



Do the Newspaper Publishing Houses in Bangladesh Maintain Quality of Work Life?

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Research Article

Abstract

Purpose: The main objective of this study is to explore the degree of maintaining QWL issues in the newspaper publishing houses of Bangladesh.

Methods: This study had endeavored to expose the practices of QWL of 15 newspaper publishing houses through a questionnaire survey conducted on 75 full-time news reporters. The survey results were further endorsed by senior executives of three well-circulated newspapers of Chattogram, Bangladesh.

Results: The study revealed job stress as a high priority indicator of QWL. However, the newspaper publishing houses are found somewhat weak in maintaining the QWL issues, such as job security, harmonious relationship, experience sharing culture, and social pride.

Implications: This paper recommends few interventions to enrich the QWL practices in the newspaper publishing industry of Bangladesh.

Originality: QWL practice of newspaper publishing houses is somewhat missing in the existing literature. Therefore, the current study will inspire the researchers to discuss and debate the issues.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Quality of Work Life, Journalists, News Reporters, and Newspaper Publishing Houses.

1. Introduction

The newspaper publishing industry is profoundly a human resource-intensive industry since it calls for very proficient journalists to provide quality and trustworthy news. Newspaper journalists are frontline professionals to collect credible news, and they are the main driving force of this industry. This profession is very stressful as they need to put their utmost effort to meet the expectations of readers', society, and their employers. To remain engaged and productive in this promising profession, they need special care from their employer. Therefore, ensuring the work-life quality could be an effective strategy for newspaper publishing houses to

motivate journalists. The main objective of this study is to assess the degree of quality of work-life (QWL) practice of newspaper publishing houses of Bangladesh with particular reference to news reporters (NRs).

The genre of a useful QWL project is the commitment of an organization to promote a better work environment and welfare for employees (Singh & Singh, 2015). Present researchers have established a potential relationship between QWL and employee productivity (Bagtasos, 2011) & employee's job satisfaction (Goudarzn & Mirdoozandeh, 2012). The concept of QWL is also accepted as a vital strategy for employee performance development in the service sectors (Babu & Ramesh, 2013). The newspaper business is very prevalent in Bangladesh as the country ensures freedom of expression through article 39 of the constitution. The print media of Bangladesh is currently playing a significant role in upholding the norms of democracy, maintaining social accountability, and good governance. It also promotes innovative education, sports, and entertainment. Since 2008, the industry witnessed a significant qualitative and quantitative change, and there are 1248 enlisted newspapers at present.

In this noble industry, news reporters play a pivotal role in protecting democratic norms through factual news reporting. They do the challenging task during the day and at night searching for truth, and this hardship also disturbs their work and personal life. For that reason, appropriate QWL practices in this industry are apparent to keep the news reporters productive and more focused on work. Research on the QWL of newspaper journalists is rare, and a minimal study has been made on Bangladesh's perspective. However, this need for study constitutes a research gap and has inspired the authors to conduct extensive quantitative research on QWL strategies' applicability, especially on the Bangladeshi newspaper industry. This study will minimize that gap by exhibiting the present picture of QWL practices in newspaper publishing houses based on the news reporters' opinions.

2. Research Question

To what extent newspaper publishing houses ensure the quality of work-life issues?

3. Review of Literature

The concept of QWL is a vital strategic issue of human resource management practices. It facilitates employees' work-life balance (Huda, 2017). QWL initiatives are intended to satisfy both the organizational and individual needs of an employee (Lee, Back & Chan, 2015; Sadri & Goveas, 2013). It directly facilitates organizational productivity and performance development (Sotonye & Konya, 2020). It enhances the commitment and loyalty of an employee (Zhao et al., 2013). Effective implementation of QWL strategies ascents corporate reputation in the job market and facilitates talent acquisition and retention management (Noor & Abdullah, 2012). Many researchers like Tamunomiebi (2018), Hosseinabadi *et al.* (2013), and Navidian *et al.* (2014) have found a significant correlation between QWL and job satisfaction of the employees. Employees perceive that QWL interventions are often secured by an organization's physical ambiance, strategic compensation management, the open-armed relationship between employer & employee, participative decision-making process, and opportunity to exalt personal-esteem

(Bora, Saumendra & Murthy, 2015). Adequate compensation in compliance with the standard of living is a prominent factor in QWL's best practices (Kar, Panda, & Pathak, 2019).

Yeo and Li (2011) and Li and Yeo (2011) have concluded a research work and found that QWL opens the opportunity for an in-house career development program. It also ordains many exigent factors of job place, i.e., a culture of good corporate governance, the spirit of a learning organization, management development initiative, mentorship structure, feedback-based performance review, and cohesive work environment, and job enrichment. Organizations must create an opportunity to use individual talents and soft skills achieved by the employees through training & development programs (Kulkarni, 2013). To attain sustainability of an organization in the long-run, employers have to establish QWL strategies by assuring a better standard of living for employees, comfortable work environment, compliant occupational health and safety, effective employee assistance program, dynamic career development program, and usually the work-life balance issues (Noor & Abdullah, 2012). According to Bragardet *al.* (2012), QWL ensures work time management, reduces workload, escalates employee maintenance, and fosters leadership development. A study by ShandSh (2014) had explored that organizations ought to maintain a stress-free work environment to protect the practice of QWL, which substantially sustains organizational growth.

Padala and Suryanarayana (2010) proposed two magnitudes of QWL practice, namely classical and contemporary dimensions. According to them, the classical dimensions of QWL are physical atmosphere, employee wellness schemes, employee suggestion schemes, job security issues, compensation, benefit, and rewards management. Hence, the new dimension of QWL includes collective bargaining practice, occupational safety & health, employee grievance policy, practices of quality circles, work-life balance, employees' participation in managerial decisions, and culture of experience sharing. The significance of job security in ensuring better QWL is also supported by Swamy, Nanjundeswaraswamy and Rashmi, (2015). Vagharseyyedin, Vanaki, and Mohammadi (2011) mentioned the social dignity issue of a profession in their study. Additionally, An, Yom & Ruggiero, (2011) had validated the presence of harmonious interpersonal relationships among colleagues as a strong determinant of QWL. Moreover, Yadav and Khanna (2014) conducted a comprehensive literature review-based research and found the social esteem as an enormously useful determinant of QWL.

The press nurses the democracy and represents the voice of common people. The news reporters are the critical human resource of this industry and do the primary operation of the newspaper Production Company by collecting news accurately and consistently (Sang-young & Cho, 2014). A study conducted in Nigeria by Ngochindo (2014) has discovered that QWL intervention profoundly influences the job performance of a journalist. Hence, the study also revealed that journalists are poorly motivated since their compensation is insufficient to cope with living costs. The absence of better QWL in newspaper houses is troubling the life of newspaper journalists. They are working for long hours; they do not enjoy sufficient vacations, lack of career advancement opportunities, extreme level of job stress, diminishing mental health, unsupportive supervision, lack of morality, and an insecure job climate (Geisler, 2005).

On the other hand, job autonomy, work-life balance, fair compensation, and adequate organizational support drive news reporters' performance towards quality and authentic journalism (Reinardy, 2014). According to Huda (2017), news reporting is very stressful in Bangladesh, and there is an absence of work-life balance and adequate compensation in this profession. The profession is also life-threatening, and journalists are subject to physical and mental harassment (Huda & Azad, 2015).

The existing literature has given a clear picture of QWL of different professionals like doctors (Bragard *et al.*, 2012), nurses (Vagharseyyedin *et al.*, 2011), non-management working class of India (Saklani, 2010), university faculty members (Arif & Ilyas, 2013), workers of apparel industry (Hossain & Shirazi, 2018) female bankers (Tabassum, Rahman & Jahan, 2011), IT professionals (Bolhari *et al.*, 2011), attendants of gas stations (Kiriago & Bwisa, 2013), college teachers (Nair, 2013), freight forwarding professionals (Sadri & Goveas, 2013) government service holders (Mohammadi & Shahrabi, 2013) and marketing representatives of pharmaceutical houses respectively (Huda, 2017). However, studies conducted on QWL issues relevant to Bangladeshi news reporters are minimal, old and most of these are in the developed country context. This research will endeavor to fill the gap by contributing to the knowledge regarding QWL.

4. Research Hypothesis

H_a: The newspaper publishing houses maintain the QWL issues related to satisfactory working conditions, job security, explicit grievance management, social dignity, and other related issues.

H_o: The newspaper publishing houses do not maintain QWL issues

5. Methodology

5.1 Variable identification and Justification

Authors have extensively reviewed scholarly articles, reports, policy guideline papers, and newspaper articles to explore as many determinants of QWL as possible irrespective of the country of study. Research materials were sourced from Google scholars, Scopus database, JSTOR, NIMC web portal, and News Company's web portals. Considering the literature, authors accumulated 17 variables relevant to QWL, and those items were shared with an expert panel consisting of three non-academic members having long experience in journalism. They had checked the applicability of the variables in the current study. A 6-point Likert scale was used to measure the opinion of the respondents on the delicate items.

5.2 Questionnaire

The first part of the questionnaire contains demographic questions such as gender, education, and years of experience. The second segment of the instrument contained 17 questions relevant to QWL evaluation. A six-point Likert rating scale was used to capture the respondents' opinions on those 17 items where point 6 represents 'Strongly agree' and point one show 'Strongly disagree.' The questionnaire was first developed in English and then translated into

Bengali (local language) to facilitate data collection and understanding. An expert was involved in making sure that two versions of the questionnaire were identical. In the questionnaire, newspaper journalists were asked questions about the extent to which they are satisfied with their working conditions, job security, participation in decision-making, etc.

5.3 Respondents

This study utilized the responses of full-time news reporters only, and the demographic profiles of the respondents are presented in table 1. Data collection was controlled because the respondents should have at least 5-6 years of working experience to prudently contribute to the research. The working experience was also vital as the news reporters should work a substantial amount of time to understand and experience the QWL program of their organization. Respondents were selected following the judgmental sampling technique because they fulfill the screening criteria. Fifteen daily newspaper publishing houses were selected, and 80 questionnaires were distributed among the news reporters. However, a few questionnaires were discarded due to missing responses and incorrect answers (multiple ticked options or missing responses). Finally, 75 usable responses were used for data analysis. Samples were decisively chosen from Chattogram, the commercial capital of Bangladesh. The survey was carried out between the timeframe of July 2019 to September 2019.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Gender		Frequency	Percentage
1	Female	08	11%
2	Male	67	89%
Education			
1	Bachelor Degree (General)	51	68%
2	Masters Degree (General)	18	24%
3	Masters Degree (Journalism)	06	08%
Experience			
1	5-6 years	25	33%
2	7-10 years	33	44%
3	10 years and above	17	23%

Source: Questionnaire Survey (Compiled by authors)

5.4 Statistical method

This study considered the aggregate data as a single sample (print media/newspaper publishing houses). For testing the research hypotheses, a one-sample t-test (along with significance value) was appropriate, as suggested by Malhotra and Das (2016). Besides, mean values were

examined to identify the degree of presence of a particular item of QWL. Standard deviation values were reported to check the diversity of opinion among the respondents.

6. Findings and Discussion

Table 2: Mean values and hypotheses testing results

Sl No	Variables	H _a	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.	H _a Decision
1	Satisfactory working condition	1(a)	4.4600	.49881	2.713	0.00	<i>Accepted</i>
2	Practice of fairness	1(b)	4.4000	.51186	1.871	0.67	<i>Rejected</i>
3	Job security provided by the organization	1(c)	5.2000	.34012	6.332	0.00	<i>Accepted</i>
4	Employees comments & suggestion scheme	1(d)	3.5000	.42938	-3.130	0.03	<i>Accepted</i>
5	Employee's participation in decision making	1(e)	3.3000	.32865	-3.725	0.01	<i>Accepted</i>
6	Explicit grievance management	1(f)	3.3200	.59642	-3.012	0.04	<i>Accepted</i>
7	Standard work time	1(g)	3.5400	.75208	-1.856	0.69	<i>Rejected</i>
8	Stress-free work	1(j)	2.9200	.58504	-1.532	0.13	<i>Rejected</i>
9	Learning opportunity	1(k)	3.9400	.34405	-.275	0.78	<i>Rejected</i>
10	Opportunity to use of skills & talents	1(l)	3.2800	.22542	-3.841	0.00	<i>Accepted</i>
11	Compensation conforms standard of living	1(m)	3.2200	.31839	-3.889	0.00	<i>Accepted</i>
12	Satisfactory reward system	1(n)	2.5600	.41402	-6.725	0.00	<i>Accepted</i>
13	Merit-based performance appraisal	1(o)	3.9000	.36818	-.451	0.65	<i>Rejected</i>
14	The harmonious relationship among the colleagues	1(p)	5.4600	.33431	9.981	0.00	<i>Accepted</i>
15	Experience Sharing Culture	1(q)	5.2200	.56567	7.401	0.00	<i>Accepted</i>
16	Good career prospect	1(r)	3.5400	.43157	-2.272	0.02	<i>Accepted</i>
17	Social Dignity	1(s)	5.1800	.61969	11.594	0.00	<i>Accepted</i>

Source: Field Survey

The results (Table-2) of the study revealed 5 out of 17 hypotheses being rejected. Our result disclosed that twelve significant variables (H_a accepted: see table 2) are satisfactory working condition, comments & suggestion scheme, job security, participation in decision making, good grievance management, opportunity to use skills& talents, compensation, experience sharing culture, sound reward system, good career prospect, and social dignity. For the remaining five

hypotheses that tested, the items' have been rejected (in all cases, sig. < 0.05 with higher t-values). These findings approve the absence of those five variables (such as merit-based performance appraisal, stress-free work, standard work time, a learning opportunity, and practice of fairness) in the work-life of the NRs of Bangladesh.

Hypothesis 1(b) practice of fairness representing the item 'practice of fairness at work' is found to be rejected (sig. = 0.67 with t=1.871). It means the responding journalists do not feel that their organizations are valuing fairness or justice. According to the respondents, this issue arises due to the lack of fair compensation and benefits practice in most of the newspaper houses of Bangladesh. NRs believe that their employers are reluctant to implement the recommendations of the ninth wage board, and most of the newspaper houses are unwilling to put it into practice. The newspaper houses are not following the due process of employment, and many NRs are laid off unjustifiably (The Daily Star, 2019). Zakaria & Azad (2009) had also found the same result in their research. Hypothesis 1(g) Standard work time is also rejected (sig. = 0.69 with t= -1.856). It shows that journalists do not have standard working hours. At the time of discussion with the news reporters, they have opined that they do not practice standard office hours like other corporate jobs. Most of them have reported that they remain engaged at day time in search of news and prepare the report at night hours till the news goes for printing (consistent to Huda, 2018). It was found from the data that news reporting is a stressful work as alternative hypothesis 1(j) "Stress-free work" is rejected (sig. = 0.13 with t=-1.532). Most of the researchers worldwide found it common (Al Muala, 2017; Azad & Hussain, 2016; Huda & Azad, 2015; Buchanan & Keats, 2011).

On the other hand, learning opportunities 1(k) for the journalists are minimal as this hypothesis is also found to be rejected (sig. = 0.78 with t= -.275). Formal learning opportunity on journalism is very limited in Chattogram and also in Bangladesh. According to the respondents, most of the journalists have educated themselves on the job.

Only two universities in Chattogram are offering undergraduate programs on journalism, and seats are minimal. Government institutes are centralized and located in the capital city. Also, for the journalists' professional preoccupation, newspaper publishing houses are not interested in engaging them in learning and development. Hypothesis 1(o) titled merit-based performance appraisal (sig. = 0.65 with t= -.451) are found to be rejected. These results signify that performance evaluation is not based on merit. The respondents may feel favoritism prevails in this industry as all the newspaper publishing houses are private and mostly owned by corporate houses or local industrialists.

It was observed that most of the hypotheses (H_a) were accepted, and seven items were highly significant (sig. =0.00). It can be noted that the sample newspaper publishing houses have succeeded in maintaining a better QWL through ensuring a satisfactory working condition for the news reporters (sig.= 0.09 with t= 2.713), they have a practice of taking comments and suggestion for organizational development (sig. = 0.03 with t= -3.130), job security is ensured (sig. = 0.00 with t= 6.332), effective practice of employee's participation in managerial decision making (sig. =0.01 with t= -3.725), they have an explicit grievance management policy (sig. = 0.04 with t= -3.012), they ensure the opportunity to use of skills and talents of the news reporters

(NRs) (sig. = 0.00 with $t = -3.841$), compensation is fair to lead a standard life (sig. = 0.00 with $t = -3.889$), the houses are practicing satisfactory reward system (sig. = 0.00 with $t = -6.725$), harmonious relationship among the colleagues is prevailing (sig. = 0.00 with $t = 9.981$) the organization have a culture of experience sharing among the peers for professional support (sig. = 0.00 with $t = 7.401$), there is an opportunity of career development in journalism (sig. = 0.02 with $t = -2.272$), and finally the NRs feel that their profession is socially dignified (sig. = 0.00 with $t = 11.594$).

Based on the mean value, the study's result has revealed that 'harmonious relationship among the colleagues' has got maximum positive response (mean is 5.4600 out of 6.00). This result confirms that the journalist or the news reporters (NRs) maintain a peaceful and cordial relationship. In real life, we also see unity among journalists. Experts' opinion in this regard was also found similar. They opined that the professional associations of the journalists are robust, and they get united to support each other at the time of crises. This spirit of unity also impacts on the workplace relationship. Our earlier result is linked to another item's higher mean values, namely 'experience sharing culture' (mean is 5.2200). It is undeniable that effective workplace relationships ensure a culture of sharing, and the reporters remain compassionate.

The item 'job security' also obtained close to the previous result (mean is 5.2000). It means the NRs feel that their employers secure their job. However, this result contradicts the earlier findings on "fairness or justice issues," as this hypothesis was rejected. The meaning of job security in Bangladeshi work culture is the retention of the job only, not other employment issues like salary and benefit. On the other hand, it also contradicts the news report of The Daily Star (2019) as the newspaper employees are raising their voice against immoral layoffs by their employers. It is universal that journalism is not merely a noble profession and socially prestigious but esteemed too. The study's result also acclaimed the same as the NRs deeply feel that their profession is socially dignified (mean is 5.1800).

The result was also found the higher mean value of two variables, i.e. 'satisfactory working condition (4.4600)', and 'practice of fairness (4.4000)'. During the survey, some respondents were optimistic about physical working conditions as their office and workstations are well furnished. On the contrary, they showed deep concern regarding the culture of promoting fairness, integrity, and mutual trust at the workplace by their employers. It may happen as the respondents feel that the desire of the top management somewhat influences their job. Therefore, the top management of newspaper publishing houses should make them free from all prejudice.

The results also indicate a moderate effect of the issues such as 'learning opportunity at the workplace (3.9400)', 'merit-based performance appraisal (3.9000)', 'good career prospect (3.5400)', 'standard working hour (3.5400)', 'comments and suggestions scheme (3.5000)', 'satisfactory grievance management practice (3.3200)', participative decision making (3.3000)', 'opportunity to use skills and talents (3.2800)', 'standard compensation (3.2200)'. The items with the least mean value are 'stress-free work environment (2.9200)' and "satisfactory reward system" (2.5600). Many earlier pieces of research universally prove that journalism or news reporting is a stressful profession and the result of this study is also consistent with the findings

of earlier research. However, the mean value result on satisfactory reward issues is very close to the reality (The Daily Star, 2019) though the hypothesis 1(n) was accepted.

7. Conclusion and Managerial Implications

It is the noble mission for all the newspapers to uphold democracy, human rights, good governance, other social issues, and NRs are playing a vital role in this regard. This research investigates the positive and negative facts regarding the QWL of NRs of Bangladeshi newspaper publishing houses. The results show that twelve out of seventeen variables are effective in ensuring the QWL of NRs of Bangladeshi Newspaper Publishing Houses. However, it is also discovered that their job is stressful, has no systematic performance management and a standard working hour like other jobs. The NRs are working long hours, and learning opportunities are also absent. Better practice on human resource development may reduce job pressure, ensure merit-based performance evaluation, and better learning opportunities for them. Newspaper publishing houses must have a better job design for the NRs to make their work-life stress-free. Nurturing effective corporate governance may enhance fairness, integrity, and mutual trust in the workplace. Top management and the owners should comprehend that NRs are the vital human resources for newspaper publishing houses. Hence, excellence in QWL practice should be considered as the principal concern of the top management to increase circulation, profitability, and the newspaper's reputation.

The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by realizing the importance of QWL as a reliable human resource development and organizational development practice. The outcome of this research may facilitate the HR managers, practitioners, and consultants to constitute a productive work-life for the employees who undergo pressure at work and encounter life threats in performing duties. This study also opens a window for further research on QWL programs. Academicians and independent researchers may extend the research area applying a large sample size and study QWL issues of different professions and industries. Researchers could endeavor to assess the correlation of QWL practice with the productivity and profitability of the organizations.

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