

GENDER DIFFERENCES ON PERCEPTIONS OF SALES REPRESENTATIVES' QUALITY OF WORK LIFE IN AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

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Abstract

Employee satisfaction and quality of work life directly affect company's ability to serve its customers. Efforts towards quality of work life measurement help in efficient and effective allocation of resources to enhance productivity and stability of the workplace. Determining the quality of work life of employees is an important consideration for employers, interested in improving employees' job satisfaction and commitment. The aim of this paper is to investigate the gender differences on perceptions of sales representatives' quality of work life in automobile industry. The study found that there is no significant difference in perceptions of sales representatives' quality of work life based on gender.

Key words: Quality of Work Life, Sales Representatives, Automobile Industry, Gender

1. Introduction

The heart of business success lies in its marketing. Marketing is a process by which a product or service is introduced and promoted to potential customers. The marketing covers advertising, public relations, promotions and sales. Among these, selling is at the core of any business. Sales force is the backbone of all the businesses all over the world. Therefore, the people who do the selling are more important than any other group in the organisation. Despite their importance, most of the business strategies attribute least priority to the sales staff of the company. This leads to lower job satisfaction and sales performance, decreased organisational commitment and more turnovers. Therefore, it is very essential for an organisation to retain sales representatives. A sales representative is a person who sells products on behalf of a company. Sales representatives work with customers to find what they want, create solutions and ensure a smooth sales process.

The Automobile industry is a wide range of companies and organisations involved in the design, development, manufacturing, marketing and selling of motor vehicles. The Indian automobile industry includes two-wheelers, trucks, cars, buses and three wheelers which play a crucial role in growth of the Indian economy. The success and growth of automobile industry depends on sales. Sales people can make or break a business, depending on their level of professionalism, commitment and integrity. Sales representative's satisfaction and quality of work life directly affect company's ability to serve its customers. Quality of work life creates a culture of work commitment, so as to ensure higher productivity and job satisfaction. . Determining the quality of work life of employees is an important consideration for employers, interested in improving employees' job satisfaction and commitment.

In modern era it is very important to give equal importance for both male and female employees. When woman receive the same education and job opportunities as men, they can improve any organisation they join. This study aims to evaluate gender differences in perceptions of sales representatives' quality of work life and to suggest measures to achieve uniform improvement in quality of work life among male and female sales representatives.

2. Quality of Work Life

The term "quality of work life" (QWL) originated from the concept of the open socio-technical system designed in the 1970s that helps to ensure autonomy in work, interdependence, and self-involvement with the idea of "best fit" between technology and social organizations. Quality of work life is a comprehensive and expanded program that increases member satisfaction, reinforces their learning with the environment, and helps them to manage change. The aim of many organizations is increasing members' satisfaction in all levels. However, this is a complex problem, because the separation and determination that what factors relate to QWL is difficult (Seraji, 2006).

Quality of work life is a multi-dimensional construct that needs careful consideration to conceptualise and measure. It can be described as the favourable working environment that supports and promotes satisfaction by providing employees with rewards, job security, career growth opportunities etc.

Davis (1983) defined QWL is the broader spectrum that exemplifies all the researched factors like satisfaction, commitment, turnover, compensation, relationship management, organisation culture etc.

Walton (1973) defined the QWL as the personnel reaction to work; especially its essential outcome in relation to job needs satisfaction and psychological health.

Nadler and Lawler defines QWL as “a way of thinking about people, work and organisations, its distinctive elements are (i) a concern about the impact of work on people as well as on organisational effectiveness, and (ii) the idea of participation in organisational problem-solving and decision making.”

From the above definitions QWL can be said to be all the original inputs which aim at improving the employees’ satisfaction and enhancing organisational effectiveness. It is nothing but having a work environment where employees’ activities become more important. The QWL encompasses the sum of total healthy experience of individual’s experience in various facets of the work life or life at work.

3. Literature Review

Various studies on Quality of work life and Sales Representatives have been carried on in India and abroad. The present literature review will only cover the concepts related with dimensions of quality of work life and studies related with sales representatives.

Mark W. Johnston et al (1987) investigated patterns of change among new salespeople’s organizational commitment and job satisfaction in order to gain insights into attitudinal differences which may be expected to exist between stayers and leavers during their first year with the organisation by considering five dimensions [Pay satisfaction, Promotion satisfaction, Supervisor satisfaction, Work satisfaction, Co-worker satisfaction] of job satisfaction as they related to turnover among new salespeople and they found that differences exist between stayers and leavers with respect to these variables very early in their job tenure.

Steven P. Brown and Robert A. Peterson (1994) investigated whether exertion of effort influences job satisfaction only through the mediation of performance or whether it has a direct effect on satisfaction that is not contingent on performance and

found that effort has a strong direct effect on job satisfaction that is not contingent on sales performance.

Charles E. Pettijohn et al (2007) examined the relationship between salesperson selling skills and critical outcome variables for the sales force viz., performance, customer orientation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover. They found that sales behaviour were not positively related to sales performance, job satisfaction, and turnover but they were positively and significantly related to both customer orientation and organizational commitment.

Diana Rajendran (1994) examined the prevailing quality of work life and the related variables like performance and satisfaction along with quality of work life. The researcher collected primary data from 412 middle level executives in 31 organizations through questionnaires. The study considered three dimensions viz., work environment, management practices and immediate work group behavior for measuring the levels of QWL and found that it was only moderate level and all the dimensions were equally important in the prevailing level of QWL as perceived by a cross section of middle-level executives working in selected industrial organisations of Tamil Nadu.

With the objective of determining whether and how the quality of work life affects the satisfaction level of employees of BSNL, Dr. Meenakshi Gupta and Ms. Parul Sharma (2011) conducted a study. The study revealed that the quality of work life in the organization can be improved by enhancing Adequate Income & Fair Compensation, Safe & healthy working conditions, Opportunity for career growth, Social integration in the work force, Constitutionalism in work organization, Eminence of Work Life and Social relevance of work. All these factors are highly positively correlated with the quality of work life in BSNL.

Dr. Kritika (2015) reviewed literatures available on the Dimensions of Quality of Work Life in India and found that Quality of work life is the degree of excellence brought about work and working conditions which contribute to the overall satisfaction at the individual level but finally at the organizational level.

4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study pertains to the dimension of QWL, in general and QWL amongst sales representatives in marketing of light motor vehicles, in specific. Although, QWL is essential for all type of organizations this study is confined only to the study of QWL amongst sales representatives in marketing of light motor vehicles. This study considers sales representatives of automobile industry in Karnataka. A perceptual study of Sales Representatives will be carried out using a questionnaire to study the satisfaction level of quality of work life of sales representatives.

5. Objectives of the study

- To investigate the gender differences on perceptions of sales representatives' quality of work life in automobile industry.
- To suggest measures to improve QWL of sales representatives working in automobile industry.

5.1 Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female sales representatives with respect to the eight factors of quality of work life.

H_1 : There is significant difference in the perception of male and female sales representatives with respect to the eight factors of quality of work life.

6. Research Methodology

The research design chosen for the study was exploratory and descriptive in nature. Unit of analysis considered for the study is 'individuals' in the capacity of sales representatives working in various automobile industries in Karnataka. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected with help of self-administered questionnaire from respondents belonging to various age groups, genders, educational levels and experience. The questionnaire focuses on 8 dimensions of quality of work life such as; Adequate and fair compensation, Safe and Healthy Working Conditions, Immediate Opportunity of Use and Develop Human Capacities, Future Opportunity for Continued Growth and Security, Social Integration in Work

Organization, Constitutionalism in the Work Organization, Work and the Total Life Space, Social Relevance of Work Life.

This study is an empirical one and is based on a questionnaire survey of sales representatives in marketing of automobiles. Sales representatives were selected as a relevant population, because both working hard and working smart are necessary for effective performance in this profession. The survey was carried out in Karnataka covering Bangalore division, Belgaum division, Mysore division and Gulbarga division. To fulfil the objectives of this study, a random sample 600 sales representatives of automobile industry will be taken at 4% confidence interval. The sample consists of 150 sales representatives from each division of Karnataka.

Based on the literature survey 32 statements were developed to measure quality of work life. Statements of the questionnaire were well structured with 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 (highly dissatisfied) to 5 (highly satisfied). The reliability test has been conducted for factors of quality of work life. Cronbach's Alpha was used to check the reliability of the scale. The reliability test results show that the questionnaire designed for the present study is reliable with respect to all the factors of quality of work life as alpha coefficients had an acceptable level which is greater than 0.70, which is considered as highly sufficient. The collected data were analysed by using SPSS and various statistical tests were applied to test the hypothesis such as; descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and S.E mean) and independent samplest test were used.

7. Analysis and Interpretation

Major findings relating to demographic data of the respondents are among 600 respondents 82.8% of the sales representatives are male and only 17.2% of the sales representatives are female. Majority of the sample respondents are male.

Table 1

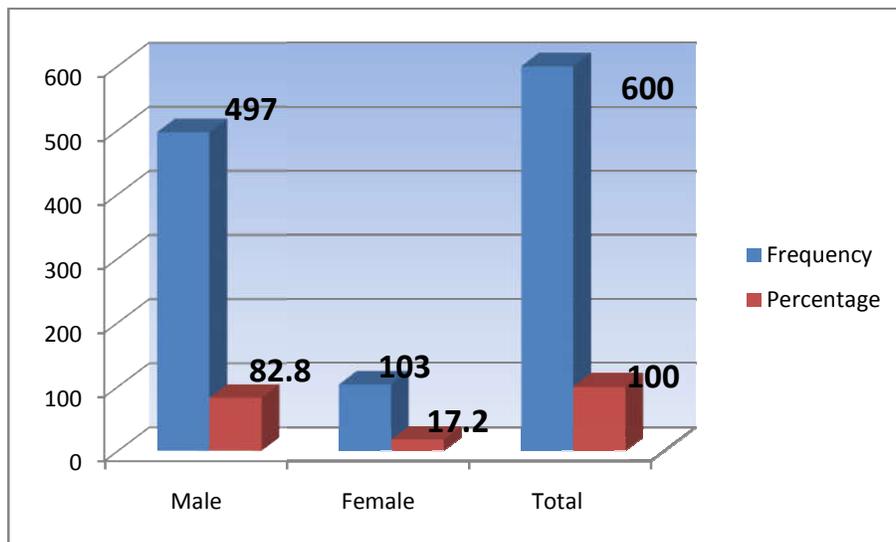
Gender wise classification of the Sample

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	497	82.8
Female	103	17.2
Total	600	100

Table 1 shows the gender wise classification of the sample respondents. Among 600 respondents 82.8% of the sales representatives are male and only 17.2% of the sales representatives are female. Majority of the sample respondents are male. It is also represented in the following figure 1.

Fig: 1

Gender wise classification of the sample



In order to see whether there is any significant difference in the satisfaction level of men and women with respect to various factors affecting quality of work life following analysis is required. The following table shows mean scores and standard error means for factors affecting quality of work life – classification on the basis of gender.

Table 2**Mean Scores of Factors Affecting Quality of Work Life – Classification on the Basis of Gender**

Sl No.	Factors affecting QWL	Male	Female
1	Adequate and Fair Compensation	3.3048±0.037	3.2864±0.091
2	Safe and Healthy Working Conditions	3.7409±0.024	3.8083±0.055
3	Immediate Opportunity of Use and Develop Human Capacities	3.1278±0.031	2.9976±0.062
4	Future Opportunity for Continued Growth and Security	2.8727±0.030	2.7112±0.082
5	Social Integration in Work Organization	2.5714±0.026	2.9345±0.050
6	Constitutionalism in the Work Organization	2.5941±0.031	2.5437±0.076
7	Work and the Total Life Space	2.7656±0.029	2.4175±0.063
8	Social Relevance of Work Life	3.5372±0.022	3.7888±0.049

Since the variance of the two groups with respect to the mean scores of all the factors considered do not significantly differ Students't test based on equal variance assumed is applied. Hypotheses test results of these 8 factors of quality of work life are shown in the below table.

Table 3
Student's t test – Difference in Mean Scores of Male and Female Sales
Representatives

Factors		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			Remark
		F	Sig	T	d.f	Sig	
V1	Equal variances assumed	7.424	0.007	0.202	598	0.840	Accepted
	Equal variances not assumed			0.187	137.525	0.852	
V2	Equal variances assumed	0.595	0.441	-1.151	598	0.250	Accepted
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.119	143.491	0.265	
V3	Equal variances assumed	2.008	0.157	1.785	598	0.075	Accepted
	Equal variances not assumed			1.884	156.025	0.061	
V4	Equal variances assumed	9.150	0.003	2.114	598	0.035	Accepted
	Equal variances not assumed			1.850	131.506	0.067	
V5	Equal variances assumed	3.074	0.080	-5.823	598	0.000	Rejected
	Equal variances not assumed			-6.468	165.826	0.000	
V6	Equal variances assumed	2.788	0.096	0.655	598	0.513	Accepted
	Equal variances not assumed			0.610	138.016	0.543	

V7	Equal variances assumed	0.087	0.769	5.051	598	0.000	Rejected
	Equal variances not assumed			5.041	147.066	0.000	
V8	Equal variances assumed	1.035	0.309	-4.681	598	0.000	Rejected
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.685	147.468	0.000	

The above table 5.4.2 disclosed the results of Levene's test for Equality of Variances and t-test for Equality of Means. The results from independent samples t-test the variable adequate and fair compensation signify that F value and P value are 7.424 and 0.007 respectively. As P value for Levene's test for equality of variance is less than 0.05, the assumption of homogeneity of variance has been violated. Therefore it is necessary to consider the t value and P value under "equal variances not assumed" for evaluating the null hypothesis of equality of means. The observed t value and P value are 0.187 and 0.852 ($p > 0.05$) respectively. Hence there is no significant difference in the satisfaction level of sales representatives with respect to adequate and fair compensation on the basis of gender.

In the cases of safe and healthy working condition and opportunity to use and develop human capacities P value for Levene's test for equality of variance is more than 0.05, the assumption of homogeneity has not been violated. Therefore it is necessary to consider the t value and P value under "equal variances assumed" for evaluating the null hypothesis of equality of means. The observed t values are -1.151 and 1.785 and P values are 0.250 and 0.075 respectively. Hence there are no significant differences in the satisfaction level of sales representatives with respect to safe and healthy working condition and opportunity to use and develop human capacities.

Regarding opportunity for continued growth and security, P value for Levene's test for equality of variance is less than 0.05; the assumption of homogeneity has been violated. Therefore t value and P value under equal variances assumed are considered. The observed t value and P value are 131.506 and 0.067 ($p > 0.05$) respectively. Hence there is no significant difference in the satisfaction level of sales representatives with respect to the above mentioned factor.

The observed P value for social integration in the work organisation is 0.000 ($p>0.05$). Hence it can be inferred that there is significant difference in the satisfaction level of sales representatives with respect to the above mentioned factor.

The observed P value for constitutionalism in the work organisation is 0.513 ($p>0.05$). Therefore it can be stated that there is no significant difference in satisfaction level of male and female sales representatives with respect to the constitutionalism in the work organisation.

In the cases of work and total life space and social relevance of work life, the t values (598) and p values (0.000) are same. Therefore it can be concluded that there is significant difference in the satisfaction level of male and female sales representatives with respect to the above mentioned factors affecting quality of work life.

Since five out of the total eight 't' values are not significant as per table 5.4.2 the null hypothesis is accepted and alternative hypothesis is rejected. So, it can be inferred that there are no much differences in the opinions of male and female sales representatives of automobile industry relative to factors affecting quality of work life. Male and female salesrepresentatives have different opinions about social integration in the work organisation, work and total life space and social relevance of work life.

8. Results and Inferences

- Majority of the respondents are male constituting 82.8% of the total.
- Out of eight factors, the mean scores of five factors are high in case of male sales representatives as compared to mean score of female sales representatives. It means male sales representatives have positive opinion about quality of work life as compared to female sales representatives.
- It is proved that there is no significant difference in the mean scores relative to factors; a) adequate and fair compensation, b) safe and healthy working conditions, c) opportunity to use and develop human capacities d) opportunity for continued growth and security, and e) constitutionalism in the work organisation.
- But, it is proved that there is significant difference in the mean scores relative to factors; a) social integration in work organisation, b) work and total life space and c) social relevance of work life.

9. Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study the following suggestions are offered to achieve the uniform improvement in quality of work life among male and female sales representatives working in automobile industry.

- ✓ The level of quality of work life of female sales representatives in automobile industry is lower than the level of male sales representatives. The main reasons for this are working hours, work-life balance. So, in order to give good quality of work life to female sales representatives it is necessary to change their work schedule by which they can manage both family and work and also provide child care facilities for children of female sales representatives. If possible allow them to work from home for once a week.
- ✓ Employers should assist employees in seeking and maintaining their work-life balance and employers should not expect employees to work hard with long hours and weekends all the time.
- ✓ Regarding social integration in the work organisation, there is significant difference in satisfaction level. Therefore it is advisable to adopt open door policy at organisation i.e., allowing employees to communicate freely. It helps female sales representatives to ask anybody else for help in need at their work.

10. Conclusion

A sales person is an intelligent agent who keeps the management informed of any significant development in his/her area, i.e., any strategic change of competitor etc. The power of Sales representatives in the continued success of an organization is not to be underestimated or under used. Thus sales representatives are very important to a company as they bridge gap between customer needs and the product/service provider. Sales people can make or break a business, depending on their level of professionalism, commitment and integrity. Sales representative's satisfaction and quality of work life directly affect company's ability to serve its customers. In modern era it is very important to treat men and women equally. Therefore, the present study analysed the gender differences on perceptions of sales representatives' quality of work life in automobile industry. The study found that there is no significant

difference in perceptions of sales representatives' quality of work life based on gender.

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