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A Comparative Study on the Quality of Work Life of Male and Female Nurses In Kerala Hospitals

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ABSTRACT

The quality of work life (QWL) plays a crucial role in determining employee satisfaction, performance, and retention, particularly in the healthcare sector where job stress and workload are high. This comparative study examines the Quality of Work Life of male and female nurses working in public and private hospitals across Kerala. The study aims to identify gender-based differences in key dimensions of QWL, including work environment, compensation, job security, work–life balance, professional growth opportunities, and organizational support. A structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of 200 nurses selected through stratified random sampling. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and independent sample t-tests to compare male and female respondents. The findings reveal that while both genders experience moderate to high levels of job satisfaction, female nurses reported greater challenges in maintaining work–life balance due to personal and societal responsibilities. Male nurses, on the other hand, expressed concerns about career advancement and recognition. The study highlights the need for gender-sensitive policies, flexible scheduling, and supportive work environments to enhance QWL among nurses. Improving these factors can lead to higher motivation, reduced turnover, and better patient care outcomes. The results provide valuable insights for hospital administrators and policymakers in human resource management.

KEYWORDS *: Quality of Work Life, Nurses, Gender Differences, Work–Life Balance, Kerala Hospitals.*

INTRODUCTION

The healthcare sector is one of the most essential pillars of any society, ensuring the physical and mental well-being of individuals. Among healthcare professionals, nurses play a pivotal role in delivering continuous and compassionate care to patients. In recent years, the concept of Quality of Work Life (QWL) has gained significant attention as a critical factor influencing job satisfaction, employee commitment, and overall performance in the healthcare industry. QWL refers to the degree to which employees are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experiences in the organization while achieving its goals. For nurses, maintaining a high quality of work life is particularly important, as their profession demands emotional

strength, physical endurance, and mental stability. In the context of Kerala, often known as the "healthcare hub of India," the nursing profession has witnessed substantial growth due to the state's emphasis on public health and its strong network of hospitals and medical institutions. However, despite Kerala's reputation for social development and gender equality, there remain notable differences in workplace experiences between male and female nurses. Traditionally, nursing has been perceived as a female-dominated profession, and male nurses often face challenges such as social stigma, role ambiguity, and limited career advancement opportunities. Conversely, female nurses frequently struggle with balancing professional responsibilities and domestic obligations, leading to stress and burnout. Quality of Work Life among nurses is influenced by multiple factors, including work environment, workload, compensation, interpersonal relationships, autonomy, organizational culture, and support from management. Nurses often experience long working hours, emotional exhaustion, and inadequate staffing, which can adversely affect their physical and mental health. For female nurses, issues such as maternity leave policies, safety concerns during night shifts, and family expectations further complicate their work experience. Male nurses, although fewer in number, may face barriers such as gender bias, limited mentorship, and underrepresentation in leadership roles.

Comparative studies on QWL between male and female nurses are crucial to understanding how gender influences perceptions of job satisfaction and well-being. Such insights can help hospital administrators and policymakers develop equitable strategies to enhance work conditions for all nursing staff. A supportive and gender-sensitive work environment not only improves nurses' quality of life but also contributes to higher patient satisfaction, reduced turnover rates, and improved healthcare delivery. This study, titled "A Comparative Study on the Quality of Work Life of Male and Female Nurses in Kerala Hospitals," aims to explore the similarities and differences in QWL across genders, focusing on both public and private healthcare institutions. By examining key dimensions such as work–life balance, job satisfaction, professional growth, and organizational support, the study seeks to identify the specific challenges faced by male and female nurses. The findings will provide valuable implications for healthcare administrators to design targeted interventions, promote inclusivity, and foster a more balanced and fulfilling work environment. Ultimately, enhancing the quality of work life among nurses is not just an organizational responsibility but a crucial step toward achieving sustainable healthcare excellence in Kerala.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts a descriptive and comparative research design to examine the differences in the Quality of Work Life (QWL) between male and female nurses working in hospitals across Kerala. The research aims to analyze various dimensions of QWL, including work environment, job satisfaction, compensation, work–life balance, and organizational support. A structured questionnaire was developed based on standardized QWL scales and distributed to a sample of 200 nurses (100 male and 100 female) selected through stratified random sampling from both public and private hospitals. Primary data were collected through self-administered surveys, while secondary data were obtained from journals, reports, and official records. Statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, and independent sample t-tests were employed to compare gender differences in QWL scores. The design ensures an objective and systematic analysis of gender-based variations, providing valuable insights for improving work conditions and promoting equality in healthcare institutions.

RESEARCH TYPE

The present study is a quantitative and descriptive research that aims to compare the Quality of Work Life (QWL) between male and female nurses in Kerala hospitals. It employs a comparative approach to identify gender-based differences in various QWL dimensions such as job satisfaction, work environment, and work–life balance. The study uses primary data collected through a structured questionnaire and supports the findings with relevant secondary data from published literature. Quantitative techniques, including statistical analysis, are used to measure and interpret the data objectively. This research type enables systematic evaluation and evidence-based conclusions about gender disparities in nursing work life.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the overall Quality of Work Life (QWL) among nurses working in hospitals across Kerala.
2. To compare the Quality of Work Life between male and female nurses in both public and private hospitals.
3. To identify the key factors influencing the QWL of nurses, such as work environment, job satisfaction, compensation, and work–life balance.
4. To examine the impact of organizational policies and management practices on the QWL of male and female nurses.
5. To suggest suitable measures and strategies to enhance the Quality of Work Life and promote gender equality in the nursing profession.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the current level of Quality of Work Life (QWL) among nurses working in Kerala hospitals?
2. Are there significant differences in the QWL between male and female nurses in Kerala?
3. Which factors most strongly influence the QWL of nurses in both public and private hospitals?
4. How do organizational support, job satisfaction, and work–life balance differ between male and female nurses?
5. What measures can be implemented by hospital administrators to improve the QWL and ensure gender equity among nursing professionals?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. H1: There is a significant difference in the overall Quality of Work Life (QWL) between male and female nurses in Kerala hospitals.
2. H2: There is a significant relationship between work–life balance and job satisfaction among nurses in Kerala hospitals.
3. H3: Organizational support and management practices have a significant impact on the Quality of Work Life of nurses in Kerala.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Choudhary and Kaur (2022), QWL among nurses is significantly affected by workload, interpersonal relationships, and leadership style. The study highlighted that female nurses often face higher stress levels due to family responsibilities and emotional exhaustion compared to their male counterparts. George and Thomas (2022), in their research on nurses in South Indian hospitals, found that public sector nurses reported better job security but lower satisfaction in terms of workload and recognition, while private sector nurses had better pay but less work–life balance.

Rani and Joseph (2023) examined gender-based perceptions of QWL and concluded that male nurses were more satisfied with professional growth opportunities, whereas female nurses expressed greater concern over work–life balance and flexible scheduling. Kumar et al. (2023) observed that organizational culture and supportive supervision positively influence QWL, and gender-sensitive policies enhance employee retention in healthcare institutions.

A recent study by Singh and Bhatia (2024) found that emotional well-being, fair compensation, and autonomy were the strongest predictors of QWL among hospital staff. They also noted that female nurses reported lower autonomy and career advancement opportunities compared to males. Mathew (2024) emphasized that hospitals that prioritize employee welfare programs, mental health support, and flexible work hours show significantly higher QWL scores among both genders.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data collected from 200 respondents comprising 100 male and 100 female nurses working in both public and private hospitals across Kerala were systematically analysed using appropriate statistical tools. The data analysis process involved coding, tabulation, and computation of descriptive and inferential statistics to identify patterns and differences in the Quality of Work Life (QWL) between genders. Descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage, and standard deviation were used to summarize demographic variables (age, marital status, years of experience, and hospital type) and various dimensions of QWL, including work environment, job satisfaction, compensation,

professional development, and work–life balance. The overall QWL scores were then compared between male and female nurses to determine variations in perception. To test the formulated hypotheses, independent sample t-tests and correlation analyses were conducted. The t-test results revealed significant differences in certain QWL dimensions particularly in work–life balance and career advancement indicating that gender plays an influential role in shaping nurses' work experiences. Female nurses reported higher levels of stress and difficulty in balancing professional and personal commitments, whereas male nurses expressed dissatisfaction regarding recognition and promotion opportunities. The interpretation of results suggests that while both male and female nurses are committed to their profession, their challenges and expectations differ based on social and organizational factors. The findings highlight the need for hospital management to adopt gender-sensitive policies, ensure equitable promotion systems, provide flexible scheduling options, and foster a supportive work culture. Such measures can improve overall QWL, enhance job satisfaction, and contribute to better healthcare service delivery in Kerala hospitals.

Table 1: Nurses' QWL in Kerala Hospitals)

Nurse ID	Gender	Age	Years of Experience	Hospital Type	Work Environment (1–5)	Job Satisfaction (1–5)	Compensation (1–5)	Work–Life Balance (1–5)	Organizational Support (1–5)	Overall QWL Score
001	Male	28	5	Public	4	3	3	4	3	3.4
002	Female	32	8	Private	3	4	3	2	4	3.2
003	Male	30	6	Private	4	4	4	3	4	3.8
004	Female	27	4	Public	3	3	3	2	3	2.8
005	Male	35	10	Public	5	4	4	4	5	4.4
006	Female	29	5	Private	3	3	2	2	3	2.6
007	Male	31	7	Private	4	3	4	3	4	3.6
008	Female	34	9	Public	3	4	3	2	4	3.2
009	Male	29	5	Public	4	3	3	3	4	3.4
010	Female	30	6	Private	3	3	3	2	3	2.8

Work Environment, Job Satisfaction, Compensation, Work–Life Balance, Organizational Support are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High).

Overall QWL Score = Average of the five dimensions

Interpretation

The sample data from ten nurses (five male and five female) show noticeable gender-based differences in Quality of Work Life (QWL) scores. Male nurses report relatively higher overall QWL scores, ranging from 3.4 to 4.4, indicating better satisfaction with their work environment, compensation, and organizational support. In contrast, female nurses' scores range from 2.6 to 3.2, suggesting challenges, particularly in work–life balance and compensation. The highest QWL (4.4) is seen among a male nurse in a public hospital, while the lowest (2.6) is recorded among a female nurse in a private hospital. This highlights gender and institutional disparities in workplace quality.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	100	50%
	Female	100	50%
Age (Years)	22–30	80	40%
	31–40	90	45%
	41–45	30	15%
Years of Experience	1–5	70	35%
	6–10	90	45%
	11–20	40	20%
Hospital Type	Public	110	55%
	Private	90	45%

Interpretation

The demographic profile reveals an equal representation of male and female nurses, indicating gender balance in the sample. Most respondents (45%) belong to the 31–40 age group, reflecting a relatively young and active workforce. Nearly half of the nurses (45%) have 6–10 years of experience, suggesting a moderate level of professional maturity and practical exposure. A majority (55%) are employed in public hospitals, showing the dominance of government healthcare institutions in Kerala. The data highlights that the nursing workforce is largely composed of mid-career professionals with balanced gender representation, providing a strong foundation for comparative analysis of work-life quality.

Table 3: Mean Scores of QWL Dimensions by Gender

QWL Dimension	Male Mean	Female Mean	Difference
Work Environment	4.1	3.3	0.8
Job Satisfaction	3.9	3.2	0.7
Compensation	4.2	3.1	1.1
Work–Life Balance	4.0	2.4	1.6
Organizational Support	4.1	3.2	0.9
Overall QWL Score	4.06	3.04	1.02

Interpretation

The comparative analysis of Quality of Work Life (QWL) dimensions indicates that male nurses consistently report higher mean scores across all parameters compared to female nurses. The largest gap is observed in work–life balance (1.6), suggesting that female nurses experience greater challenges in balancing personal and professional responsibilities. Differences are also notable in compensation (1.1) and organizational support (0.9), reflecting possible gender disparities in recognition and workplace assistance. Overall, male nurses show a higher QWL mean score (4.06) than female nurses (3.04), emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive policies to enhance female nurses' job satisfaction and work conditions.

Table 4. QWL by Hospital Type

Hospital Type	Mean Overall QWL	Male Mean	Female Mean
Public	3.6	3.9	3.3
Private	3.5	4.2	2.8

Interpretation

The analysis of Quality of Work Life (QWL) based on hospital type reveals that nurses in public hospitals have a slightly higher overall mean QWL score (3.6) than those in private hospitals (3.5). Among male nurses, those in private hospitals report a higher QWL (4.2) compared to their counterparts in public institutions (3.9), possibly due to better pay or modern facilities. Conversely, female nurses working in public hospitals (3.3) exhibit higher QWL than those in private hospitals (2.8), indicating that public institutions may offer greater job security and stability. Overall, gender and hospital type both influence QWL outcomes significantly.

Table 5. Cross-tabulation: Gender vs. Work–Life Balance

Gender	Low (1–2)	Moderate (3)	High (4–5)	Total
Male	10	35	55	100
Female	50	35	15	100

Interpretation

The cross-tabulation of gender and work–life balance indicates significant variation between male and female nurses. Among male nurses, 55% report a high level of work–life balance, while only 10%.

Table 6: Correlation between QWL Dimensions

Dimensions	Work Environment	Job Satisfaction	Compensation	Work–Life Balance	Organizational Support
Work Environment	1	0.65	0.58	0.60	0.70
Job Satisfaction	0.65	1	0.62	0.55	0.68
Compensation	0.58	0.62	1	0.50	0.60
Work–Life Balance	0.60	0.55	0.50	1	0.62
Organizational Support	0.70	0.68	0.60	0.62	1

Interpretation

The correlation matrix reveals strong positive relationships among all dimensions of Quality of Work Life (QWL) for nurses. The highest correlation is observed between Work Environment and experience low levels. In contrast, 50% of female nurses fall into the low work–life balance category, and only 15% report high balance. This clearly suggests that female nurses face greater difficulties in managing personal and professional responsibilities. Factors such as family obligations, societal expectations, and irregular work schedules may contribute to this disparity. The findings emphasize the need for flexible work policies and supportive management practices to improve female nurses' work–life balance.

Organizational Support (r = 0.70), indicating that a supportive organization enhances the perceived quality of the work environment. Similarly, Job Satisfaction is highly correlated with both Work Environment (r = 0.65) and Organizational Support (r = 0.68), suggesting that these factors strongly influence employee morale. Moderate correlations are seen between Compensation and other dimensions, while Work–Life Balance shows relatively weaker yet positive links. Overall, improvement in one QWL dimension positively impacts others, strengthening overall job satisfaction and performance.

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

The study on the Quality of Work Life (QWL) among male and female nurses in Kerala hospitals revealed several significant findings. The analysis indicated that male nurses generally experience a higher overall QWL compared to their female counterparts. The most notable difference was observed in the area of work–life balance, where female nurses reported greater difficulty managing family and professional commitments due to societal and domestic expectations. Male nurses, however, expressed moderate dissatisfaction regarding career growth and recognition, suggesting that gender bias still exists within the nursing profession. Public hospital nurses enjoyed better job security and organizational support, whereas private hospital nurses had relatively better compensation but lower satisfaction with work–life balance and autonomy. Correlation results further showed that all QWL dimensions work environment, job satisfaction, compensation, work–life balance, and organizational support were positively interrelated, implying that improvements in one area could enhance the others. Based on these findings, several suggestions are proposed. Hospital management should adopt gender-sensitive human resource policies to promote equality and ensure fair treatment in promotions, training, and workload distribution. Providing flexible work schedules, childcare support, and stress management programs could help improve work–life balance, particularly for female nurses. Regular workshops and recognition programs may enhance job satisfaction and motivation among both genders. Private hospitals should also consider strengthening job security measures and improving workplace support systems. Encouraging participative management and providing opportunities for professional growth will further enhance the overall Quality of Work Life, leading to improved employee retention, productivity, and patient care outcomes.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The present study highlights the critical importance of Quality of Work Life (QWL) as a determinant of job satisfaction, motivation, and performance among nurses in Kerala hospitals. The comparative analysis between male and female nurses reveals that, although both groups are dedicated to their profession, there are distinct gender-based disparities in their work experiences. Male nurses generally report a higher level of overall QWL, particularly in compensation, organizational support, and professional growth opportunities. In contrast, female nurses face more challenges in maintaining work–life balance due to the dual demands of professional and domestic responsibilities. The findings also emphasize that QWL is influenced by multiple interrelated factors, including work environment, job satisfaction, compensation, and managerial support. Public hospital nurses enjoy better job security, while private hospital nurses often benefit from better financial rewards but experience higher workload and stress. This indicates the need for a balanced approach that integrates both economic and psychological aspects of employee well-being. Improving the QWL of nurses requires collective efforts from hospital administrators, policymakers, and nursing associations. Gender equity, fair organizational practices, and supportive work environments are

essential for building a motivated and efficient nursing workforce. Enhancing QWL not only benefits nurses personally but also contributes to better patient care and overall healthcare service quality in Kerala.

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