

Organizational Hierarchy and Employees Aspirations

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ABSTRACT

There is evidence to suggest that high status managerial employees working at higher echelons of organizational hierarchy have different aspirations and expectations from the organizations vis- a- vis their counterpart employed at lower levels. Needs structure of the former class of employees is markedly different from the latter. Spearman rank correlation coefficient performed on two ranked data, based on responses obtained from a sample respondents belonging to various organizations selected from different sectors of Indian industry, as a tool of inferential statistics to carry out bivariate analysis has been found to be low ($r_s = .236$, $Srs=.2$). Further, t -value derived from this coefficient after its conversion into a t -score too is statistically insignificant (t -value= $-.806$, p -value $>.20$) rejecting the null hypothesis that there is a similarity in the importance rating pattern of various factors having bearing on the work life by employees working at different levels in organizations.

Introduction

Growing employee consciousness of their rights, rising level of education, changing gender composition of workforce, increasing social mobility and consequent ever evolving needs structure have necessitated Indian organizations to be more and more concerned about the aspirations of human beings in work organizations. The traditional employer-employee master-slave pattern of relationship and the carrot-and-stick approach of motivation have been replaced by supportive, consultative and participative approaches treating employees not merely as "hands" but assets which should always grow rather than depreciate. It has long been realized that human resource is the most important asset which must be released and developed. The human resource is critical because of its capability to contribute knowledge, skills, experience and commitment to the organizations. Notwithstanding all this, very few studies in the recent past have attempted to identify what is that employees give value to and what they look for while choosing to be a part of the organizations. In the light of the impact of world economic slowdown on the economy, the need to enhance the efficiency of work organizations in India is all the more pressing in order to survive and face greater competition from foreign multinational companies successfully. Strategy of cost-cutting through better performance

and the consequent price reduction for arresting falling product demand in the market is a better alternative than retrenchment and employee lay-off in that the latter leads to unrest, disharmony and many other evils in the society. Therefore, it is imperative to develop new work culture, high levels of commitment to job and organizational goals amongst employees. And, this requires us to find out what are their expectations; what are the factors which are important to them in their work lives.

There is a plethora of literature suggesting the factors that are critical for employees at the workplace (for instance, see Walton, 1973; Morton, 1977; Carlson, 1978; Rosow, 1980; Kalra & Ghosh, 1984; Srinivas, 1994; Gani & Ahmed, 1995; Saklani, 2004). These encompass a wide range of issues both financial non-financial pertaining to work context, work content and work relations having bearing on one's material as well as non-material aspects of life. Work life factors encompass in their fold both intrinsic and extrinsic job factors. Research findings in the past suggested that in Indian organizations work context and relational factors satisfying lower order biological and social needs were more important in employee quality of life as compared to others. For instance, work context environmental factors (such as, physical environment, safety and other working conditions) and relational factors (such as, work group relations and labour-

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management relations) have been found to be more important in employee quality of work life (Srivastava & Verma, 1978; Kalra, 1981(b); Metha, 1982; Sharma & Sundra, 1983; Kalra & Ghosh, 1984). Similarly, a study conducted at HMT unit located in Kashmir found that adequate financial returns from the job, besides desire for job security, better working conditions and advancement opportunities continued to be major considerations in employees working lives (Gani & Ahmed, 1995). This was in sharp contrast to Western societies where job content factors (like, meaningful and challenging work) were more significant to employees (Jackson, 1973; Cherns, 1975; Mottaz, 1981). However, the findings of a study suggest that there appears to have taken place a paradigm shift in the aspirations of employees in India in the recent past. Rapid advancement in the economic sphere by the country during the last couple of years probably is the reason behind this change. Today, contrary to the commonly held stereotype, employees in India are no less concerned with the realization of non-materialistic goals of life. Apart from financial factors, many non-financial factors (such as, opportunity to use and develop human capacity, reward and penalty system and participation in decision making) which satisfy needs of higher order have emerged as highly important for employees in Indian organizations. Similarly, as against earlier research findings, job context factors that have direct bearing on one's ability to perform and are indicative of attitude towards work and other life roles are attached less value by present day employees in India (Saklani, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

As is evident from the preceding discussion, there is a dearth of studies that have tried to capture the evolving needs structure of employees in India in the post economic reform era. Further, most of these studies are general in nature and there is hardly any work which has attempted to make the analysis of differences, if any, in the expectations of employees

across the organizational hierarchy. This is why the present study was undertaken with the specific objective of assessing the differences in the perception of high status managerial and low status non-managerial employees about the factors they value in organizations.

Hypothesis

Significance of various workplace factors is likely to be different to employees across organizational hierarchy. This is because of the likelihood of differences in the importance structure of the needs, aspirations and perceptions of various types of employees (Congalton, 1969). A study has reported differences in the perceptions of workers and managers on various dimensions of employee quality of work life (Gani & Ahmed, 1995). Due to differences in values, high status and low status employees are likely to perceive the same thing differently. Incompatibilities in the perceptions may also arise due to the real variations in the service conditions of different group of employees. On the basis of these observations it can be posited that:

there are differences in the pattern of importance rating of various factors, having bearing on one's quality of work life, across high status managerial and low status non-managerial employees.

Research Design and Methodology

After an extensive review of literature, Important Factor Information Schedule (IFIS) initially containing twenty two factors was developed as an instrument for assessing the expectations of people working at the different levels of organizational hierarchy. However, after a careful scrutiny of the responses of the pilot survey conducted for the purpose and also the views of people working in different organizations and those engaged in research, the number of factors in this schedule was reduced to thirteen. These include:

- ♦ adequate and fair compensation;
- ♦ fringe benefits and welfare measures;

- ♦ physical work environment;
- ♦ work load and job stress;
- ♦ opportunities to use and develop human capacity;
- ♦ opportunities for career growth;
- ♦ human relations and social aspect of life;
- ♦ participation in decision-making;
- ♦ reward and penalty system administration;
- ♦ equity, justice and grievance handling;
- ♦ work and total life space (balance in life); and
- ♦ image of organization in society (social relevance of work life).

As is clear, this schedule contains all three categories of factors (*viz.*, job context, job content and relational) mentioned earlier in the literature review. Thus, the instrument developed for assessing the importance of various factors to employees at the workplace in the present study possesses both aspects of content validity (*i.e.* face validity and sampling validity). On the face of it, the instrument seems to represent various dimensions of employee aspirations in work organizations. The factors constituting the scale have sufficient literature support. These also have the approval of co-researchers, practitioners and the respondents. Many of these factors have already been used by researchers in the Indian context as mentioned before. Sampling validity, the other aspect of content validity, requires the researcher to become acquainted with all the items/factors that are known to belong to the content population of a concept (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1976). Although it is impossible to specify exactly how many items/factors need to be identified for any particular content population, but it is always desirable to construct too many items/factors than too few (Carmine & Zeller, 1979). Therefore, as mentioned earlier, after a careful analysis of a pool of twenty two factors generated initially at the pre-testing stage,

thirteen factors were finally chosen for the analysis of employee expectations from work organizations.

Using the technique of convenience-cum-quota sampling, the required information was obtained with the help of a structured questionnaire from a sample of 294 employees working at different levels in 24 various types of organizations based in and around Delhi. Keeping in mind the objective of the study, employees were divided into two broad categories: (1) high status employees consisting of middle level officers, managers and executives, (2) low status non-managerial employees comprising clerks, assistants, technicians and supervisors. Like Cacioppe and Mock (1994), the category of an employee was determined by using Conglton (1969) Occupation Status Scale after modifying it suitably into two categories. Total sample of 294 employees consists of 192 managerial respondents (about two thirds) and 102 non-managerial respondents (about one third). Due care was given in giving representation to different types of organizations. Out of the total organizations in the sample, sixteen belong to the private sector and the remaining eight to the public sector. When classified on the basis of nature of activity pursued, seventeen fall in the category of manufacturing and seven in service organizations. In terms of origin, while nineteen organizations are domestic, five are foreign in the sample. Distribution of respondents varies from organization to organization from a minimum of one to a maximum of thirty two. Further information about the distribution of respondents across different types of organizations classified on the basis of different criteria is available in Table :1. As is clear from the table, the respondents are almost equally spread over the two sectors—private and public. However, the proportion of respondents with managerial status is 71.5% from private sector as compared to 58.7% of the public sector organizations. The proportion of respondents in service organizations is much higher in non-managerial cadre (45.1%) than that of manufacturing sector (29.2%). Keeping origin in mind, an

overwhelming fraction of respondents (77.2%) is from the domestic sector. Interestingly, their percentage in managerial and non-managerial cadre is more or less the same.

Table :1 Table Showing Distribution of Respondents Across Organizations Classified on the Basis of Three Separate Criteria

Organisations (N=24)	Respondents		
	Managerial (N=192)	Non-managerial (N=102)	Total (N=294)
Ownership			
Private	108	43	151
Public	84	59	143
Nature of activity			
Manufacturing	136	56	192
Service	56	46	102
Origin			
Domestic	149	78	227
Foreign	43	24	67

For knowing the importance of various work life factors nominal level of measurement was used to record the responses. Respondents were asked to tick a minimum of six factors which they thought were relevant to them in their work lives. It is pertinent to point out here that this also gave them the option of choosing all the factors as important. For generating data, ticks against each factor were added across individuals. This helped in developing descriptive statistics in the form of overall score obtained by each factor both in absolute and relative terms. Thus, it enabled to convert nominal level of measurement into ordinal level of measurement so essential for obtaining rank order of various factors. Higher number or percentage was taken to signify more and lower, to indicate lesser level of factor importance to respondents. Various factors were then assigned rank order in the descending order of importance from one to thirteen with one signifying the highest and thirteen, the lowest level of importance. To carry out the process of data analysis further Spearman Rank Correlation (rs) coefficient was used as an

inferential statistics to examine the relationship between two rank order data. Then, it was converted into a t-test score to know the statistical significance of the relationship since the sample size in this context is thirteen, equal to the number of factors forming two rank order data. Jaccarad (1987) states that when sample size is more than ten ($N > 10$) it is desirable to convert rs to a score on t-distribution with $N-2$ degrees of freedom.

Findings and Discussion

Table: 2 brings out the differences in the proportion of respondents that considers a particular factor as valuable and the importance rank order obtained by it across the two groups of employees. The table makes it absolutely clear that high status managerial employees seem to differ from their counterpart non-managerial employees in terms of importance rating of various factors having bearing on their work lives. Spearman Rank Correlation performed on the two ranked data indicates low degree of correlation between the two rankings at the overall level. Further, t-value obtained after converting it into a t-score has been found to be statistically insignificant rejecting the null hypothesis that there is a similarity in the perception of higher level and lower level employees in this regard ($r_s = .236$, $S_r_s = .293$, $t\text{-value} = .806$, $p\text{-value} > .20$). In other words, at the overall level, the two groups of employees attach different degree of importance to various factors at the workplace.

Factor-wise also, differences in the perceptions are quite evident in a good number of cases. It appears that for managerial and officer level employees opportunity to use and develop human capacity, opportunity for continued career growth, participation in decision-making, adequate and fair compensation and reward and penalty system administration in that order are the first five most valuable factors. Whereas the most important requirements of non-managerial employees appear to be job security, fringe benefits and welfare measures, adequate and fair compensation,

opportunity for growth in career terms and reward and penalty system administration in that order. Interestingly, expectations relating to compensation, growth in career terms and effectiveness of reward and penalty seem to be common to both in varying order, but what is strikingly noticeable is the high managerial preference for opportunity to develop themselves and participation in decision making in contrast to non-managerial preference for job security and fringe benefits. These findings corroborate the results already reported by Congalton(1969) and Cacioppe & Mock (1984). These also reaffirm the popular belief that high status employees differ from low status employees in their scale of quality of life. The two class of employees seem to be differ from each other in terms of their needs structure, values and life style.

For managers participation in decision making is one of the most important factors. On the other hand, for non-managers it is the least factors. Higher importance obtained by factors such as, opportunity to use and develop human capacity, participation in decision-making and reward and penalty system in the case of high status employees is in line with the popular perception that better educated high status people in organizations are more concerned with the issues having bearing on the needs of higher order vis-à-vis their counterpart working at lower rungs of the organizational hierarchy. Similarly, high non-managerial preference for job security and fringe benefits and welfare measures is not inexplicable. The clamour is always for more money or its equivalents in some form or the other. Highest importance attached to job security by these employees is in fact perfectly in tune with the prevailing realities of life. For these employees, continuity of income is more important as compared to any other factor. In a manpower surplus economy like India, such employees usually find it very difficult to secure an alternative employment in view of their low levels of education, training and skills. This becomes all the more acute especially during the periods of economic slowdown.

Similarly, if we look at the lower ends of the two rank order data sets in Table:4, we find that physical work environment; human relations and social aspect of work life; equity, justice and grievance handling; work load and job stress and job security in that order occupy the last five positions in the case of managers. Whereas participation in decision-making; work and total life space (balance in life); work load and job stress; image of organization in the society (social relevance of work life) and physical work environment respectively are similar such factors in the case of non-managerial employees. Low value attached by managers to issues concerning human relations and social life; equity, justice and grievance redressal system and job security is clearly discernible from the similar less importance accorded by non-managers to participation in the decision making; ability to pursue other life interests and perform other life roles (work and total life space) and image of the organization in society (social relevance of work life). Even out of the two common dimensions of physical work environment and work load and job stress, the former appears to be less relevant to managerial as compared to non-managerial employees. The lowest value attached to physical work environment by managers is in sharp contrast to the moderate preference of non-managers to this aspect of work life.

Low managerial concern for human relations and social aspect of work life; issues involving equity, justice grievance handling and job security is not difficult to explain. Today's managers are highly career-oriented and professional in their approach. In their scheme of things, human emotions and relations do not have much place. It is not that they are not important, but they should not interfere with job performance. This seems to be quite tenable in view of the prevailing value system in the society eulogising the achiever disregarding the means adopted for attaining the goals. For them job security is not a big issue. They enjoy a fair degree of mobility and hence, continuity of income in view of the specialised nature of qualifications and skills

possessed by them. This, in turn, appears to render the issues of larger concern viz., equity and justice less relevant for them in organizations.

Involvement in decision making processes, work and total life space ensuring balance in life and socially responsible behaviour of organizations and their image in society have less meaning for employees of lower level. This coupled with higher

in order to keep employees happy and contented employers need to apply different yardsticks to people working at different levels of the organizational hierarchy. Non-managerial people appear to be concerned mainly with issues satisfying needs of lower order. In order to motivate them employers probably can depend on financial incentives. Assurance about the continuity of income is likely to influence their motivation the most in that

Table : 2 Importance of Various Workplace Factors to Managerial and Non-managerial Employees

Factor	Managerial Class (N = 192)			Non- Managerial Class (N = 102)		
	Frequency Distribution		Rank Order	Frequency Distribution		Rank Order
	Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage	
Adequate and fair compensation	160	83.3	4	75	73.5	3
Fringe benefits and welfare measures	133	69.3	6	77	75.5	2
Job security	84	43.8	9	84	82.2	1
Physical environment	63	32.8	13	39	38.3	9.5
Work load and job stress	77	40.1	10	37	36.3	11
Opportunity to use and develop human capacity	177	92.2	1	59	57.8	6
Opportunity to grow in career terms	166	86.5	2	72	70.6	4
Human relations and social aspect of work life	64	33.3	12	44	43.1	7.5
Participation in decision-making	161	83.9	3	24	23.5	13
Reward and penalty system	154	80.2	5	61	59.8	5
Equity, justice and grievance handling	66	34.4	11	44	43.1	7.5
Work and total life space	90	46.9	8	36	35.3	12
Image of organization in the society	94	49.0	7	39	38.2	9.5

importance obtained by factors relating to relational and social aspect and physical environment in addition to (as explained earlier) in the case of non-managers as compared to managers appear to be reaffirming the popular belief that the former class of employees are more pre-occupied with the issues affecting needs of lower order.

Concluding Remarks

Preceding discussion makes it abundantly clear that

the job security has emerged as the single most important factor in their case. High status managerial employees, on the other hand, seem to be more concerned with issues that lead to the fulfillment of the needs of higher order. Opportunity to use and develop human capacity, growth in career terms and participation in decision-making in that order appear to be the three most valuable factors to them in their work lives. Thus, it can be safely inferred that, in order to enhance the motivation of

this class of employees, employers need to look beyond the traditionally used financial incentives.

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