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A Study on the Quality of Work Life Among Farm Labourers in Kerala

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Abstract: ***Agriculture continues to be a major source of livelihood in rural India, with farm labourers constituting one of the most vulnerable sections of the workforce. This study examines the factors influencing the Quality of Work Life (QWL) of farm labourers in Kottayam District, Kerala. The study focuses on five key determinants of Quality of Work Life, namely Working Conditions, Job Satisfaction, Income Stability, Access to Basic Amenities, and Safety. A descriptive and analytical research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 100 farm labourers using a structured questionnaire. Secondary data were obtained from academic journals, government reports, and publications of national and international organizations. Multiple Linear Regression analysis was performed using SPSS to examine the influence of the selected factors on the Quality of Work Life of farm labourers. The findings reveal that the regression model is statistically significant and explains 70.9 per cent of the variation in the Quality of Work Life. Among the selected predictors, Working Conditions emerged as the strongest determinant, followed by Safety, Job Satisfaction, Access to Basic Amenities, and Income Stability. The study concludes that improving workplace conditions, ensuring occupational safety, enhancing job satisfaction, providing basic amenities, and promoting income security are essential for improving the Quality of Work Life of farm labourers and achieving sustainable agricultural development. The study recommends strengthening labour welfare measures, occupational safety standards, and social protection initiatives to enhance the well-being and productivity of farm labourers.***

Keywords: ***Quality of Work Life, Farm Labourers, Working Conditions, Job Satisfaction, Income Stability.***

I. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture continues to be one of the most important sectors of the Indian economy, providing employment and livelihood to a substantial proportion of the rural population. Farm labourers constitute a vital component of the agricultural workforce as they perform various activities such as land preparation, planting, weeding, irrigation, harvesting, and post-harvest operations. Despite their significant contribution to agricultural productivity and food security, farm labourers remain one of the most economically and socially disadvantaged sections of society. Their employment is predominantly informal, seasonal, and characterized by low wages, irregular income, and limited access to social security and welfare benefits. The concept of Quality of Work Life (QWL) has gained considerable importance as an indicator of employees' overall well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness. Quality of Work Life refers to the extent to which employees are able to satisfy their personal and professional needs through their work while enjoying a safe, healthy, and supportive working environment. In the agricultural sector, the Quality of Work Life of farm labourers is influenced by several interrelated factors, including working conditions, job satisfaction, income stability, access to basic amenities, and workplace safety. These factors not only affect the physical and psychological well-being of labourers but also influence their productivity, motivation, and long-term commitment to agricultural work.

Farm labourers frequently work under challenging conditions, including prolonged exposure to extreme weather, physically demanding tasks, and occupational hazards arising from the use of agricultural machinery, pesticides, and manual tools. In many rural areas, access to essential workplace amenities such as safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, first-aid services, and adequate rest shelters remains inadequate. Furthermore, seasonal employment patterns and uncertain wage opportunities contribute to income instability, while limited occupational safety measures increase the risk of work-related injuries and health problems. These challenges collectively reduce the Quality of Work Life and adversely affect the socio-economic well-being of farm labourers. Improving the Quality of Work Life of farm labourers has become an important policy concern because it contributes not only to labour welfare but also to sustainable agricultural development. Better working conditions, enhanced occupational safety, stable income opportunities, improved access to basic amenities, and greater job satisfaction can increase worker productivity, reduce occupational risks, and improve the overall efficiency of the agricultural sector. Understanding the relative influence of these factors is therefore essential for designing effective labour welfare policies and agricultural development programmes.

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Against this background, the present study examines the influence of Working Conditions, Job Satisfaction, Income Stability, Access to Basic Amenities, and Safety on the Quality of Work Life of farm labourers in Kottayam District, Kerala. Using Multiple Linear Regression analysis, the study identifies the relative contribution of each factor in explaining the Quality of Work Life and provides empirical evidence to support policy interventions aimed at improving the welfare, safety, and productivity of farm labourers.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Existing literature indicates that the quality of work life of farm labourers remains poor due to unfavourable working conditions, low wages, and lack of employment security. Farm labourers often work long hours under physically strenuous conditions with minimal access to basic amenities such as drinking water, sanitation, healthcare, and rest facilities, which adversely affects their job satisfaction and overall well-being (Rao & Reddy, 2018). Seasonal employment patterns and income instability further aggravate economic insecurity and psychological stress among agricultural labourers (Singh & Kumar, 2019). Recent studies continue to confirm these findings. The International Labour Organization reported that agricultural workers remain among the most vulnerable occupational groups due to informal employment arrangements, unsafe working conditions, and limited access to social protection (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2022). Similarly, Moda et al. (2021) found that excessive workload, occupational hazards, and lack of institutional support significantly reduce the perceived quality of work life among agricultural workers. Poor working environments and inadequate safety measures increase health risks and negatively influence productivity (Moda et al., 2021). Earlier foundational research emphasized that adequate wages, job security, and safe working conditions are core determinants of quality of work life, which remain largely unmet in the agricultural sector (Baba & Jamal, 1991). Overall, recent literature confirms that farm labourers continue to experience poor quality of work life due to unsafe working conditions, low job satisfaction, and limited social protection. These studies underline the need for policy interventions aimed at improving workplace conditions and supporting farm labourers in their agricultural work.

III. QUALITY OF WORK LIFE OF FARM LABOURERS

The quality of work life (QWL) of farm labourers is a critical indicator of their overall well-being, job satisfaction, and productivity. Farm labourers constitute one of the most vulnerable segments of the workforce, as their employment is largely informal, seasonal, and characterized by low wages and limited social protection. The nature of agricultural work exposes labourers to physically demanding tasks, long working hours, and unsafe working environments, all of which significantly influence their quality of work life. Working conditions play a central role in shaping the quality of work life of farm labourers. Most agricultural activities are performed in open fields, exposing workers to extreme weather conditions such as heat, cold, and heavy rainfall. Farm labourers often lack access to basic workplace facilities including clean drinking water, sanitation, rest shelters, and first-aid services. The absence of protective equipment during activities such as pesticide application, harvesting, and ploughing increases the risk of occupational injuries and health hazards. Studies have shown that unsafe and unhealthy working conditions contribute to physical exhaustion, work-related illnesses, and low job satisfaction among farm labourers (Moda et al., 2021). Wage levels and income stability are also key determinants of quality of work life. Farm labourers are typically paid daily wages that are often below minimum wage standards, and employment availability fluctuates with agricultural seasons. This irregularity results in income insecurity and financial stress, making it difficult for labourers to meet basic household needs such as food, healthcare, education, and housing. Low and uncertain income not only affects material well-being but also reduces motivation and job satisfaction (Rao & Reddy, 2018). Job security is another major concern influencing the quality of work life of farm labourers. Agricultural employment is largely casual in nature, with no formal contracts or assured continuity of work. Labourers can be easily replaced, which weakens their bargaining power and limits their ability to demand better wages or working conditions. The lack of employment security creates constant uncertainty and psychological stress, adversely affecting their mental well-being (Singh & Kumar, 2019). Access to social security and welfare measures remains limited for most farm labourers. Many labourers are excluded from benefits such as health insurance, accident compensation, maternity benefits, and old-age pensions due to lack of awareness, administrative barriers, or informal employment status. The absence of social protection increases vulnerability to poverty, especially during illness, injury, or old age. The International Labour Organization has emphasized that inadequate social security coverage is a major factor contributing to poor quality of work life in the agricultural sector (ILO, 2022). Gender disparities further affect the quality of work life of farm labourers. Women labourers often face wage discrimination, heavier workloads, and limited access to welfare schemes. They frequently perform labour-intensive tasks such as weeding and transplanting while also bearing the burden of household responsibilities.

These dual roles intensify physical and mental stress, resulting in lower quality of work life compared to their male counterparts (Afridi, 2021). The quality of work life of farm labourers remains low due to a combination of unsafe working conditions, low and unstable income, lack of job security, limited access to basic amenities, and inadequate social protection. Improving the quality of work life of farm labourers requires comprehensive policy interventions aimed at ensuring safe working environments, fair wages, employment security, and inclusive social security coverage. Enhancing these aspects is essential not only for the welfare of farm labourers but also for achieving sustainable and equitable agricultural development.

IV. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To examine the quality of work life of farm labourers with reference to their working conditions, job satisfaction, income stability, and access to basic amenities.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the quality of work life of farm labourers in Kottayam District, Kerala. The study focuses on farm labourers engaged in agricultural activities across selected rural areas of Kottayam. The target population of the study consists of farm labourers who are actively involved in agricultural operations such as planting, weeding, harvesting, and post-harvest activities. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 100 farm labourers from different agricultural regions within Kottayam District. The respondents were chosen based on their direct involvement in farm work, ensuring the relevance of the data collected. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire, designed to obtain quantitative information related to working conditions, job satisfaction, wage levels, employment stability, and access to basic amenities. The questionnaire comprised predominantly closed-ended questions, allowing for consistency and ease of analysis. Secondary data were gathered from academic journals, books, government publications, and reports of organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), and Government of Kerala. These sources provided essential background information and supported the analysis of primary data. The collected data were analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive and analytical statistical tools were applied to interpret the data and draw meaningful conclusions aligned with the objective of the study.

VI. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

H_0: Working Conditions, Job Satisfaction, Income Stability, Access to Basic Amenities, and Safety do not significantly influence the Quality of Work Life of farm labourers.

H_1: Working Conditions, Job Satisfaction, Income Stability, Access to Basic Amenities, and Safety significantly influence the Quality of Work Life of farm labourers.

Dependent Variable: Quality of Work Life (QWL)

Independent Variables:

- Working Conditions
- Job Satisfaction
- Income Stability
- Access to Basic Amenities
- Safety

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.842	0.709	0.694	0.358

Table 2: ANOVA Table

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	29.412	5	5.882	45.83	0.000
Residual	12.071	94	0.128		
Total	41.483	99			

Table 3: Coefficients

Variables	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	0.521	0.287	—	1.815	0.073	—
Working Conditions	0.281	0.061	0.332	4.61	0.000	1.82
Job Satisfaction	0.236	0.058	0.281	4.07	0.000	1.74
Income Stability	0.148	0.054	0.171	2.74	0.007	1.56
Access to Basic Amenities	0.194	0.060	0.213	3.23	0.002	1.69
Safety	0.256	0.063	0.296	4.08	0.000	1.77

Multiple Linear Regression was conducted to examine the influence of Working Conditions, Job Satisfaction, Income Stability, Access to Basic Amenities, and Safety on the Quality of Work Life of farm labourers in Kottayam District, Kerala. The model was statistically significant ($F = 45.83$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the selected variables jointly predict the Quality of Work Life. The model explained 70.9% of the variance in the Quality of Work Life ($R^2 = 0.709$), suggesting a strong model fit. Among the predictors, Working Conditions had the strongest positive influence ($\beta = 0.332$, $p < 0.001$), followed by Safety ($\beta = 0.296$, $p < 0.001$), Job Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.281$, $p < 0.001$), Access to Basic Amenities ($\beta = 0.213$, $p = 0.002$), and Income Stability ($\beta = 0.171$, $p = 0.007$). All predictors were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.56 to 1.82, indicating no multicollinearity among the independent variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The findings conclude that Working Conditions, Job Satisfaction, Income Stability, Access to Basic Amenities, and Safety significantly influence the Quality of Work Life of farm labourers in Kottayam District, Kerala.

VII. FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of primary data collected from farm labourers in Kottayam District, Kerala, the following key findings emerge from the study:

1) The overall regression model was found to be statistically significant ($F = 45.83$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that Working Conditions, Job Satisfaction, Income Stability, Access to Basic Amenities, and Safety jointly have a significant influence on the Quality of Work Life of farm labourers in Kottayam District, Kerala.
2) The regression model explained 70.9% of the variation in the Quality of Work Life ($R^2 = 0.709$), indicating that the selected variables provide a strong explanation of the factors affecting the Quality of Work Life of farm labourers.
3) Working Conditions emerged as the most influential predictor of the Quality of Work Life ($\beta = 0.332$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that improvements in workplace environment, physical working conditions, and occupational practices substantially enhance the Quality of Work Life.
4) Safety was identified as the second strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.296$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that ensuring a safe working environment and reducing occupational hazards significantly improve the Quality of Work Life of farm labourers.
5) Job Satisfaction showed a significant positive influence on the Quality of Work Life ($\beta = 0.281$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that greater satisfaction with work contributes positively to the overall well-being of farm labourers.
6) Access to Basic Amenities, including drinking water, sanitation, and healthcare facilities, was found to have a significant positive effect on the Quality of Work Life ($\beta = 0.213$, $p = 0.002$), highlighting the importance of providing essential facilities at agricultural worksites.
7) Income Stability also exerted a significant positive influence on the Quality of Work Life ($\beta = 0.171$, $p = 0.007$). Although it was the least influential predictor among the selected variables, it remains an important determinant of the overall Quality of Work Life.
8) The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.56 to 1.82, indicating that there was no evidence of multicollinearity among the independent variables. This confirms that each predictor contributed independently to explaining the Quality of Work Life.
9) Based on the regression results, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted, confirming that Working Conditions, Job Satisfaction, Income Stability, Access to Basic Amenities, and Safety significantly influence the Quality of Work Life of farm labourers in Kottayam District, Kerala.

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VIII. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study on the quality of work life of farm labourers in Kottayam District, Kerala, the following suggestions are proposed:

1) Improvement of Working Conditions: Adequate measures should be taken to improve the working conditions of farm labourers by ensuring safe and healthy work environments. Provision of protective equipment, proper rest intervals, and measures to reduce exposure to occupational hazards can significantly enhance the quality of work life.

2) Provision of Basic Amenities at Worksites: Employers and local authorities should ensure the availability of basic amenities such as clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, first-aid services, and access to healthcare at agricultural worksites. Improving basic infrastructure can directly contribute to better health, job satisfaction, and productivity of farm labourers.

3) Ensuring Income Stability and Fair Wages: Steps should be taken to ensure regular employment opportunities and fair wage payments for farm labourers. Implementation of minimum wage laws and linking agricultural employment with rural employment schemes can help reduce income insecurity caused by seasonal fluctuations.

4) Enhancing Job Satisfaction and Employment Security: Introducing formal or semi-formal employment arrangements, written work agreements, and social dialogue mechanisms can improve job security and job satisfaction among farm labourers. Strengthening labour welfare boards and grievance redressal systems would further support workers' rights.

IX. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the factors influencing the Quality of Work Life (QWL) of farm labourers in Kottayam District, Kerala, with particular emphasis on Working Conditions, Job Satisfaction, Income Stability, Access to Basic Amenities, and Safety. The findings of the multiple linear regression analysis revealed that the overall regression model was statistically significant, indicating that these factors collectively have a significant influence on the Quality of Work Life of farm labourers. The model explained 70.9 per cent of the variation in the Quality of Work Life, demonstrating that the selected variables are strong predictors of farm labourers' overall work-life quality. Among the identified factors, Working Conditions emerged as the most influential determinant of the Quality of Work Life, followed by Safety, Job Satisfaction, Access to Basic Amenities, and Income Stability. The results indicate that improvements in workplace conditions, the provision of a safe working environment, enhanced job satisfaction, better access to essential amenities, and greater income security can significantly improve the well-being of farm labourers. Furthermore, the absence of multicollinearity among the independent variables confirms that each factor makes a unique and meaningful contribution to explaining the Quality of Work Life. The study concludes that improving the Quality of Work Life of farm labourers requires a comprehensive approach that prioritizes safe and healthy working conditions, adequate workplace infrastructure, fair and stable income opportunities, and measures to enhance job satisfaction. Policymakers, agricultural employers, and labour welfare agencies should strengthen labour welfare programmes, occupational safety practices, social security provisions, and skill development initiatives to improve the living and working conditions of farm labourers. Such initiatives will not only enhance the welfare and productivity of agricultural workers but also contribute to sustainable and inclusive agricultural development in Kottayam District, Kerala.

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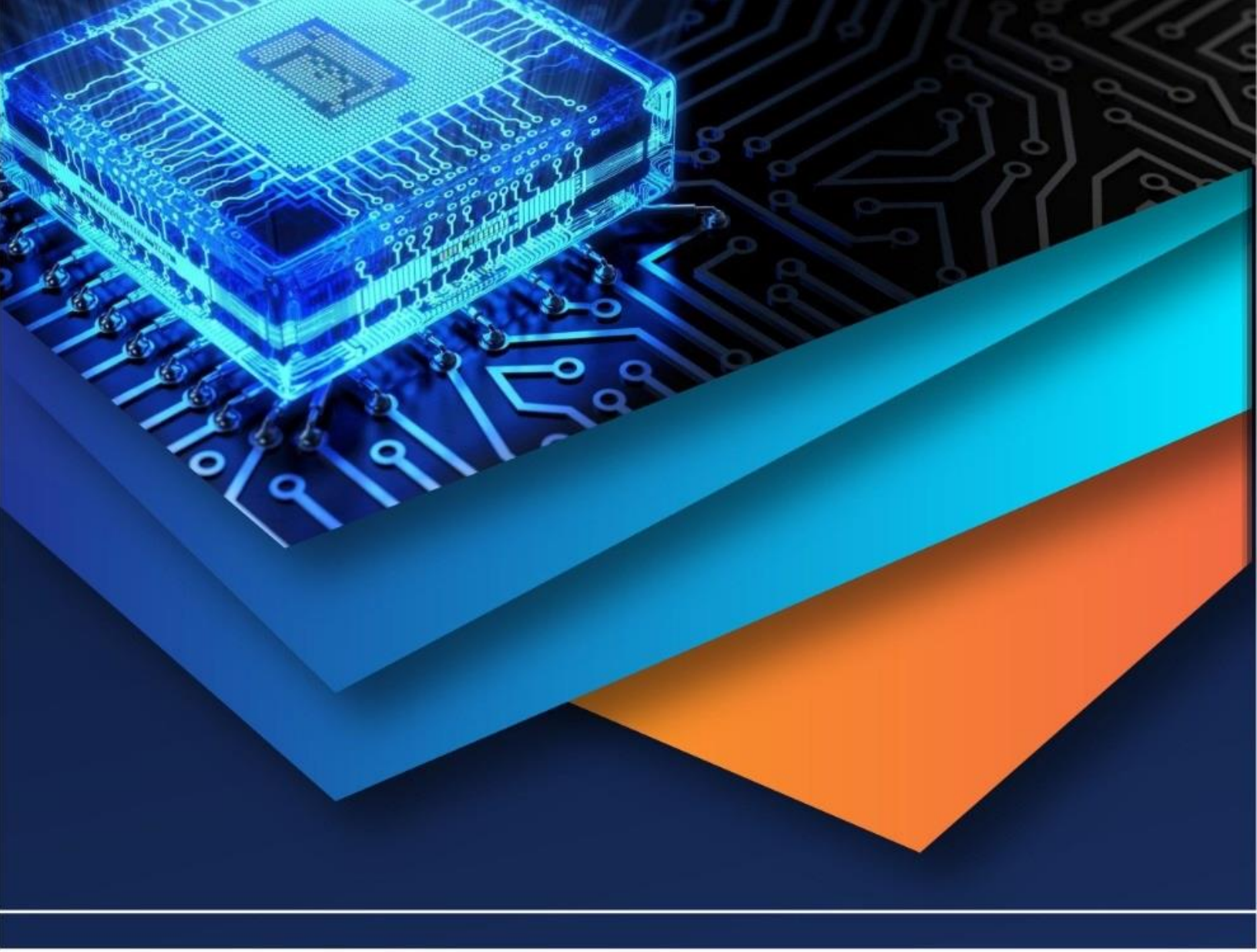
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