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Non Monetary Employee Welfare Activities (Strategic Move towards Changing Dynamics of Organisation)

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Abstract

Primarily monetary benefits provided by an organisation are based on company performance, growth, legal environment, industry trend, taxation policy, economic viability and lastly employee's performance. Company's monetary policy may have certain limitation but non monetary employee benefit can be adjusted as per employee's call. So this paper aims to provide an insight into Employee Welfare Activities (EWA) that are related to non monetary benefit and can be applicable to all employees. It is based on the idea of fairness, equity, morale, trust, social responsibility, and moral responsibility of employer towards its employee. It tends to cover latest activities based on the changing dynamic of organisational environment all over the world. To reach a particular conclusion an interdisciplinary approach was adopted which include law and management domain. It also presents an overview of non monetary activities that can be initiated by HR department of every organisation in India. A framework is proposed to furnish better understanding of Non Monetary Employee Welfare Activities (NMEWA). Three categories are suggested after exploring and learning economic and legal viability of these activities. Basic notions of EWAs are found to be independent of any kind of performance related pay and objective is to raise working condition of employees irrespective of industry.

Keywords: EAPs, Employee Benefit, Employee Welfare Activities, Monetary Employee benefit, Non Monetary Employee welfare activities.

1. Introduction

Employee welfare since the inception of industrialisation has been a great matter of concerns among various social workers, philanthropists and other religious leaders, mostly on humanitarian grounds. It was believed that labours are only entitled to get cost of the work done in industry. Other aspects of work like working condition health issue, safety, security were not part of their employment contract. It led to exploitation of employees at workplace. But to lead a better life wages received by employees were not adequate to meet his daily expenses as well as to improve his condition. It becomes a notion in industry throughout the world like "work can pay money and work done extra beyond stipulated time pay overtime". They attempted to work beyond their capacity which was not feasible for any human being. This later on resulted in taking extra workload, doing extra hour to satisfy their basic need. It started exploitation of employees at each and every industry.

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All these practices forced the government to take care well being of employees and enactment of laws mandatory to be followed by each industry. Industries are not only for making profit but also must do something for the society, environment and people in return. In the absence of any law none of the organisation seems to be interested in taking care of employee welfare. Enactment of laws for employee welfare was need of the hour and to provide social security in various aspect of life. Otherwise it would have become impossible for any employee to survive on the salary earned by them as a part of their employment contract. Initially, employee welfare finds its place in policies related to social security .It is moral duty of the employer to provide for the betterment of the employees.

Enactment of law pays concern to the employees working at lower level. There is no specific provision in law which makes it mandatory to provide any particular facilities only to employees above lower level. Variations in compensation package were already provided by employers at different level as per the employee's competence for the job. This varying compensation and designation was the only thing which created difference in employee's category. It is but obvious that when with the help of laws any welfare was being provided to lower level employees; it would be extended to those who are working at different grades.

Law provided minimum level of facility which must be given to employees while working in the premises of employers. Otherwise it seem to be completely mechanised thought process that employees are getting only the amount of work done and if they want to earn extra they are bound to do work beyond their capacity. Wages paid to the employees were not adequate to meet the rising price of commodity as well as inflation.

Research Question

1. Why in India Human Resource Department should make a strategic move towards Non Monetary Employee Welfare Activities in current scenario?
2. What are the activities HR managers can propose in organisation maintaining the economic and legal viability of such initiative?

2. Literature Review

Rational behind Employee Welfare Activities in Indian Context

HR department in every organisation make sure that employees are getting adequate reward; incentive and performance pay for the work done in company. But in addition to that every state, country and statue assumes that organisations have some social obligation for the welfare of the employees and their dependent. (Varkkey,Gary Dessler & Biju, 2011).So it is the duty of the employer to provide some social benefit to all employees where they may feel secure and motivated. A good employee welfare program assists in developing a motivational atmosphere that will encourage employee retention in organisation. (Venkata Ratnam,C,S & Chandra V, 2009).

Another event in the history of India has been Bhopal gas tragedy. It conflagrate this situation and took the plunged immediately to define the objective of Employee Welfare Activities in a specified way. Also industrialisation and liberalisation have forced government as well as employers to pay focus on employee well being and security at work place. The following provisions of State Policy refer to the State's duty to provide for the employee welfare at workplace: Article 38 or Article 39 or Article 41 or Article 43 or Article 47 of Indian Constitution. Employee Welfare measures also aimed to enhanced the comfort levels of employees, hence increasing productivity (Edward Broughton, May 2005).

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It is true to understand that all employees cannot be star performer in any company. It means few employees who are getting something for their performance are entitled to feel motivated and satisfied. This very notion may vitiate the very purpose of employee-employer relationship. These welfare and benefit are not directly related to product or service output but it is expected it will improve productivity of all employees.

In India industrialisation and liberalisation have forced government as well as employers to pay focus on employee well being and security at work place Employee Welfare Activities can also be said to be outcome of social security reforms in India whose main objective was to provide employee's security against any social and economic uncertainty and unstable situation to employees at workplace. It helped in developing a sense of belongingness towards organisation as well as feeling of working in safe environment. Keeping in mind the objective of various conventions, agreement and policies it can be said that main objective of employee welfare policy is to provide some kind of security to employees and good working condition in organisation. Earlier objective of welfare policy and laws was to provide social and economic security to employees. It means these measures aimed to overall development of employees rather than only focusing on wage related issues. It is realised that employees need something else for their survival in this society specially those who are not in a position to manage their family with the amount of wages earned by them.

It necessarily has an impact on employee behaviour at workplace. When government is taking care of employee welfare at workplace then it will definitely start effecting employee's behaviour at workplace. It is said to be first move by some external agency which indirectly effected employee's behaviour at workplace also.

Social and Legal Mandate for Organisations in Today's Scenario

Employee welfare is considered as social welfare aspect of welfare state. It is referred as employee benefit when it is discussed under the compensation section Payment above wages as employers decide to allocate to employees is due to legal and social mandate upon them to do so. However when benefit terms is considered under employee welfare it covers those aspects which are related to statutory and discretionary societal side. It may or may not be monetary or non monetary .Monetary aspect of it is part of salary packaging. Also total compensation generally is said to sum of monetary and non monetary benefit (Branko Ilic, 2006) While dealing with the concept of employee welfare focus is basically to understand those measures which are actually contributing in employees need. Benefit components which are made part of salary or compensation package are paid to employees monthly or quarterly or yearly depending upon the company's policy. But there are certain situations of employee's life cycle where he/she actually feel deprived of resources and spending long hour in office. It attributes to lack of time to manage such requirements or unable to pay attention towards it.

World Health Organisation has opined that working conditions have powerful effects on health equity. Bad working condition is so much associated with health to the extent that it may lead to unemployment and poverty (WHO, 2013).International Labor Organisation asserted that healthy workers, decent and improved working conditions increase the efficiency of the workforce. Lack of working condition has led employees into poverty. It can be understood from the fact that in case of inappropriate working condition employees may suffer from harm or industrial hazard .Occupational stress finds its place as a primary goal of workplace health promotion in ILO prospects (ILO).Safety and health have positive impact on productivity, economic and social development. Prevention strategies are mandatory to boost up health standard at work and good business performance for new ventures (Government of India). Also the successive five year plan of the Union government was designed to pursue these goals.

Employee benefits or perquisites are now integral part of salary packaging offered by employers these days. The economic viability of these employee welfare benefits given by Indian Organisations are basically determined by the statutory norms, area, specific practices and tax laws. It draws the attention that the employers have to provide employees welfare activities (EWA) as moral duty towards its employees either for free or at minimum cost. The EWA is proposed to scale up the comfort level of employees. Employee benefits in Indian firms are given as per law and others are offered by employers in their own discretion.

In addition to the legislated benefit many Indian firms provide additional benefits like soft loans to employees, housing, transporting, schooling etc. While law on benefit does not include managerial employees, firms have extended the benefit to managers too. The attractions of public sector and government employees even though salary levels are much below MNCs and private sectors are the benefits like residential township with facilities for recreation and entertainment, high quality schools where children of employers are guaranteed admissions, company run hospitals or contracts with the leading hospitals, etc. (Varkkey, Gary Dessler & Biju, 2011).

In the light of these developments, Organisation presumes it a social duty towards the betterment of the employees and family members. These advantages are indirectly linked to product or services but employers have started realizing that it will improve employee's efficiency. Good programs facilitate in maintaining motivational environment that will promote an individual to stay with an organisation for longer period of time. In late 1940s and 1970s; unions were unable to get increase in wages for their members. When marginal hike was done then it reached such a high level that pressure for advancements were denied in pay package. This has led to shift union's interest to bargain for more and expanded benefits (Richard I enderson, 2009).

It is a holistic term comprising of both wage and non wage components of total labour costs. Non wage components are given in the form of benefit in kind. Employee benefits are also known as fringe benefit, perquisites or perks. Both statutory and voluntary benefit increases the economic security of employees. In some organisation the term perks is used interchangeably with employee benefit. Often, companies use the term perks even for non discretionary or statutory benefits. As per industry practice, it can be categorised into housing, group insurance, income protection, retirement benefits, tuition fees, reimbursement, funding of children's education, contribution to different social security schemes club membership, international tours, different types of leaves, sabbatical leave. Most employee benefits are paid by employers, while in some such as in social security schemes, employees may also be required to contribute partly (Bhattacharya, 2012).

In India Whitley Commission in early 1930 first reported about working conditions of employees. Following which a program related working condition of employees have been drawn up in 1946. Industrialisation, Technological reforms, liberalisation has great impact on the social and economic security aspect of employees. Human life once injured, damaged or destroyed cannot be resorted to its original positions. Traditionally, social attitudes towards working conditions in India seem to be lax. Similar view has been expressed by labour Commission on Labour in 1969.

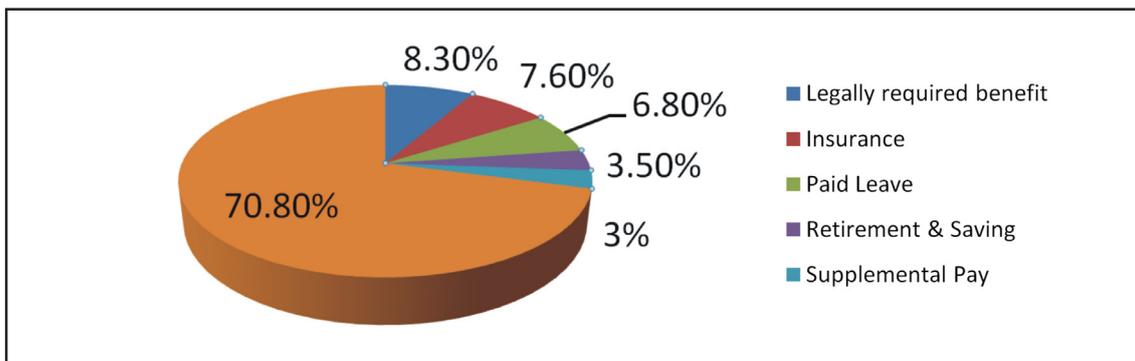
After independence lawmakers have introduced in constitution of India special articles to working conditions in the Directive principles of State Policy. This move was taken to improve the employee's situation in near future due to lack of employers apathy towards working class. Article 39(e), Article 39 (f) and Article 42 of Indian constitution are worth to be mentioned here. It emphasised on employee health safety and security.

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Increase in employee exploitation at workplace specially with reference to their working condition, had promoted International labour organisation to make provision for workers' occupational health safety and doing hazards jobs at workplace In agreement with the ILO convention no 155 of ILO different legislation have been passed to deal with physical aspects of working condition like FactoryAct1948 or Workmen's compensation Act1923 or The Employee's state insurance Act1948 etc.

Development in Recent Scenario

Earlier it was considered that to retain and attract employees it is necessary to make HR policies related to Employee benefit. Each practice is related to the objective of the benefit being provided to employees. Below is some key consideration/reason that accelerated the growth of employee welfare/benefit activities (C S Venkata Ratnam, George T Milkovich, Jerry M Newman, 2009) . Statutory requirements, security concern, vulnerability of industrial life, Tax norms, Utilisation of free time, Competition, Paternalistic and humanistic consideration. As per the data available from research in United State, Sharing percentage of benefit of wage and salaries can be summarised as below:



Source: www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ecec.pdf, accessed April 29, 2009

Figure 1: Private Sector Employer Benefit Cost by Category, March 2009

Organisations must design employee welfare /benefit package keeping in mind the current state of employees working Performa as well as external environment effecting employment contract. One method to classify them may be as pay for time not worked, insurance benefit, retirement benefit, services.

Indian firms generally divide the benefit/ welfare into two categories i.e. benefits required by central laws or state laws and Discretionary benefit provided by employer. In almost all private sector it can be categorised as intramural and extramural and statutory. (Chandra Sekhar Patro , 2012).Even in different industry and sector trend for classification of benefit/ welfare activities has been same. In retail sector also it has been divided into intramural and extramural (Mohan Reenu and Panwar J S, 2013) .In manufacturing industry also employee welfare has been detailed as both statutory and non statutory activities. (Dr. Usha Tiwari, 2014).In government sector also employee welfare measure has got no new categorisation. It is in a similar fashion as is done in all other industries. A study in Maharathna Company also took classification as in private sector that is statutory and non statutory welfare measures. (Deepak Kumar Agrawal, 2014).

3. HR Practices to Moderate Virtual Incidence Workplace (VIW)

Due to the industrialisation all across the World, it is understood that wage /salary for work may not be sufficient for employees to grow. Otherwise there would be no difference between human being and robots. Human beings have certain emotion, dual role to play in society and more over responsible to look after his family they work to fulfil this objective. Now in return it the moral duty of the employer as well as state to provide some facility and services to employees who are overloaded with lot of liability to carry on. Otherwise there would be complete breakdown of employee physical as well as mental condition. He will feel insecure and depressed.

Lot of things are changing around the world. To get an competitive edge over others and remain firm in the industry, it is necessary for every organisation irrespective of employee size to have policies in place for employee benefit also. HR department carry out various function to training & development, performance management, succession planning which are related to employees work. But on the other hand for all employees it could not be the sole motivation factor. Each employee is dealing with different situation. Due to technological advancement they work 24/7 in a week. Though as per statutory provisions working hour are defined but now it has reached beyond statutory limit. It could be termed as Virtual Incidence at workplace. It means though employees are not physically present at workplace after completing statutory working hour but he is available online via all electronic means. It is case where an employee cannot say it is his off time and he is not working. This is applicable at each level. Though there is provision for overtime but it is limited employees who are working at lower level. For employees working above lower level there is no provision for overtime in law as well as in company policy. Law has not put any restriction on making policy but now it is at the discretion of state and employer to think and do. This state of affair has led many countries to make laws for employee welfare and make it mandatory for employer to provide minimal level of facilities and services as necessary for their development. In the absence of such mandatory statutory provision it would be very difficult for any employee to run his/her family as well to do his job with full commitment. It will definitely shot up employee performance at workplace and overall organisational objective.

Various countries have passed out certain laws to deal with such state of affair. India enacted various laws in consistence with the provision of International Labour Organisation and other international organisation, treaty, agreement etc. This law provide minimum level of basic condition which must be there in any organisation for the betterment of employees. There is no provision provided in law which limit the benefit to a certain level. But to maintain the balance and regular check on employers there are certain provision in Tax Regime which made certain voluntary benefit taxable after a certain limit provided by the organisation exercising its discretionary power.

So Welfare Measures /benefit provided may be of two types Monetary and Non Monetary Employee Welfare Based on the available study it is identified that monetary benefit provided by organisation may not be sufficient for employees due to heavy cost involved in it. So focus has been shifted towards Non Monetary Employee Welfare Activities (NMEWA) It is the duty of the human resource department to take initiative for employee's welfare measure. Only HR can do and assist employees to feel motivated and engaged. HR role in benefit policy is very significant. It can act as a mediator in bridging the gap between employee's state of affair and organisational overall objective.

4. New Paradigm Shift in Non Monetary Employees Welfare Activities (NMEWA)

Non Monetary Benefit

Given the lack of critical attention paid to literature related to benefit suggested that it is devoid of complete attention from the psychological and management research domain. Various studies which are available in economic and human resource literature raise the issue of benefit administration and tax status. Work life balance activities are organisational initiative for the improvement of employee's life. It is independent of performance related pay. Income level of employees also plays a major role in demand for such activities. (Bart L Weathington, 2008). As it is based on the notion of social responsibility, morality, trust and legal requirement it covers those area which do not form part of performance of employees in any way. Like Non monetary activity play an important role in company's reward management program. Reward system refers to those policies, practices and processes that are based on employee's competencies, ability and achievement (Lipicnik , 1998). In recent years there have been growing interest amongst scholars to find what initiative could be started in organisation that are good for employee relations, emotional health, well being of employees and their families. It was suggested that an integrated approach of work life activity may bring the desired outcome. It is good for the company's bottom line increasing productivity and profitability. (Peter Berg, AmeL Kalleberg & Eileen Appelbaum, 2003) (Halpern Diane F, 2005).

Also central issue addressed here is that individual preferences are taken less seriously and their perceived value of benefit/activities. (Isles P Mabey C & Robertson I , 1990). A growing body of literature has analysed employee welfare activities that are non monetary in nature must focus on work life balance aspect in organisation. This again can be divided in two categories first which focuses completely on activities related to FAMILY and secondly connected to EMPLOYEES only. Recent developments in this area have confirmed passing of certain laws in various countries related to welfare of employees as well their family members. This interdisciplinary study also proved that it is basic duty of the state to take care employee safety security and health. Various approaches and programs have been initiated by different international organisation like ILO, WHO, United Nations.

Work life balance program are employer sponsored benefit or working condition which employees to meet his/her work and non- work related demands. (Cascio, 2000). It is a challenge for both employees and employer. For a employer it is required t to create a supportive company culture where such activities can took place in a effective way and employees can focus on their job. (Lockwood, N R, 2003)

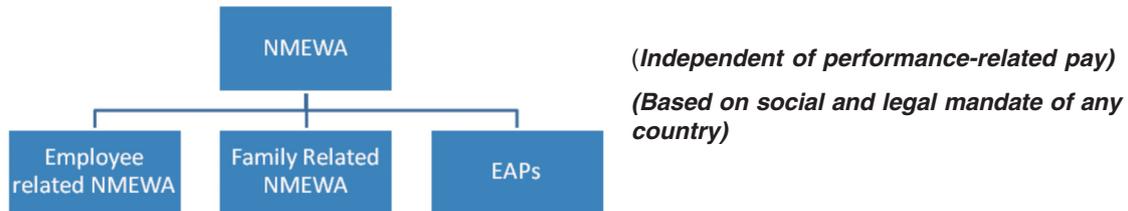
Most recent evidence came from the report of Harvard Business Review which proposed that 88% participant stated that they would give preference to flexible hour and work from home arrangements. It is also adjustable benefit for company without incurring heavy cost on organisation. It was also suggested that these benefit tend to save employer's funds by lowering extra financial burden related to overheads costs. 47 % woman employees preferred both these option which is 9% more compared to men' s preference. (Kerry Jones, Feb 2017), In addition to this survey report by SHRM also draws our attention that there is a increase of 30% in telecommuting benefit offered by employer compared to 1996 data. Also there is marginal increase in weight loss program. Over the past two years Telecommuting seems to increase threefold from 1996 to 2016. It unfolds the prospect for future activity which must focus on employee behavioural health program related to physical and mental health condition. (SHRM, June 2016). As others have highlighted those employees who use flexible work option and family leave policy result in 50% decline in absenteeism.

5. Employees Assistance Program (EAPs)

Employee Assistance Programs started in 1940 in western countries. It primarily aimed at occupational alcoholism and abuse on job performance. Later on with passage of time it included other personal issues that might have negatively impacted on employee well being. By the end of 1969, EAPs were taken seriously by various organisations. Employees are considered as an asset to the organisations. It assisted employers to proactively deal with employee concern related to violence, physical and mental health issue. EAP are mainly considered to provide assistance related to personal concerns, employee as well as organisational well being. Its services include problem identification/assessment, referral, short term counselling, and treatment coordination, follow up to employees affected by any distress situation in work. (Beverly Younger, 23 January 2015). Employee Assistance program primarily took into account personal problem experienced by employees or their family members. Such initiative has direct impact on employee's mental health and it is perceived as mandatory workplace requirement in organisation. It can be used as an integrated approach to any organisation for promotes welfare activities (Paul M Roman, Terry C Blum, 1988). EAPs are basically for troubled employees and it is job based program to assist employee in resolving their problems related to mental and emotional distress. Now a day's it is becoming popular in health care promotion activities for workers (F J Potter, G A Zarkin, M T French, N F Rodman, P Steele, T D Hartwell, 1996). EAPs are such kind of support services that facilitate not only employees but is also extended to their family members too. It encourage employee to maintain work life balance at his best while working in organisation. (Aparna Prabhu, Dr R Jayam, 2013). Now fortune 500 companies have propounded EAPs which offer health and productivity services. It helped not only employees but their dependent. (Mercer M., 2007, 2008). In one study it is proposed that due to the EAP services, in 60% cases work loss could be avoided with average saving of 17 hour per such instances. 72% of the respondent presented with EAP confirmed 43% improved work productivity gain. (Attridge M, 2001). In another research it is explained that when work /life services, legal and financial were added in EAPs then work loss could be avoided by 39% and productivity improved were 36% of cases. (Attridge M., June 2002). In India concept of EAPs are new and to some extent non existence. Employee's physical, emotional and mental health cannot be ignored at the cost of meeting organisational targets. There must be a balanced approach which aims to cater employees need while they are working. Otherwise employees working condition may impact their well being and performance at the workplace. Organisation outside India has started paying attention and framing suitable policies which makes EAP mandatory. Today's young workforce works in a highly Volatility, Uncertainty, and Complexity Ambiguity (UVCA) environment. So there is a need of EAP at workplace. (Chestnut Global Partner, 2016). Organisations outside India have considered that proactive and preventive measures are necessary to bring into workplace to resolve personal issues. Otherwise it may have serious consequences on mental health. The United State department of Labour's office has already started providing national leadership to develop and implement policies, practices and innovative strategies for EAP at workplace. (U. S. Department of Labor).. Another research to employers has recommended different approaches to integrate the EAPs provisions into the company's health and welfare policy. (US department of health and Human services, 2008). EAPs has shown tremendous improvement in saving cost which is assessed by indicator like reduced accident claims, medical benefits, mental health care costs and employee turnover Treatment, employees absenteeism (Blum T.C & Roman P M, 1995). Similar results were found in further studies which confirmed that EAPs may provide varying benefit to employees like higher employee productivity, reduced turnover, lower medical costs and absenteeism. (George E. Hargrave, 2008). Employee assistance program has positive relationship with productivity of employees which is termed as presenters and lowering absenteeism. (Mark Attridge, 2010)

6. Proposed Framework

Based on thorough interdisciplinary study of law and management below framework is drawn to guide HR department related to NMEWA. HR managers can initiate effort in this direction after identification of major activities required to meet the current requirement. Economic and legal viability must be checked before it is put up before the management. Literature already suggested that below 3 dimensions do not cost too much for any organisation.



Employee Related NMEWA may include Flexible work arrangement, Telecommuting, empowerment. Family related NMEWA may include Child care and elderly care practices. EAPs can be provided to both as per requirement.

7. Conclusion

Based on the latest development in the field of non monetary employee welfare activities (NMEWA) it is asserted that NMEWA must be studied under three categories by future researcher. First that focus on all practices related to Family and Second on Employees and EAPs they are getting popular in India; It is important NMEWA that seeks to provide better guidance who are struggling with any personal problem. Family oriented activities may be related to Child care, elderly care facility. Employee oriented Activities as confirmed by various studies include flexible work arrangement, telecommute, mental health and empowerment at workplace. Research question find its explanation in the light of above proposed framework. It can be developed into as model in future research when applied in different industries.

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