

WHAT AILS THE INDIAN MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS?

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Abstract:

The work environment and issues related to work place play a crucial role in the productivity of organizations, media industry being no exception. The small, medium and bigger media houses in India have been facing the tough challenge of ensuing better work life balance for journalists and non-journalists working in their organization. For journalists, contentment, job satisfaction, quality of work life, fairness in work distribution is a considerable measure of their productivity and effectiveness in work. To draw commitment towards the organization too, there is a need to study work environment provided to journalists and non-journalists in the media organizations. In the daily routine of a journalist, fairness, accuracy, tight deadlines, pressure of performance speed, civic duty, precision and critical thinking are all needed together and day after day. The high pressure nature of work of journalists makes it indispensable to study the work environment and factors influencing the work force. From the pay scales, to autonomy, union-management relationship, a host of factors are affecting the Indian Media set up today. **The objective of this study is to analyze the issues concerning journalists and the work force in the Indian media organizations.**

Key Words: Indian Media, Journalists, Media Industry, Concerns of Media, Work Environment, Work place issues

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Introduction:

Media industry has a peculiar way of functioning. The process of collecting news itself is very challenging and exciting. The employees in this industry, unlike other sectors, require different kind of strength to perform their daily activities. The work environment is usually of high pressure coupled with expectations of performance day after another (Stovall, 2005).

A host of social scientists and media professionals have deliberated on the fairness of editorial content, the style of coverage and theories have been devised on what influences the thought process of journalists while writing news. However some of the key areas in the Indian Media Industry are yet to be addressed.

Contentment for a journalist revolves around professional autonomy, which is an important component for research in mass communication and journalism. Having independence of thought and working style is crucial for journalists. Autonomy has a significant place in this profession (Singer, 2007).

High work pressure to meet deadlines one day after another, as embedded in the nature of media industry, could lead to distortion in Quality of Work Life for media professionals. A newspaper requires completion of several arduous tasks by its reporters that include reporting, covering spots with precision, quick and critical thinking, aggression, deadline, speed, accuracy, fairness, a sense of moral righteousness, and civic duty to name a few (Chaturvedi, 2009).

The measurement of satisfaction and overall contentment of an employee with his job in an organisation depends on several factors. There are certain factors about an employee's contentment levels which can be gauged with few parameters. These include his earning, benefits given by organisation, education among others. However, there are certain other aspects which cannot be measured as such, for instance job security, opportunities to advance forward or how much authority has been given to the employee (Wright & Dwyer, 2006).

There are parameters like levels of stress, personal independence given to employee and how connected the employee feels socially within the framework (Sengupta, Edwards & Tsai, 2009) which are also significant.

As an industry, the media is witnessing a downward commotion (**The Indian Media Business, 2010**), but in India however there is a lot to be optimistic about. The growth rate projected by various agencies for years to come appears encouraging (almost 15 percent by 2017 quotes the **FICCI-KPMG report 2013**).

A major concern of employees in most sectors is the problems in juggling their work and family life and responsibilities. The work hours, the practice of both parents earning leads to a situation where nobody is at home to take care of family. Eventually the frustration effects both work and family life. Because of this, several organizations have now begun to focus on “totally integrated employee benefits system” to enable their employees to adjust (**Morrison, 1990**).

Researchers have also probed the connection of the market forces with the newsroom and the culture within the media organizations. (**Plasser, 2005**) finds that the media organizations too are driven by profit motive and in the age of commercial environment, cutbacks in newsroom and staff to ensure profitability in organizations is acceptable. Cutting costs is also a part of this profit driven system.

Workplace issues have been a cause of concern for human resource professionals. The quality of various kinds of jobs has been increasingly noticed by both policy makers and even academicians studying these areas. Given the extent of the media and entertainment sector in India, greater attention needs to be given by researcher on work place related issues, work and family life balance among others.

Press Council of India and its concerns of job security of media professionals

The Press Council has mentioned paid news issue in the latest press release it has issued for the general elections of 2014 for the media industry in India. It has urged media professionals to refrain from acceptance of any monetary compensation for news and asked for greater autonomy for editors.

The press council of India, in its 2010 report has also mentioned the issue of job security of media persons. It has emphasized on the need to have people hired on regular jobs instead of contractual appointments or hiring stringers and the report was compiled by two senior journalists. The report cites that paid news was often a result of lesser salaries and reporters are

reduced to the status of agents to collect advertisement. This is particularly true in case of election time in India, when such practices surface more prominently.

One more report by PCI was released in September 2011, raising the issue of wages and job security of journalists.

The movement of journalists and the federations needs to be strengthened and the issues and concerns in media organizations related to performance, job security, productivity, even policies needs to be relooked into.

Issues that are ailing the Media Industry in India

Studies concerning the media largely revolve around effects of media consumption and usage. Still other studies are concerning the process of shaping news by journalists and their perceptions. What does into the mind of journalists while writing news or what are the market and other factors that influence the new production, has been studied by researchers in past. The professional role of journalists and their political views have been well researched by social scientists like **Donsbach (1996)** and **Weaver (1998)**.

A research done on media professionals reveals how this category, like some other professionals, do not know much about the history of their subject. (**Carey, 2007**) has mentioned in the research work that journalists have this perception that journalism has always been like it is today. Researchers opined that media professionals or journalists will benefit if they are trained better and are imparted with some knowledge related to their work more systematically.

Researchers like **Altmeppen (2008)** have also studied newsroom structure and the work schedule of media persons.

The **International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)** which is a global federation of journalists' trade union published a report in collaboration with WageIndicator, a partner of Amsterdam Institute of Advance Labor Studies, University of Amsterdam. This report titled "Gender Pay Gap in Journalism", released in the year **2013** mentions that women journalists continue to face discrimination in terms of wages and benefits.

Wages of Journalists- Justice Majithia Commission Recommendations

In July 2011, the Supreme Court declined to stay the implementation of this wage board, which was a sign that media organisations have no choice but to comply with orders and hike salaries. Small newspapers like the Assam Tribune and Maghyamam, have already implemented the wage board recommendations, which has set a good precedence in the industry.

The attitude of larger media groups in India is however problematic, who has been delaying the implementation Justice Majithia wage board recommendations, although with the Supreme Court upholding the decision in March 2014, there is not much choice left for them.

Research Questions of the Study:

The study aims at building a foundation of the need to study work environment in media organisations and identifying areas that need serious introspection.

Organisational functions that need to be explored

When we talk about an employee's commitment, it includes several aspects of how he perceives his organization and the goals. For instance one of these aspects is his belief in the goals of his organization and the acceptance. Another is the amount of effort he puts in achieving that goal and third is the desire to retain association with the organization (**Porter et al, 1974**). From the perspective of the employer, to retain an employee also requires ensuring that the staff thinks and works in synchronization with the goals of organization.

Bumer and Kavanagh (1999) found that journalism was constantly and increasingly under the pressure of matching the goals of media organization. The style of journalism had to be in synchronization with media goals of the company.

Hence due to these changes and altering needs of the organization, problem areas and its solutions need to be identified and more regularization needs to be brought about.

Issues and Concerns of Media Industry in India:

Following are the areas of concerns in the Indian Media industry which various federations and academicians have raised from time to time.

- Work Conditions of Media Persons

-Is the overall work-environment congenial?

-Are they getting ample motivation at work?

-Is their even distribution of everyday assignments?

- Salaries/Pay Scales

-Are the salaries enough to draw commitment towards organization and enhance performance?

-Are the lesser economic benefits in organisations causing more corruption? (Poll time funds allocated to journalists- PCI 2014 report for Elections)

- Contractual Appointments/Stringers in Media Industry

-Is Work Satisfaction up to the mark?

-Do media person have ample Job-security/

- Is uncertainty in career and Job an issue?

-Any regularization on Stringers/Contractual employment?

- Work Hours

-Are journalists over-working?

-Are their work hours hindering family life?

-Is there good Work-Life balance?

- Work pattern & System of Elevation

-Is there a calculated system of elevation of journalists?

-Is the elevation policy fair, human resource policies even?

- Unions/Federations for Journalists

-Are the unions/media foundations playing a constructive role for contractual employees also?

-Are organizations permitting media professionals to stay active with unions?

-Are journalist federations active enough to take a call on crucial issues concerning their work life?

Hierarchy of Influences Model by Shoemaker & Reese, 1996

These researchers worked on the area of 'thinking and working style of journalists' that influences and shapes news. This model considers several factors that influence the functioning of media people. The model studies the influences at one level and their interaction with those at another level and how they can interact within organization and in the hierarchy of the organisational set up. (Reese, 2007).

There are various approaches through which this model is understood. Broadly these are classified into five categories including individual factors, routine (in the organization), institutional factors, organizational factors and ideological or socio-cultural (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

These approaches are related to the influence on the media content. The first approach, for instance, is related to the psychological or individual factors that influence an individual's work. This approach is communicator-centered and takes into account personal, political and professional factors. In short the factors are media workers' attitude and socialization that influence the content.

Findings and Conclusions

The above literature reveals that management researchers have worked on areas related to work environment in several sectors and industries. But in the case of Media Industry, specifically in India there is need to further inspect and research upon aspects of work environment and parameters of organisational behavior. The model that establish the connection of a reporter's thinking and the news output or production have already been studied by Shoemaker and Reese (1996) through their model of hierarchy of influences, however perception of employees in this industry about other factors related to work place attitudes, organisational culture, emotional quotient, commitment levels, work-life balance, quality of work life, leadership are yet to be researched upon.

There is a dire need to study exhaustively the above aspects of organisational behavior of media professionals. A close consideration needs to be given to the reforms, corrective measures and policy in human resource departments of media organisations.

Yet another concept which needs focused attention of researchers and social scientists is the implementation of the Justice Majithia Wage Board Recommendations for journalists and non-journalists and after implementation, its outcome and implications as well. This needs to be studied in context of regular and contractual staff in media organisations. Economic benefits is a dimension of quality of work life in organisations and similar parameters related to work culture in organisations, hence the need to study wages of media persons arises from this factor.

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