

LABOUR WELFARE (TEXTILE INDUSTRY) - A QUEST OF INDIA

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Abstract: The textile plays a vital role in human life. Textile industries are one of the important industries of India for earning Foreign Exchange and giving employment to lakhs of workers. Because of being a highly labor intensive industry it needs to concentrate more in the area of employee welfare. As per the study, Welfare measures plays important role in employee satisfaction and it results in improved quality of work life. Employee welfare defines as “efforts to make life worth living for workmen”. These efforts have their origin either in some statute formed by the state or in some local custom or in collective agreement or in the employer’s own initiative. This research paper deals with the labour welfare in India a Quest.

Keywords: Textile, Foreign Exchange, Intensive, Welfare, Workmen, Statute, Quest.

Introduction: Safety and welfare measures are inevitable to any organization where workers are involved. An organization’s responsibility to its employees extends beyond the payment of wages for their services. The employee’s safety and welfare on and off the job within the organization is a vital concern of the employer. Welfare helps to improve employee retention and creating positive image for longer time period. It helps to motivate and improve morale of the employees. Some of the facilities and services which fall within the preview of labour welfare like adequate canteen facilities, accommodation arrangements, recreational facilities, medical facilities and transportation. Providing a safe and healthy environment is a pre-requisite for any productive effort.

Labour Welfare: Labour welfare occupies a place of significance in the industrial development and economy. It is an important facet of industrial relations, the extra dimension, giving satisfaction to the worker in a way which even a good wage cannot. With the growth of industrialization and mechanization, it has acquired added importance. A happy and contented work force is an asset for the industrial prosperity of any nation.¹ Labour

welfare is nothing but the maintenance function of personnel in the sense that it is directed specifically to the preservation of employee health and attitudes. In other words, it contributes to the maintenance of employee morale. The welfare services in an industry is to improve the living and working conditions of workers and their families because the workers well-being cannot be achieved in isolation of his family² Labour welfare, though it has been proved to contribute to efficiency in production, is expensive. Each employer depending on his priorities gives varying degrees of importance to labour welfare. It is because the government is not sure that all employers are progressive minded and will provide basic welfare measures that it introduces statutory legislation from time to time to bring about some measure of uniformity in the basic amenities available to industrial workers. "Obviously, there is some creation and stimulation in the maintenance function just as there is some maintenance in all other operative personnel functions. But the primary emphasis in employee service programme has been on maintaining an employee's favorable attitude towards his work and work environment"³

Today, welfare has been generally accepted by employers. The state only intervenes to "widen the area of applicability"⁴. The Committee on Labour Welfare (CLW), formed in 1969 to review the labour welfare scheme, described it as social security measures that contribute to improve the conditions under which workers are employed in India. Vaid considers it as an "expression of the assumption by industry of its responsibility for its employees".⁵ Though industrial workers are generally better paid, their conditions of work, and often poorer living conditions necessitate more than minimum amenities, and hence most statutory legislations apply to them.

In a resolution in 1947, the ILO defined labour welfare as "such services, facilities and amenities as adequate canteens, rest and recreation facilities, arrangements for travel to and from work, and for the accommodation of workers employed at a distance from their houses, and such other services, amenities and facilities as contribute to improve the conditions under which workers are employed."⁶

The welfare measures influence the sentiment of the workers and contribute to the maintenance of industrial peace.⁷ Labour welfare is thus, one

of the major determinants of industrial relations. Apart from improved morale and loyalty welfare measures are of significance to reduce absenteeism and labour turnover in industries. Whatever improves conditions of work and life for the employee, whatever leads to the increasing adaptation of the worker to his task and whatever makes him well contented will lessen his desire or need to leave. One of the thrust areas in the personnel in future would be the creation of the type of organizational environment that will help to make work more satisfying.⁸

Welfare measures also serve to enhance an organizations image as a caring employer.⁹ This image can be very useful to organizations in recruiting the workers.

Social advantage of labour welfare is by no means less important than economic ones. The provision of canteen, where balanced diet is available at subsidized rates, improves workers health, entertainment's tend to reduce the incidence of vices; medical aid and maternity benefits improve the health of workers and bring down the rates of general, maternal and infant mortality and likewise educational facilities broaden their outlook and improve mental health.

The welfare measures have more relevance in the context of the poor standard of livings of the Indian working class. It is, therefore, one major aspect of national programmes towards the promotion of the welfare of the people and is as such designed to create a life and work environment of decent comfort for working class. As stated already, the directive principles of state policy in our constitution have very significantly highlighted the need for securing just and humane conditions of work for this vital segment of the community.

Classification Of Labour Welfare Work: The classification of labour welfare is based on dividing industrial welfare measures into three categories.

1. Statutory
2. Voluntary
3. Mutual

Statutory welfare is the product of the coercive power of the government. Statutory stipulations compel employers to implement welfare schemes. The government enacts rules in regard to labour welfare in order to

enforce the minimum standard of health and safety of the workers. Employers have to observe the rules relating to working conditions, hours of work, hygiene, safety, light, ventilation, sanitation etc. Government has increased the statutory control of labour welfare.

Voluntary welfare includes all those activities which employers undertake for their workers on a voluntary basis. There are some social organizations, which also undertake voluntary welfare work. Mutual welfare is undertaken by the workers themselves. Some trade unions also undertake the responsibility of workers welfare. Labour welfare is also classified under intra-mural activities, and extra-mural activities. The former include services provided inside the factory premises, and the latter include services and amenities outside the factory.

Principles Of Employee Welfare Service: Following are generally given as the principles to be followed in setting up a employee welfare service:

- The service should satisfy real needs of the workers. This means that the manager must first determine what the employee's real needs are with the active participation of workers.
- The service should be handled by cafeteria approach. Due to the difference in Sex, age, marital status, number of children, type of job and the income level of employees there are large differences in their choice of a particular benefit. This is known as the cafeteria approach. Such an approach individualizes the benefit system though it may be difficult to operate and administer.
- The employer should not assume a benevolent posture.
- The cost of the service should be calculated and its financing established on a sound basis.
- There should be periodical assessment or evaluation of the service and necessary timely on the basis of feedback.

Labour Welfare Facilities:

1. Sanitary and Hygiene facilities

The maintenance of a clean, sanitary and hygiene work environment is now accepted as an important basic welfare amenity. These include toilets and water for drinking and washing. The factories Act requires that every factory must be kept clean and free from effective flowing from any drain or privy; that a sufficient supply of wholesome drinking water must be made available at suitable and convenient points; that separate latrine and urinals for male and female workers must be provided; that spittoons must be kept in convenient places in clean and hygienic conditions, and that adequate, suitable, clean, conveniently accessible and separately screened washing facilities must be provided for male and female workers.

2. Rest Facility

This amenity provides a prescribed number of seats on the shop floor and rest rooms or shelters. This facility helps to reduce fatigue, as it enables a worker to sit down occasionally without any break in his work and contribute to his comfort and efficiency. The factories Act provides that, for the purpose of rest, suitable sitting arrangements have to be made and maintained for all workers who are obliged to work standing and rest rooms and lunch rooms in a factory with more than 150 workers.

3. Feeding Facility

Mess rooms are an elementary feeding facility, where with a few chairs, and tables and in some cases lockers, workers can sit and eat in comfort, the food they have brought from home. Presently, greater and increasing importance is attached to the provision of industrial canteens all over the world. The construction of canteens is compulsory as per the Factories Act (1948), the Mines Act (1952), Motor Transport Workers Act (1961) and the Plantation Labour Act (1951).

4. Medical Facilities

Health care for workers will help to reduce the incidence of sickness and, absenteeism among them and increase productivity. The importance of industrial health care in general has also been emphasized by the international labour organization. In 1931, the Royal Commission on Labour and the Labour Investigation Committee (1946) underlined the necessity for providing basic health and welfare amenities.

The importance of industrial health service is greater in India than elsewhere because of the adverse effects of unhealthy work environment in many factories and also due to the incidence of tropical diseases, long hours of work, low wages causing malnutrition and poor stamina; illness of workers due to ignorance and poverty and urban conditions of life which do not agree with migrated workers.¹⁰ These services include health and medical facilities inside and outside the workers place of work, intra-mural health amenities cover first aid, ambulance rooms, industrial hygiene, occupational health, and emergency medical care in case of accidents or sudden illness inside factory premises.

The ILO, in its conventions and recommendations, has laid down standards, which have had a contributory effect on legislation in India.¹¹ The factories act (1948) contains statutory provision for the maintenance of first aid kit for all factories and ambulance room obligatory for those employing 500 or more workers. Further, statutory medical facilities were provided under the Employees State Insurance Act, (1948). This Act extends the following benefits to industrial workers (i) maternity benefits (ii) disablement benefits (iii) dependents benefits (iv) sickness benefits and (v) medical benefits.

Medical care and cash benefits are provided to workers for such reasons as sickness, maternity and disablement and death or injury due to employment. The families of workers are also covered to some extent under this Act.

5. Occupational Health Services

These are essentially preventive schemes very common in the industrially advanced western countries and are gaining in importance and recognition in large sized undertakings in India. One of the main functions of these health services is to protect workers against the health hazards arising out of the nature of their work or the work environment. The service includes carrying out of periodical medical checks of certain categories of workers to detect early signs of ill-health and prevent the outbreak of serious health complaints. Section 87 of the Factories Act refers to dangerous occupations and states that the state government is empowered to make rules in respect of

any or all classes of factories in which any operation exposes persons to serious risks of bodily, injury, poisoning or disease.

6. Family Planning

Tremendous growth in population has increased the strength of the labour force and created a number of economic problems, including the problem of unemployment and industrial unrest. A great deal of attention has, therefore, been paid to family planning programmes for industrial workers. The ILO Resolution of 1947 has included family planning as an integral part of labour welfare. The importance of this programme at international level was brought out by the international labour conference at its Geneva session in 1966.

7. Creche

The Factories Act lays down that in any factory with more than 50 women workers; a creche should be provided and maintained for children less than six years in a clean and sanitary condition. The Act states that the creche should be under the care of women trained in child care and should have adequate accommodation, lighting and ventilation. The state government is empowered to make rules in respect of standards, equipment and facilities.

8. Housing

Housing is an integral part of worker's welfare. Recommendation of the ILO states that housing should be a matter of national policy. Both the Industrial Commission (1918) and the Royal Commission (1913) realized the importance and necessity of improving housing conditions of industrial workers and made recommendations for the purpose.

9. Transport Facilities

Transport facilities to and from the place of work are given to workers as one of the desirable welfare amenities. This facility is gaining in popularity because of growing urbanization, location of industries, transport loads and traffic congestion. The main purpose of this amenity is to enable workers reach their place of work without undue delay or fatigue.

10. Recreational & Cultural Facilities

Recreation is a leisure time activity which is a healthy diversion and a spare-time occupation. It refreshes an individual mentally, lessens the

monotony and drudgery of his every day work, and develops his personality on a wholesome basis

11. Educational Facilities

Education facilities form another important welfare programme for industrial workers. Education would improve the quality of the labour force, for it would provide opportunities for a proper training for the acquisition of skills and techniques which are essential for workers in an industry and which will enable them to adjust themselves to their particular way of life, and to enable them to acquire broader values of life, personally, industrially and socially.

The need and importance of such educational facilities in India have been accepted and emphasized by various commissions and committees, such as Indian Industrial Commission (1958) the Royal Commission on Labour (1931), The National Commission on Labour (1966), The Malaviya Committee on Labour Welfare (1969) etc. Yet, there is no statutory obligation with regard to education for worker's children in any industry except in plantations.

12. Co-operative and Saving Facilities

In the context of spiraling prices and the rising cost of living, the importance of fair price shops and supply schemes cannot be overemphasized. Though these supply schemes and shops can be operated by the employer himself, it is the co-operative method which has been found to be desirable and has been recommended again and again by various committees and conventions. The co-operative credit societies also help the worker to save for unforeseen domestic crises.

13. Personnel Counseling

By means of this service workers are able to receive advice and counsel on some of the personnel and sometimes also on personal problems inside and outside their place of work. A trained social worker is usually appointed for this purpose. Counseling helps a workers to overcome his anxiety and troubles.

14. Distress Relief and Cash Benefits

There are many non-statutory welfare amenities available to industrial workers, depending on the importance the employer attaches to these benefits. One is an ex-gratis payment called Distress Relief and cash benefits

paid in case of death, injury, sickness, marriage or as a felicitation grant. It is a gift made by the employer to his workers. The C.L.W. has recommended that workers and employers should work out a mutually acceptable formula for such benefits and that State Labour Welfare Board should earmark a portion of their fund to help small-scale units.

Recent Trends: While most employers offer a variety of benefits to employees, employees very rarely have any choice in the benefits they receive. Employee benefits are generally selected for employees by management. One study found that union representatives did not have a good idea of the benefits desired by their constituents"¹⁴. Another study found that when given the

Opportunity, 80 percent of the respondents were in favour of changes in their benefits packages.

In the light of the above findings the recent "cafeteria style" approach to benefit represents a major step in the evolution of employee benefits based on age, sex, number of children, family status, life style and preferences. Under this system, each employee is allowed to select an individual combination of benefits within some overall limits. There are two important advantages to a cafeteria style approach. First, it allows employees to have the benefits they need and desire most, second, by their active involvement in benefits selection, employees become more aware of the benefits they have and of their cost. But at times and in appropriate benefit package may be chosen by employees.

A labour welfare service is an important personnel function in a business. The earlier view of considering labour as nothing more than a factor of production had changed over the years and now welfare for the employees holds a place of importance in the minds of every employer.

Conclusions:

The effective utilization of other factors of production depends on the efficiency of human factor. The worker spends more than a quarter of his life in his working place. Therefore the worker has every right to demand that the condition under which he works should be reasonable and provides proper safeguards for life and health. The amount of dedication, quality of

work, commitment to the organization, morale etc. are all determined by the type and amount of welfare a worker receives.

In conclusion we may say that Safety and Welfare is the main concern for the employees in textile industry. Its focus is on employee safety and it can provide for higher morale and productivity in the workplace. This is due to the perception that the industry truly cares about the health and well-being of its employees, thus creating a sense of pride for the industry. Increased productivity as it correlates to safety and morale is a difficult metric to measure, but forward-thinking organizations realize that it does exist and can therefore justify the costs of their safety programs as compared to the productivity benefits that they provide. In contrast to measuring productivity as it relates to safety, the indirect costs of employee injuries are much more measurable.

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