Quality of Work Life among the Faculty Members of Higher Education Institutions in India

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https://doi.org/10.24191/ajue.v20i3.27867

Received: I February 2024
Accepted: 18 October 2024
Date Published Online: 28 October 2024
Published: 28 October 2024

Abstract: This study adopted an exploratory study design to reveal the quality of work life (QoWL) of the faculty members working at Indian higher education institutions (HEIs), aiming at their gender and various academic specialties in which those are serving. A self-structured QoWL questionnaire was utilised for data collection from the study population, and 547 faculty members responded to the questionnaire used. Based on the findings, 73% of the faculty members at Indian HEIs expressed satisfaction with their QoWL. Faculty members' perceptions of the five QoWL dimensions with regard to their gender and academic specialisations varied significantly ($p<0.05$). Though, some essential items required the attention of the policymakers of Indian HEIs with the appropriate strategies reinforcing the QoWL, thereby enhancing the faculty members' satisfaction. Such strategies would retain the highly skilled workforce and decline the turnover rate of faculty members in the Indian higher education sector.

Keywords: Faculty members, Higher education institutions, India, Quality of Work Life

1. Introduction

Higher education (HE) is vital to the success and all-round expansion of a nation, particularly social and economic progress to address the needs and encounters of the public and industry (Saqib & Toheedmal, 2023). There is an increase in higher education institutions (HEIs) around the world to accommodate the increase in student enrolments. Globally, India has seen strong progress in the number of HEIs in recent years. This condition creates competition among universities, placing pressure on faculty to serve as service providers rather than academics (Al-Zoubi et al., 2024; Patra, 2022; Shome & Gupta, 2020). The Indian higher education system is one of the largest in the world and comprises 51,649 universities. India (35.7 million) is next to China (41.8 million) in terms of student enrolment in higher education. Massive growth has been witnessed in the Indian higher education sector as the number of colleges and enrolments have almost quadrupled since 2001. This increase was mainly achieved by private institutions (Ravi et al., 2019). The effectiveness of the education industry depends on its employees (Chatterjee, 2018). Several factors affect the progress of faculty members in HEIs that characterise the competence and effectiveness of higher education as they are considered as one of the vital resources. One of the significant factors affecting the faculty member's contribution in teaching is their "Quality of Work Life (QoWL)" (Aarthy & Nandhini, 2016; Subbarayalu & Al Kuwaiti, 2019).

QoWL is associated with the psychological, mental, physical and spiritual desires of the employee. It can be active in the growth and use of human resources through the satisfaction of the employee's psychological desires for involvement, self-esteem, acknowledgement, etc (Patra, 2022). In the HE setting, QoWL has been associated with employee organisational commitment and loyalty, job satisfaction, career advancement, retention, competence, career development, and work performance (Abebe & Assemie, 2023; Rubel et al., 2023). Moreover, QoWL is crucial to retaining and attracting well-qualified employees, and employees are eager to work in the facilities when a better quality of life exists (Daniel, 2019). It is positively associated with augmented employees' organisational commitment, which significantly enhances organisational performance and better accomplishes organisational and individual goals (Abebe & Assemie, 2023).

Workers who like their jobs may have a high QoWL, while those who are depressed or whose desires are not met may have a low QoWL. Therefore, it is crucial in HEIs to restore the relevance of faculty members using human species methods in the face of a supportive QoWL environment. The overwhelming development opportunities of any HEIs largely depend on the quality of faculty members in terms of quality and performance (Malarkodi et al., 2017).

1.1 Conceptual framework of faculty quality of work life

The theoretical dimensions of QoWL were originally projected by Walton (1975) and include eight main dimensions such as "healthy and harmless environment," "adequate and fair compensation," "expansion of human competence," "development and security," and "constitutionalism.", "Social relevance". "Social integration" and "entire life space". Later, Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2013) proposed nine dimensions for assessing the QoWL of staff in non-governmental technical organizations. These embrace "working conditions", "training and development", "organizational culture and climate", "workers relationships and co-operation", "amenities", "job autonomy", "job satisfaction and job security", "sufficiency of resources", and "compensation and rewards. Specifically, the QoWL dimensions such as "adequacy of resources", "work environment", "organizational culture", "relation and cooperation", "facilities", "training and development", "job satisfaction and job security", "compensation and rewards", and "autonomy of work" showed a positive correlation with the QoWL perceived by the teaching staff (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2013). Previous studies found that the faculty members working in private engineering colleges did not to show the gender difference in their overall QoWL, and the opportunities for growth and security strongly influenced their perceived overall QoWL (Pani, 2015; Rao et al., 2013). Another study by Senthilkumar et al. (2015) revealed the eight factors contributing to the QoWL of engineering faculty, which include "leadership," "teaching and learning process," "opportunity for learning," "compensation," "feedback on achievement," "professional relations," "work-life balance," and "staff support facilities." Other factors besides employee support services explained the QoWL of those faculty members. A recent study by Singh and Maini (2019) observed that factors such as "work environment," "management policies," "impartial pay

and rewards," "work/social security," "grievance handling," "work design and life space," and "training and development opportunities" were associated with the QoWL among the faculty members of the technical institutes of Punjab, India.

The authors made further attempts to explore the research conducted on assessing the QoWL of employees in the higher education sector across the globe to ascertain the factors included in those studies (Akram & Akir, 2020; Atoom et al., 2024; Subbarayalu & Al Kuwaiti, 2018; Subbarayalu & Al Kuwaiti, 2019). Likewise, several studies have discussed the QoWL of faculty members of various HEIs in India (Aarthy & Nandhini, 2016; Malarkodi et al., 2017; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2013; Pani, 2015; Rao et al., 2013; Selvan et al., 2018; Senthilkumar et al., 2015; Singh & Maini, 2019; Solomon, 2015). Some studies observed a low to a high level of QoWL among the faculty members working in various Indian HEIs (Aarthy & Nandhini, 2016; Rao et al., 2013).

After a thorough exploration of the published studies and considering the world health organisation's comprehensive healthy framework/model (Burton, 2010) as well as the QoWL model suggested by Subbarayalu and Al Kuwaiti (2018), the authors have adopted the conceptual framework of the QoWL of faculty members, belonging to academic clusters such as medical and allied healthcare, management science, arts and education, engineering and information technology (IT), and science disciplines (Figure-1). Previous studies have investigated the QoWL for faculty in specific academic fields. However, there has been no comparative analysis of the QoWL for faculty members across different disciplines, specifically in the Indian context. Hence, this study aims to demonstrate the QoWL of the faculty members of HEIs in India. The five major constructs studied include "working conditions and environments", "psychosocial factors at the workplace", "opportunities for training and development programs", "compensation and rewards", and "job satisfaction and job security". Precisely, the authors conducted this study with the following objectives to: (i) examine faculty perceptions of various constructs of QoWL prevalent in HEIs in India, and (ii) assess the overall QoWL of faculty concerning their gender and the academic specialty where they belong.

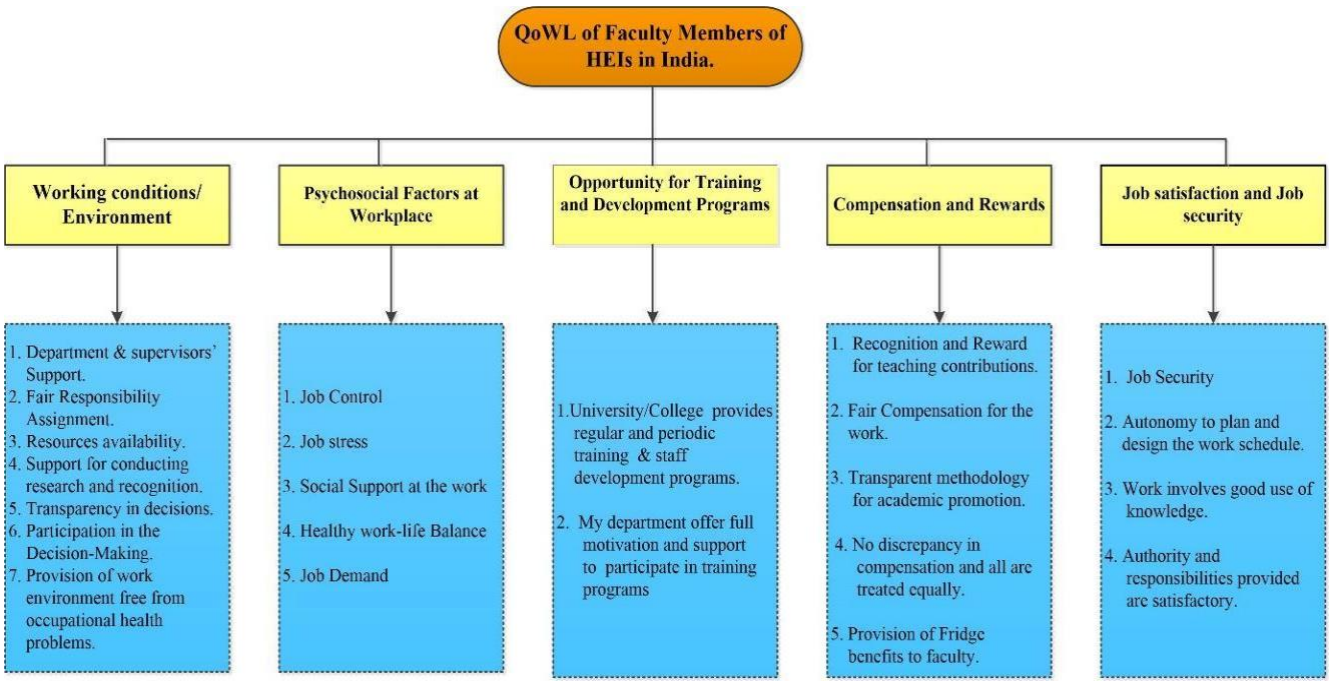

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Fig.1 Conceptual framework of QoWL of faculty members of HEIs in India.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study design and sampling

An exploratory design was applied to uncover diverse perspectives and hidden perceptions of faculty about the QoWL since existing QoWL theories or frameworks do not adequately explain the perspectives of faculty across diverse academic disciplines, especially in the Indian context. The whole population of the faculty members working at HEIs of India was considered as the population of this study. The faculty members belonging to all the five academic specialties (i.e., Medical and Allied Healthcare, Management Sciences, Arts and Education, Engineering and Technical (IT), Science discipline) were covered. Due to the difficulty in determining the exact number of faculty members employed in India, the required sample size has been estimated using a formula for an infinite population. This formula considers the Z score for a 95% confidence level which is equal to 1.96, the percentage of the population assumed to be 55% or 0.55, and the confidence interval or margin of error of 0.05 or 5%. The formula used is $Z^2 \times p \times (1\text{-}p)/C^2$. It is determined that a minimum sample size of 380 is required with a 95% confidence interval and 5% margin of error to conclude the problem being investigated. A stratified random sampling approach was adopted to recruit samples from each of the five academic disciplines. Utmost efforts have been taken to cover 150 faculty members from each academic discipline. Ethical considerations were followed, and anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed before gathering participant data. As such, the QoWL survey link was created using the questionpro application and sent randomly to 750 faculty members, 547 completed questionnaires were received, resulting in a 72.93% response rate. After completing the informed consent form, all the participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was set as open for a pre-specified time duration. All the participants were provided with frequent reminders to respond to the survey.

2.2 Questionnaire

The QoWL questionnaire used in this study was adapted from a previous study by Al Kuwaiti and Subbarayalu (2019) with prior permission for use. It consists of 32 items. Out of those items, the initial section was framed to get the demographic data of the faculty members (8 items). The following 23 items were considered to reveal five dimensions, i.e. (i) “working conditions (7 items)”; (ii) “psychosocial factors in the workplace (5 items)”; (iii) “opportunities for training and development (2 items)”; (iv) “compensation and rewards (5 items)” and, (v) “job satisfaction and job security (4 items)”. The global item (24^{th} item) focused on revealing the faculty members' overall satisfaction towards their QoWL at Indian HEIs. The responses on the items of this questionnaire were documented through the five-point Likert-scale [“(1) strongly disagree”, “(2) disagree”, “(3) neutral”, “(4) agree”, and “(5) strongly agree”].

Even though the tool adopted in this study is a valid one, since the population of the current research is different, the authors verified its reliability and validity using the data collected among Indian academics where the internal consistency of the QoWL questionnaire was found with the overall alpha coefficient value of 0.877, indicating the instrument is good (Chen et al., 2021; Grgic et al., 2021; Ursavas & Bayrak, 2021). On examining the instrument through factor analysis with the varimax rotation, the total variance described the sum of squared loadings as 75 percent.

2.3 Data Analysis

Faculty members’ perceptions of the QoWL dimensions were investigated through a mean value and the cumulative percentage of those selected for both “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” on the five-point Likert scale. The significant difference among the faculty members’ perception of QoWL at Indian HEIs concerning their gender and specialty was revealed using One-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Further analysis was performed through the univariate ANOVA to determine the significant difference among the faculty members concerning the five dimensions of QoWL at Indian HEIs. All statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS 29.0 with the level of significance at 0.05.

3. Results

3.1 Demographic profile

Among the study participants, 54.3% were male and 45.7% were female. Of the 547 faculty members, 30% (n=162) had a doctoral degree, 61% (n=334) had a postgraduate degree, and 9% (n=51) had a bachelor's degree. Table 1 describes the distribution of faculty members in terms of their academic area of expertise. The distribution of faculty members in terms of their job titles such as professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and lecturers are 10%, 14%, 69%, and 7%, respectively. In addition, Table 2 shows the responses to each of the five dimensions of QoWL using the mean and cumulative percentage of faculty members who selected either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" on several items in the questionnaire.

Table 1. Distribution of the faculty members concerning their academic specialty

S. No	Academic specialty	Number of faculty members responded n (%)
1	Medical and Allied health care	104 (19)
2	Management Science	145 (26.5)
3	Arts and Education	125 (22.8)
4	Engineering and IT	96 (17.6)
5	Science discipline	77 (14.1)

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of faculty members who chosen for either "Agree" or "Strongly agree" on several items

Dimensions and their items	Mean ± Standard Deviation	Agreement score (%)
Working condition/environment (3.77 ± 0.69)		
Support rendered by department head/superior for my ideas and methods for completing tasks	4.05 ± 1.05	77%
The assignment of responsibilities is fair and in line with my ability	4.03 ± 0.88	83%
Our university/college provides me with the resources I need (equipment, materials, information, etc.) to do my job effectively.	3.73 ± 1.01	70%
Provision of support for conducting research is adequate, and my research skills are duly acknowledged and compensated.	3.54 ± 1.06	59%
There is transparency about how decisions are made at department/college/university levels.	3.53 ± 1.04	61%
I was given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process at my department level.	3.88 ± 0.93	71%
Our university/college provided an excellent working environment, so I am not exposed to any work-related health problems during my work.	3.67 ± 0.98	67%
Psychosocial factors at workplace (3.77 ± 0.48)		
I am able to express opinions and influence changes in my own work area.	3.73 ± 0.96	67%
Due to time constraints on assigned tasks, I am under pressure to work very fast.	3.65 ± 0.99	62%
My colleagues are always willing to listen to my problems at work, and I always get support and assistance from them.	4.00 ± 0.94	71%
I am able to attain a healthy work and home life balance.	3.73 ± 0.96	69%

My job requires a high level of concentration to keep track of many things while working.	3.86 ± 0.91	75%
Opportunity for training and development programs (3.90 ± 0.82)		
Our university/college conducts regular and periodic training programs according to the needs of employees.	3.57 ± 0.01	59%
Our department head supports me fully and motivates me to take part in the training.	3.85 ± 1.01	74%
Compensation and rewards (3.47 ± 0.70)		
Whether your teaching contributions are recognized and rewarded.	3.56 ± 1.07	58%
I am fairly compensated for the work I do as a faculty/teacher at the university/college	3.45 ± 1.05	56%
My university/college uses a fair and transparent methodology for academic promotions.	3.75 ± 0.86	72%
There is no discrepancy in compensation and at my university/college all employees are treated equally.	3.26 ± 1.18	47%
I value the fringe benefits that my university/college offers, which include free housing, medical care, and transportation.	3.35 ± 1.23	56%
Job satisfaction and job security (3.72 ± 0.69)		
I feel secure in my job and would like to remain with this organization for the foreseeable future.	3.42 ± 1.08	70%
I have complete autonomy in planning and designing my work schedule.	3.73 ± 0.93	71%
I believe that the work I am given makes good use of knowledge and skills.	3.95 ± 0.84	77%
As faculty or teaching staff at my university or college, I am satisfied with the authority and responsibilities that have been granted to me.	3.64 ± 1.06	66%
Overall satisfaction		
In general, I am completely satisfied with the quality of working life as a faculty/teacher at my university/college	3.83 ± 0.88	73%

3.2 Working conditions/environment

The mean score of participants' responses to working conditions/environments is 3.77. About 83% of faculty members reported that the distribution of responsibilities was fair and commensurate with their abilities. Similarly, 70% felt their university or college had the resources they needed to do their work effectively. However, 59% of respondents felt they had adequate support for conducting research and that their research skills were appropriately recognized and rewarded. Only 61% felt transparency about how decisions were made in their department, college or university.

3.3 Psychosocial factors at the workplace

The mean score of the responses of the faculty members on the psychosocial factors in the workplace is observed to be 3.77. 75% of faculty members agreed that their work requires high concentration to keep track of multiple aspects while working. 71% stated that those were always getting help and support from their co-workers. Their co-workers were continually eager to attend to their job-related issues. Nevertheless, 62% of faculty members felt stressed to work very fast because of the time pressure for the given tasks. Only 69% were able to attain a healthy work-life balance.

3.4 Opportunity for Training and Development Programs

The mean score of the participants' responses over the opportunities for training and development programs is observed as 3.90. Among participants, 59% of faculty members felt that their university or college conducted regular training programs that met their needs. However, 74% agreed

that their department head offered them the full support and motivated them to participate in the training programs.

3.5 Compensation and Rewards

The mean score of the participants' responses towards the compensation and rewards is observed as 3.47. 72% of faculty members believed that their university or college had a fair and clear methodology for academic promotions. About 58% said that their teaching achievements were recognized and rewarded. 56% perceived that those were fairly compensated for their job at the university or college. However, 47% agreed that there was no discrepancy in compensation and all faculty members are considered equally at their institutions. Only 56% felt that the university or college offered them good fringe benefits.

3.6 Job Satisfaction and Job Security

The mean score of the participants' responses concerning job satisfaction and job security is observed as 3.72. Approximately 77% of faculty members felt that their job was a good use of their knowledge and skills. On the other hand, 71% agreed that they had complete autonomy in planning and designing their work schedules. Notably, only 70% felt secure in their job and interested in continuing with their organisation for the predictable future.

Regarding the overall satisfaction, the mean score of the participants' responses was 3.83. 73% of faculty members were completely satisfied with the QoWL in their universities or colleges.

Table 3 describes faculty members' perceptions of QoWL with respect to their gender and academic discipline in Indian HEIs using MANOVA. The results showed a significant gender difference in the faculty members' perception of QoWL in their HEIs ($p<0.05$). It is also inferred that the faculty members showed a significant difference among them regarding their different academic specialty that they worked ($p<0.05$). Further analysis was performed to discover whether the faculty members' perception toward each of the five QoWL dimensions varied according to their academic specialty using ANOVA (Table 4). From Table 4, it can be seen that there was a significant difference in faculty members' perceptions of all QoWL dimensions regarding academic discipline ($p < 0.05$). As for multiple comparisons, a Tukey HSD post hoc test was performed, with significant factors detected using ANOVA.

Table 3. MANOVA of faculty members' perception on QoWL concerning the gender and academic specialty

Demographic Variables		Working Condition/ Environment	Psychosocial Factors at workplace	Opportunity for Training and Development Programs	Compensation and Rewards	Job Satisfaction and Job Security	p-value
Gender	Male	3.81 ± 0.72	3.80 ± 0.53	3.72 ± 0.82	3.48 ± 0.72	3.74 ± 0.71	0.000*
	Female	3.73 ± 0.64	3.73 ± 0.42	3.69 ± 0.82	3.46 ± 0.67	3.67 ± 0.68	
Academic specialty	Medical and Allied Healthcare	3.79 ± 0.67	3.81 ± 0.57	3.95 ± 0.68	3.53 ± 0.75	3.70 ± 0.70	0.000*
	Engineering and Technical (IT)	3.68 ± 0.61	3.84 ± 0.40	3.55 ± 0.78	3.45 ± 0.73	3.77 ± 0.60	
	Management sciences	3.89 ± 0.71	3.71 ± 0.49	3.64 ± 0.77	3.43 ± 0.69	3.62 ± 0.73	
	Science Discipline	3.77 ± 0.74	3.71 ± 0.41	3.70 ± 0.86	3.49 ± 0.64	3.74 ± 0.75	
	Arts and Education	3.77 ± 0.70	3.80 ± 0.49	3.76 ± 0.90	3.48 ± 0.66	3.74 ± 0.69	

*Significant at 0.05 level

Table 4. ANOVA of faculty members' perception on the five QoWL dimensions concerning their gender and academic specialty

Source of Variance	Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	p-value
Academic Specialty	Working Condition/ Environment	9.005	3.501	0.001*
	Psychosocial Factors at workplace	8.484	3.371	0.006*
	Opportunity for Training and Development program	8.017	2.004	0.018*
	Compensation and Rewards	9.656	4.164	0.000*
	Job Satisfaction and Job Security	9.549	4.387	0.000*

*Significant at 0.05 level

While reviewing the mean score of male and female faculty members regarding the working conditions/environment (Male=3.81, Female=3.73), psychosocial factors at workplace (Male=3.80, Female=3.73), opportunity for training and development program (Male=3.72, Female=3.69), and compensation and rewards (Male=3.48, Female=3.46), and job satisfaction and job security (Male=3.74, Female=3.67), offered in their respective universities or colleges in the Indian context. Male faculty members showed a higher mean score for all QoWL dimensions except the opportunity for training and development programme than female counterparts (Table 3).

On appraising the faculty members' responses on working conditions/environment by academic specialty, a significant mean difference was observed between the following academic specialties such as medical and allied healthcare and management science, management science and arts and education; management science and engineering and Technical IT, management science and science discipline. It is inferred that the faculty members belonging to management science were highly satisfied than those in the other academic specialties. Regarding the psychosocial factors, engineering and technical IT exhibited a significant mean difference with medical and allied healthcare, arts and education, science discipline, and management science. The faculty members of engineering and technical IT are more satisfied than those belonging to the medical and allied healthcare, arts and education, science discipline, and management science.

Next, the faculty members of the medical and allied healthcare presented a significant mean difference with those in management science, engineering and technical IT, science discipline, and arts and education. The faculty members of medical and allied healthcare are more satisfied than those belonging to management science, engineering and technical IT, science discipline and arts and education.

Further analysing the faculty members' responses on compensation and rewards, a significant mean difference was found between the medical and allied healthcare and the remaining academic specialties. The faculty members of medical and allied healthcare reported a high level of satisfaction over the compensation and rewards compared to those in other academic specialties.

Concerning job satisfaction and job security, engineering and technical IT showed a significant mean difference with the academic specialties such as medical and allied healthcare, science discipline, management science; and arts and education. The engineering and Technical IT faculty members are highly satisfied than the faculties in medical and allied healthcare, science, management and arts and education disciplines.

Regarding the faculty members' overall satisfaction, the independent 't' test detected a significant gender difference in the faculty members' overall satisfaction. Overall, male faculty members (mean=3.86) were highly satisfied than female faculty members (mean=3.79) concerning their overall satisfaction towards QoWL offered at Indian HEIs ($p<0.05$). Also, the overall satisfaction of the faculty members' working at different academic specialties was observed as 3.83 (Medical and Allied Healthcare), 3.92 (Engineering and Technical-IT), 3.77 (Management Science), 3.82 (Science discipline), and 3.77 (Arts and Education), respectively. There was a significant difference in the faculty

members' overall satisfaction concerning their academic specialty ($p<0.05$). Besides, the engineering and Technical IT faculty members showed a significant mean difference with those belonging to the remaining academic specialties. Overall, the faculty members belonging to engineering and Technical IT are highly satisfied than those in the medical and allied healthcare, management science, arts and education, and science disciplines.

4. Discussion

This study revealed the QoWL of the faculty members of Indian HEIs using a questionnaire with five dimensions. The faculty members recorded their responses towards QoWL dimensions and reported their overall satisfaction towards QoWL prevailing in Indian HEIs. Further, the authors revealed whether the QoWL constructs differ concerning gender and the five academic disciplines where the faculty belong.

Firstly, it is observed that male faculty members of Indian HEIs are more satisfied than their counterparts concerning all QoWL dimensions except the opportunity for training and development programs. In line with this finding, Akram and Amir (2020) found that male faculty members experienced better QoWL in their university than female faculty members. Contrarily, a study by Bhavani and Jegadeeshwaran (2014) observed that the level of perceived QoWL among female faculty members mainly relies on their satisfaction with the working environment, including but not limited to working conditions, the existence of teamwork, recognition for work well done, value for opinion, feedback on work performance, level of support offered by fellow faculty, provision of requirements for the job and overall college management in Indian HEIs.

Concerning the first QoWL construct-working condition/environment, a significant difference was observed in faculty members' perception ($p<0.05$). The faculty members working in management science (mean=3.89) were more satisfied than those working in other academic specialties of Indian HEIs. However, Bose and Banerjee (2020) recently observed that the faculty members of private autonomous business colleges in the Indian context perceived their working environment with a mean of 2.7. In India, the working environment in private business schools has become increasingly strenuous as the faculty's role has diversified (Bhuin, 2017). Contrarily, Malarkodi et al. (2017) in India observed that 51% of the faculty members in private engineering colleges perceived that their working conditions were good, and 49% felt average about their working conditions. Most faculty members were satisfied with the working environment offered by an Indian medical college (Abbas et al., 2017). A previous study stated that faculty members of the arts and science colleges of Chennai, India, sensed that the physical working conditions required to be altered, and the government should extend their provision to evolving self-financing colleges (Solomon, 2015).

The next QoWL construct discussed is psychosocial factors at the workplace that include job control, job demand, social provision, and work-life balance. A significant difference was observed in the perception of the faculty members of various academic specialties regarding psychosocial factors. Engineering and technical IT faculty members are more satisfied than those in medical and allied healthcare, arts and education, science discipline, and management science colleges. However, 61% of engineering college faculty members in Allahabad, India, described work-life imbalance and a lack of work-life balance among faculty members as influencing their personal and professional lives (Yadav & Badugu, 2017). A recent study stated that engineering college faculty members perceived job stress from family commitments, high workload, job insecurity, work difficulty and poor salary (Brindha & Muthukumaran, 2024). The institutions should develop employee-friendly policies, allowing faculty members to attain work-life balance effectively. In addition, the medical and health science faculty members in an Indian institution were satisfied and happy with the interpersonal relationships and teamwork within the organisation (Abbas et al., 2017).

The third QoWL construct discussed is the opportunities offered to faculty members for training and development programs. In this regard, the faculty members belonging to the medical and allied healthcare specialty (mean=3.95) are more satisfied than those of the management science, engineering and technical IT, science and arts and education disciplines. In accord with this observation, Abbas et al. (2017) observed that the faculty members working in a medical college in India rated the opportunity for personal growth, development, and creativity with a mean score of 3.22. Such finding might be due to the need for participating in the training and professional development programs among the medical

and allied health faculty members to improve their knowledge and practical skills to protect human lives and it is mandated for continuing professional practice. Contrary to this, Shigli et al. (2012) stated that the faculty members of Indian dental colleges reported neutral responses towards in-service training opportunities and insisted that the college administration should direct them to attend a certain number of workshops, seminars, and hands-on courses on teaching, and such training update them on the newer and more effective teaching methodologies available. The observed difference might be because the study by Shigli et al. (2012) covered only one specific dental department, i.e., prosthodontic faculty members, whereas our findings pertained to the entire medical and allied healthcare specialty faculty members. But earlier studies reported that opportunity for growth was perceived with a mean score above 3.0 by the faculty members belonging to the engineering and arts and science colleges in the Indian context (Pani, 2015; Rajaa & Babu, 2019).

The fourth and subsequent QoWL construct is the compensation and rewards offered to faculty. Specifically, the faculty members of medical and allied healthcare in our study (mean=3.53) exhibited higher satisfaction with the compensation and rewards than those in other academic specialties. In line with this finding, Abbas et al. (2017) observed that most faculty members from an Indian medical college were satisfied with the pay and allowances; however, some were dissatisfied with their organisation's promotion policy. On the other hand, female faculty members at arts and science institutions in Tamil Nadu, India, expressed satisfaction with their salaries (Sumathi & Velmurugan, 2018). Nevertheless, Ganapathi (2017) stated that self-financing arts and science institutions showed partiality in promotion, increment, and workload. Also, those colleges delayed salaries, affecting faculty members' QoWL. Thiagarajan and Jeevitha (2021) stated that remuneration and recognition influence the QoWL of faculty members in the self-financing arts and science colleges in the Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu, India. Besides, Ariffin et al. (2020) stated that higher education administrators should implement a novel system to support them in allocating acceptable teaching workloads to all faculty members.

The final QoWL construct discussed is job satisfaction and job security perceived by the faculty members. Precisely, the engineering and Technical IT faculty members are highly satisfied with their jobs and perceive more job security than those in the medical and allied healthcare, science, management, and arts and education disciplines. In line with this outcome, a previous study also observed that the faculty members of engineering colleges in Namakkal district, Tamilnadu, India, were content with their jobs and felt secure (Yoganandan & Sowndarya, 2015). However, another study stated that most faculty members of engineering domains were more worried about job security in private institutions (Velmurugan et al., 2018). Ironically, a majority of faculty members at an Indian medical college expressed satisfaction with their jobs (Abbas et al., 2017). A study by Rajaa and Babu (2019) revealed that the arts and science colleges of a selected district in an Indian state perceived their job security with a mean score of 3.45. Job satisfaction and security levels can vary among faculty members across different academic disciplines. These differences can be attributed to workload variances, different teaching norms, funding disparities, disciplinary cultures, varying research opportunities and career prospects between different academic programs (Sucuoğlu & Karnley, 2022). It's important to note that these multifaceted factors contribute to the nuanced perceptions of satisfaction and security among faculty members across academic disciplines.

Considering the overall satisfaction of faculty members with the QoWL existing in their respective colleges, male faculty members were more satisfied than their counterparts with QoWL offered at Indian HEIs. In conformance with our observation, a recent study also found a significant gender difference in the QoWL among university faculties, where Male faculty exhibit a higher QoWL than female (Akram & Amir, 2020). In contrast, Rao et al. (2013) concluded that there was no significant gender difference in the QoWL of university faculties in India. The observed difference in gender between our findings and the one conducted by Roa et al. (2013) is due to the difference in coverage of the dimensions of QoWL, selective groups of teaching staff from sciences, professional, and social sciences disciplines, and a limited sample size where only 78 participants were covered by the earlier study. Regarding the academic discipline-specific comparison, our findings reveal that engineering and Technical IT faculty members reported a higher overall satisfaction level than those in the medical and allied healthcare, management science, arts and education, and science disciplines. In line with this outcome, previous studies conducted in India also reported that engineering college faculty members are satisfied with their jobs and exhibited moderate levels of QoWL (Yoganandan &

Sowndarya, 2015; Aarthy & Nandhini, 2016). Nevertheless, Bose and Banerjee (2020) revealed that the faculty members of Indian private autonomous business schools perceived QoWL as more or less favourable. Sruthimol (2019) observed that 70% of college faculty members in government and private-aided arts and science colleges in the Kottayam district of Kerala, India, reported a moderate level of QoWL.

Besides, other prominent areas are also partly agreed upon by the faculty members. Firstly, the support provided by the institutions to conduct research and recognize and reward faculty research skills where only 59% of the participating faculty agreed on it. A supportive research environment is essential, achieved by establishing research groups to aid faculty research activities (Coppola et al, 2020). However, many institutions only provide modest support, which hampers faculty research productivity (Ajotikar et al., 2023). Second, our study reveals 59% of the participating faculty agreed that regular and periodic training programs are provided as per the requirements. Training programs not only benefit individual faculty members but also enhance institutional research capacity and improve the research environment collectively (Dhumal et al., 2020). In this study, 58% of faculty members felt recognized and rewarded for their teaching contributions. Many expressed concerns about compensation, with 56% feeling fairly compensated and 47% noticing no difference where all faculty members were treated equally. Adequate compensation is vital for the well-being of Indian faculty members, as inadequate compensation can lead to high attrition rates, and faculty members may seek better-paying opportunities elsewhere (Dileep Kumar, 2012). Financial compensation, both direct (salaries, bonuses) and indirect (benefits, allowances), is a significant determinant of job satisfaction (Katabalo & Mwita, 2024). Notably, 56% of participants in this study perceived that their institution offered valuable fringe benefits, including free housing, medical assistance, and transportation. Therefore, the policymakers of Indian HEIs should emphasise on the above-mentioned prominent areas and the QoWL dimensions with the appropriate strategies developed through root cause analysis. Such an effort would enhance faculty members' opinion of QoWL, leading to improved contributions to higher education and organisational growth.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that 73% of the faculty members were satisfied with their QoWL at Indian HEIs. Regarding gender, a significant difference was found among faculty members concerning the working conditions/environment, psychosocial factors at the workplace, the opportunity for training and development programs, compensation and rewards, and job satisfaction and job security. It is implied that gender differences have implications on the QoWL among faculty members in India where male faculty members were generally more satisfied with their QoWL compared to their female counterparts. This underscores the need for gender equality in the workplace, a fundamental aspect of faculty well-being and institutional development. HEIs should develop and implement appropriate strategies to address these issues and improve the QoWL of female faculty members. It is crucial to note that this study found that faculty members in the medical and allied healthcare fields were more satisfied than others with regard to the opportunities for participating in the training and development programs and compensation and rewards available in their institutions. This highlights the importance of improving training opportunities for faculty members in academic disciplines, such as management science, engineering and technical IT, science, arts, and education. Moreover, HEIs must establish and implement a fair compensation policy that considers the faculty workload and addresses remuneration and compensation issues to improve faculty satisfaction and enhance their quality of life.

Similarly, the engineering and technical IT faculty were more satisfied than others with psychosocial factors in the workplace, job satisfaction, and job security. Management science faculty members stated a higher level of satisfaction towards their working conditions/environment than their counterparts. Appropriate measures need to be taken to improve faculty working conditions in various academic clusters, including medical and allied healthcare, engineering and technical IT, science, arts, and education disciplines. The findings of this study will offer valuable insights to policymakers at Indian HEIs. By considering the factors that impact the QoWL, HEIs can develop effective strategies to address those shortcomings and enhance job satisfaction, leading to better QoWL. These efforts can contribute to retaining highly skilled faculty members and reducing high turnover rates at HEIs.

6. Limitations and Recommendations

This study is restricted to revealing the QoWL of the faculty members of HEIs in India. It uncovered the difference in the faculty members' opinions towards QoWL concerning their gender and various academic specialties. However, the faculty members' responses concerning the type of institution (i.e., government and private) have yet to be studied. Hence, further studies are warranted to reveal the opinion of the faculty members towards QoWL, which is available at public and private HEIs in India. Future studies can also uncover those factors influencing faculty members' overall satisfaction with QoWL at India HEIs.

7. Co-Author Contribution

Abirami Arunachalam, Dr. Balamourougane Ramalingam, Dr. Deepa Samiappan, Dr. Sivakumar Chinnusamy and Dr. Gokila Shanmugavelu collected the data. Dr. Arun Vijay Subbarayalu was involved in conceptualising this study and reviewing the original draft. Dr. Sivasankar Prabaharan, Mr. Balamurugan Ganesan and Ms. Nithya Jayaseeli prepared the original draft of the manuscript. Dr. Palanivel Rubavathi Marimuthu and Mr. Prabu Neethidoss analysed the data. Dr. Arun Vijay Subbarayalu, Dr. Sivasankar Prabaharan and Dr. R. M. Palanivel revised the manuscript. Dr. Arun Vijay Subbarayalu is responsible for completing and approving the final version of the manuscript.

8. Acknowledgement

The authors thanked all participants for their valuable feedback and contributions to this study. Additionally, the authors extended special thanks to the ethics committee of Ashwin Hospital and PPG Educational Institutions for granting ethical approval to conduct this study (Approval number AH-ECA-17-2020).

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