diverse structure which involves concepts such as job security, reward systems, workflows, opportunities for educational and job development, as well as participation in decision-making. Walton (1975) proposed eight major conceptual categories relating to QWL: 1) Adequate and fair compensation; 2) Safe and healthy working conditions; 3) Immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities; (4) Opportunity for continued growth and security; (5) Social integration in the work organization; (6) Constitutionalism in the work organization; (7) Work and total life space; and (8) Social relevance of work life. Many researches have been carried out during the 1980s to 2011 within the subject of QWL. Faculty members constitute a significant part of universities; therefore it is of utmost importance to pay more attention to their QWL, and their work conditions. Moreover, programs and policies can be undertaken to improve QWL of faculties.

IV. MULTIPLE ROLES PERFORMED BY TEACHING FACULTIES

In the present times, academic staffs at higher education institutes are required to perform multiple workplace roles like teaching roles, research roles, cooperating and assisting in various administrative roles such as during admission process, counselling of the students, supervision, invigilation, evaluation responsibilities. They are also required to participate in various other extra-curricular, co-curricular activities, extension activities including community service responsibilities (UGC, 2010). Moreover, faculties today are increasingly realizing that in order to meet the requirements of the industry and society at large, teaching methods need to be modified. According to Hagen (2002), in a UK case study of public/private sector partnerships, universities are considered to be the largest "knowledge-based" institutions in the region. Pressures of globalization and knowledge based economy are transforming the traditional roles of university engaged in teaching and research by adding an additional pivotal role in economic regional development by disseminating their knowledge and expertise through industry linked partnerships. However, it is significant to know that, an excess of demands other than their multifarious roles and responsibilities could contribute to uncertainty in terms of academic roles and work conflicts may occur among the faculties. This can influence their work-life balance and it can lead to job dissatisfaction and reduced organization commitment.

Studies on issue of work life balance among faculties are being discussed. Mukhtar (2012) studied work life balance and job satisfaction among faculty members at Iowa State University and the results indicated that there is a significant relationship between work life and job satisfaction and the result also indicated that age, climate and culture were significant predictors for work life balance. It was also found out that female faculty have lower job satisfaction. The results also showed that the level of job satisfaction was lower for hard pure disciplines as compare to soft pure disciplines. The increasing demands and pressures of work-life are raising the conflict between work and personal life. Heydari et al. (2015) in their study indicated a significant relationship between organisational health and quality of work life. Begas (2012) research on faculty of higher education institutions in the Philippines observed that there was a positive relation between QWL & satisfaction and QWL & productivity. Tabassum (2012) investigation in 11 private universities of Bangladesh concluded

that there was positive relationship between the dimensions of QWL and job satisfaction. Shahbaji et al. (2011) study in Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical University identified the relationship between the quality of work life and performance and found inter university difference.

V. VARIOUS CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY TEACHING FACULTIES

Each institution, college, department and classroom may face challenges which may be different from the other. Any new faculty or experienced faculty members may anticipate the challenges and navigate through them so that their level of success increases along with their level of satisfaction. The availability of resources necessary for teaching in institutions can be a challenge. Almost all faculties in the course of their teaching career face students with a wide range of skills, abilities, and experiences which can also be a challenge. Being aware of the diverse range of students will help the faculties to provide adequate support to the students which will help them to learn. Educational process today is changing rapidly which is affecting the demands of knowledge as well as the needs of society. The increase in the body of knowledge in each discipline poses a challenge for a faculty member on how to incorporate such enhanced knowledge in a meaningful manner so that it can be shared and transmitted to students. A faculty member has to find the right type of knowledge to cater to the needs of students of the twenty-first century. Therefore, the role of a teaching professional is in the process of change. The changes and social pressures which are taking place have a direct bearing on the teaching faculties' role, responsibilities and teaching. The institutes of higher learning today require qualified faculty members. The faculty members play a number of roles such as combining research with teaching as well as application of theoretical knowledge. They are also required to devote time for research projects and guidance. The faculty members put in long working hours to provide assistance to the students for their various needs. The faculty members are also required to participate in conferences, publish papers and take up administrative responsibilities. It is a great challenge to the teaching professionals of higher education institutes to live with this constant change and dynamism. They may encounter tension, anxiety, fear, pressure, strain and stress in their day to day life and may find it difficult to contribute effectively in the field of education. A few other factors such as job insecurity, increasing overload, accountability without adequate authority, inadequate facilities and lack of recognition are some other challenges that can contribute to stress in these teachers. Further, teaching professionals might also be subjected to face common stressors such as; work overload, time restraints, problems with working conditions, relationship with colleagues, lack of resources and alarming increase in physical demands of teaching. Insufficient money as salary and lack of respect in society, ultimately lowers down the psychological well-being of teaching faculty members. All these can affect the teaching efficiency and it can disrupt the work life balance and lead to generation of stress. According to Mirkamali and Thani (2011), the results of their study on QWL among University faculties show that professors have a fairly unfavorable QWL condition. The results also show that there is no significant difference between the levels of QWL among the faculty members of two universities studied by the author.

VI. CHANGING NATURE AND QUALITY OF WORK LIFE BALANCE

Competing demands of work and home and the multiples roles and responsibilities entrusted on individuals today has made it increasingly relevant for employees and organizations to discuss on the issue of work-life balance in recent years. Work overload, role conflict has generated stress among teachers which is leading to unfair work-life situation. This has necessitated the need to study work-life balance issues among the teachers. Proper work life balance can be achieved when an individual is able to fulfil all his/her needs in respect of family, work and society (Irfan et al. 2015). Technology is one of the many things that exert an influence on the kinds of tasks that are performed and how they are organized. Technological advancement has changed work patterns by expanding the boundaries of economic, social and cultural relationships, a process known as globalization. Balancing a successful career with a personal or family life is assumed to be challenging and it can impact on a person's satisfaction in their work and personal family life's roles which affects other family members as well (Broers, 2005). Sometimes, in order to strike a balance between work and family roles, women had to opt for part time employment. The role of part-time employment in the balancing of women's employment and family lives has generated an immense literature within the social sciences (Warren, 2004). Organizational work practices sometimes influence organisational and employee's performance. Beauregard and Ahmad (1996) performed correlational and path analytic associations among conflict between work and family, job satisfaction, family satisfaction and life satisfaction among married professional Malaysian women and found that work-family conflict was significantly related to job satisfaction and to life satisfaction, although the correlation coefficients were very low. Work-family conflict was not related to family satisfaction; however, life satisfaction was related to job satisfaction and to family satisfaction. Lee and Hong (2005) analysed six aspects of work-family conflict that is time-based, strain based, and behavior-based of work-influence-family and family-influence-work conflict on 112 full time lecturers/teachers teaching in eight private educational institutions in Kuching, Malaysia. They found that the lecturers/teachers experienced moderate

levels of work family conflict. As Hertz's (1986) study revealed, contemporary dual-career marriage challenges the traditional ideal marriage. "Work and its rewards still shape a couple's life chances; but instead of being a single career or job defining marital roles, there are two careers, qualifying each spouse as a breadwinner" (p. 31). Some people can achieve a satisfying and successful career, a happy marriage and fulfilling parenthood if they receive social support, family support and work support (Broers, 2005). Organizations today are also increasingly pressured to implement work practices which can facilitate employees' efforts to fulfil both their employment related and their personal responsibilities.

VII. ISSUE OF STRESS AMONG FACULTIES

Strain or stress is the result of a disturbance in the equilibrium between the demands that employees are exposed to and the resources that they have at their disposal (Hakanen et al., 2006). Various studies across the world have supported the existence of stress among teachers at all levels from primary to higher education. Borg and Riding (1991) in their study among Maltese primary schoolteachers revealed that the level of stress among teachers, job satisfaction and career commitment was different in some of the teacher demographic subgroups. Results also showed that teachers who reported greater stress were less satisfied with their job and less committed to choose a teaching career were they to start life over again. Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978) investigated the incidence of stress along with its sources and symptoms among 257 schoolteachers in 16 medium-sized, mixed comprehensive schools in England and about one-fifth of the teachers were either very stressful or extremely stressful. Khan et al. (2014) identified factors such as performance evaluation system based on typical confidential reporting as stressful among university teachers in Pakistan. Reddy and Poornima (2012) study from 9 state universities in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh revealed experiences of moderate and high levels of occupational stress and professional burnout.

Employees today try to constantly juggle their professional and personal lives and it often results in interference or influence of one on the other which leads to positive or negative 'spill-over'. Spill-over refers to a process where experiences encountered by individuals in one role influences the other roles. This spill-over can be positive or negative. Positive spill-over refers to fact that satisfaction and achievement in one domain may bring along satisfaction and achievement in another domain. Negative spill-over refers to the fact that difficulties and depression in one domain may bring along the same emotion in another domain (Xu, 2009). Edwards and Rothbard (2000) suggested that the spill-over of values, skills, and behaviours learned in one role might influence other roles. The teaching faculties experience this this spill-over effect when their work roles gets carried in their family roles and it can influence the experience of an individual.

Literature review suggests that the demands between work and family needs to be addressed and universities need to adopt 'family friendly policies'. Work/family issue will continue to be problematic unless there occur a change in societal norms that infuse these values.

Theoretical evidence also supports the issue of work life balance among individuals. According to Frederick Herzberg (1987), in motivation-hygiene theory discussed that individuals are not gratified with the satisfaction of lower-order needs at work such as those associated with minimum salary levels or safe and pleasant working environment rather, individuals look for the gratification of higher-level psychological needs having to do with accomplishment, appreciation, responsibility, advancement as well as the nature of the work itself. Herzberg's (1987) motivation hygiene theory of job satisfaction offered a rationale as to why employees may be more dynamic, creative, and committed to their employer when they work in an environment that promotes job satisfaction. Administrators must recognize and attend to both sets of characteristics and not assume that an increase in satisfaction leads to decrease in dissatisfaction.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This is a sociological study on the various issues faced by teaching faculties in higher education with a focus on the changing dimensions of quality of work-life balance and stress. In the Indian context, this issue needs to be explored in much detail. This study provides an understanding of issues which are significant for the teaching community at large. Interaction on the part of administrative authorities and teachers needs to be enhanced so that these issues can be resolved and a balance needs to be achieved between academic work load, leisure and extra-curricular activities for overall development.

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