

A QUALITATIVE STUDY TO IDENTIFY THE HR STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING MIGRANT WORKERS

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Abstract

Migration has become a day to day reality in India. Kerala is witnessing a large influx of migrant workers from different parts of the country in recent years. They have become an integral part of the industrial arena of Kerala especially in the iron and steel industry. The factors like better employment opportunities, better living conditions and higher wages have prompted them to migrate to Kerala. Kerala's educational system has expanded substantially over the years in response to societal demand. Demographic transition, high literacy rate, better education and lack of professional and skilled jobs had forced Keralites to look for higher wages and better prospects outside the state and abroad. This trend has led to a decline in the availability of workforce in Kerala, especially in the unskilled job market. The present focuses on identifying the reason for recruiting migrant workers in steel manufacturing companies and identifying the HR strategies for employing migrant workers. The study was conducted in the steel manufacturing companies in Kerala. This is a qualitative study used semi- structured questionnaire to identify the HR strategies from the respondents. The respondents was HR managers of the company. Thematic analysis was utilised to evaluate the interview data. The study found that there were

Keywords: Migrant workers, HR strategies, Non statutory and statutory HR strategies

Introduction

India is a country with a vast human resource pool and diversified resources and due to the unbalanced distribution of these resources the country faces an imbalanced supply of labour. When the people find it difficult to get minimum job opportunities, to meet their basic needs, they start their journey for employment and if the volume of this movement is more we call the process as migration. Indian constitution provides basic freedom to move to any part of the country, right to reside and earn livelihood of their choice. Thus, migrants are not required to register either at the place of origin or at the place of destination. A number of economic, social, cultural and political factors play an important role in the decision to move in search of Employment. The effects of these factors vary over time and place. Migration has become a universal phenomenon in recent years. Millions of people all over the world move out of their normal place of residence to seek their fortune elsewhere (Joseph, 1988).

Migrant workers are people who leave home to find work outside of their hometown or home country. Persons who move for work in their own country are 'domestic' or 'internal' migrant

workers. Persons who move for work to another country are commonly called 'foreign' or 'international' migrant workers (International Labour Standards on Migrant Workers' Rights, 2007). As per the Economic Survey of India 2016-17, there are over a hundred million migrant workers in India, of which most are circular migrants. They work in precarious worksites in sectors ranging from construction and brick kilns to rural harvesting operations (ILO, 2015). Iron and steel production dominates the industrial sector in Kanjikode town of Palakkad District. Palakkad was one of the initial destinations of migrant workers in Kerala from beyond south India. Workers from Odisha and Bihar came here to work in the iron and steel industry. Kerala's educational system has expanded substantially over the years in response to societal demand. Demographic transition, high literacy rate, better education and lack of professional and skilled jobs had forced Keratitits to look for higher wages and better prospects outside the state and abroad. This trend has led to a decline in the availability of workforce in Kerala, especially in the unskilled job market.

However there are only few studies focused on identifying the reason for recruiting migrant workers and identifying the HR strategies for managing migrant. The current study has been carried out in the quest of discovering HR strategies for managing migrant workers in the steel industry in Kerala.

IRON AND STEEL INDUSTRIES

Iron and steel production dominates the industrial sector in Kanjikode, Palakkad was one of the initial destinations of migrant workers in Kerala from beyond south India. Workers from Odisha and Bihar came here to work in the iron and steel industry. Now migrant workers are found in almost all the sectors in the district, including agriculture. Workers from Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan can be found in the district. Iron and steel related industrial units in Palakkad district are concentrated in the Industrial Development Area (IDA) and New Industrial Development Area (NIDA) in Kanjikode. These units produce iron/steel rods, bars, pipes, ingots and other allied products, mainly from scrap iron. The industry depends only on migrant labour, significantly from Bihar and Odisha. Migrant workers are found in almost all the sectors in Palakkad district, including agriculture. Steel was one of the first few sectors in Kerala that engaged male workers from eastern India significantly. Like most industrial settings, workers live in the factory premises. Workers with families live outside. The level of economic development, job opportunities and daily wages in the southern states are considerably higher (Reja & Das, 2019; Prakash, 1999). Thus, the vacuum created in the market for manual labour and other works is filled by the migrant workers from northern and eastern states (Martin & Philip, 2019). Kerala, which thrives on the remittances of its more than 72.5 million strong diaspora in the Gulf and Western countries, has become a haven for migrants from other Indian states (Zachariah & Rajan, 2012). Between the 1970s and 1990s immigration to Kerala was primarily from the neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka (Reja and Das, 2019). But now Kerala has become a lucrative job market for workers coming from distant states, especially West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand to fill the void in segments of the labour market left vacant by the upwardly mobile Keralites. According to a study by Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation (GIFT, 2013), there were around 2.5 million internal migrants in Kerala. A higher wage rate in the unorganized sector and suitable job opportunities have fabricated the state as one of the most desired destinations for migrant labourers. There are about 25 lakhs

migrants in Kerala with four states – West Bengal, Assam, Bihar and Orissa accounting for 62 per cent of the migrant workers, with West Bengal at the top (20 per cent). It is estimated that the number will go up to 40 lakhs by the end of the decade (GIFT, 2013). These Labourers have the habit of bringing down family and accomplices to take up work adding to disposable Income.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Several studies (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Arthur, 1992) have shown that positive human resource management practices are associated with better organizational performance in manufacturing industries. High performance HR practices including comprehensive recruitment and selection, incentive rewards and extensive employee involvement and training, have positive effect on both employee performance and turnover (Huseild 1995). This study focuses on identifying the HR strategies for managing the migrant workers

This study focuses on an increasingly core group of employees but often neglected group in research- Low skilled migrant workers in the steel manufacturing industry. Migrant workers are the primary group of employees without them the companies cannot run business. They are the backbone of the steel companies.

RESEARCH GAPS

Based on the review of the literature, it can be suggested that although research on migrant workers issues has been conducted in various contexts for several decades, there exist critical gaps in the literature in exploring the HR practices for managing migrant workers in steel companies which need to be addressed. The gaps are elaborated as follows

- Literature focussed on overall understanding about migrant workers; however, there exists a little emphasis on the reason for recruiting the migrant workers in manufacturing companies.
- Lack of research studies in understanding the HR practices related to managing migrant workers in steel manufacturing companies.

METHODOLOGY

Present section explains research methodology adopted for present study.

Sample

A sample of 12 respondents was utilized in the study. Sample consists of employers working as managers in different steel manufacturing companies in Kerala. An organised questionnaire was directed to the respondents.

Sampling technique

The purpose of the sample was to answer the research questions of the qualitative phase of the study. The interview was taken from the steel manufacturing companies in Kerala. The sample phrame was the HR managers of the steel manufacturing companies. Of the total 40 steel manufacturing companies in Kerala, 12 companies HR managers were selected for the exploratory phase of the study. Saturation is utilised in qualitative research as a norm for discontinuing data collection. In the interviews, when the researcher commence to hear the same comments repeatedly, data saturation is being reached. It is then time to halt collecting information. After interviewing 12 respondents the fresh data incline to be redundant of data already collected. Data from Individual respondent was collected through purposive sampling method.

Data collection instrument

The primary source of data employed in this study is the questionnaire. Semi-structured interview method was used in the study. Face to face interview with human resource managers in 12 steel industry were conducted. The interview took place at steel companies in Kerala. The time taken for each interview was more than one hour. The interviews were recorded utilizing a phone and important points were noted down.

Self-developed questionnaire was utilized for qualitative data collection. The questionnaire comprised of 7 questions is designed and administered to all HR managers in the steel manufacturing companies by the researcher. The aim of the questionnaire is to investigate the issues of employers by employing migrant workers particularly in steel companies. The questions in the questionnaire are made short and clear in order to ensure that it takes the respondents not more than 30 minutes to answer and therefore encourage participation.

Tools used in the study

The responses were documented utilizing the voice recorder and written notes. The responses gathered were scrutinized utilizing **Thematic Analysis**. It is a technique utilized for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was done manually by reading and re-reading the data several times and coded them throughout the text. The codes are then grouped together into similar clusters to create meaningful theme.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

The study focus on exploring the reason for employing migrant workers and identifying HR strategies for managing them through qualitative philosophy is fairly uncommon, the thematic analysis provides the rich opportunity to find new themes by taking into consideration all of the varied and rich data gathered from interviews.

The followed six stages of thematic analysis were conducted (Braun and Clarke, 2006): familiarization of data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review themes, define and name the themes and produce the report. While the six phases are reported in a linear fashion, an iterative approach was favored to enhance the richness and depth of the findings.

Phase 1: Familiarization of data

First, familiarization of data was internalized through transcription and translation of the interviews. The audio recordings of the interviews of 12 respondents were listened to many times for their accurate translation and transcription. All interviews were directly translated and made in to a meaningful text. The first step in any qualitative analysis is reading, and re-reading the transcripts. The below table shows a few sample transcripts from the interview data.

Reason for recruiting migrants

“Unavailability of unskilled workers. We won’t get local workers for working in steel industries. Education place an important role in our economy, all the locals are now educated, they are not ready to do unskilled jobs. All are searching for white collar jobs”.

“Unionism among the locals is one main reason for not recruiting the locals”

HR Strategy

“We give yearly increment even if company faces loss. We give complete medical care other than ESI facility. Whenever they have an emergency we consult them in any private hospitals. We accept moreover all the conditions of migrants. We try to satisfy all their needs. We give freedom in their working. We won’t force them to do any work. We make them feel happy and comfortable”.

“To retain the migrants we provide good salary. We try to satisfy all the demands. We give all the help for them. We provide good accommodation and foods according to their taste and preferences. We maintain good relationships.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

This phase involves the production of initial codes from the data. The Table 1.1 shows the initial codes of the data collected. Codes identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst and refer to ‘the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon’ (Boyatzis, 1998: 63).

The process of coding is part of the analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994), as we are organizing our data into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005). Coding can be performed either manually or through a software program (see, eg, Kelle, 2004; Seale, 2000, for discussion of software programs). The initial step is to identify the codes, and then match them with data extracts that demonstrate that code. In this phase ensure that all actual data extracts are coded, and then collated together within each code. Coding was done manually by writing the notes on the text by using highlighters or coloured pens to indicate potential patterns. All actual data extracts were coded and then collated together within each code. In this phase, we organized data in a meaningful and systematic way.

Table 1.1: Initial codes

Codes/ Extracts
Free food and Accommodation
Increment
Locals are not ready to work in steel industries
Locals took leave often
Maintain a good relationship
Unavailability of unskilled workers
Promotion

Migrants work for a long time
Competitive salary
Complete medical care
Education among the locals
Tough working condition
Incentives
Locals are not ready to do unskilled job
Freedom in the work
Unionism among the locals
Satisfy the needs and wants
Skill development programs
Tour programs
Provide security

Phase 3: Searching for themes

In this phase, the analysis starts to take shape as we shift from codes to themes. A theme “captures something important about the data concerning the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82). The basic process of generating themes and subthemes, which are the subcomponents of a theme, involves collapsing or clustering codes that seem to share some unifying feature so that they reflect and describe a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data. There were totally 21 codes clustered around the data. In this case, after exploring lots of different ways to combine these codes into themes and drawing lots of thematic maps, 2 broad themes emerged: 1. Reason for recruiting migrant workers 2. HR practices for managing migrant workers

The Table 1.2 shows all the preliminary themes that were identified in the extract, along with the codes associated with them. All of the codes fit into three main themes.

Table 1.2 Codes and Themes

Codes/ Extracts	Common themes
Education among the locals	Reason for recruiting migrants
Locals are not ready to do unskilled job	
Locals are not ready to work in steel industries	
Locals took leave often	
Tough working condition	
Unavailability of unskilled workers	
Unionism among the locals	
Migrants work for a long time	
Competitive salary	Human resource strategy
Complete medical care	
Free food and Accommodation	
Freedom in the work	
Incentives	

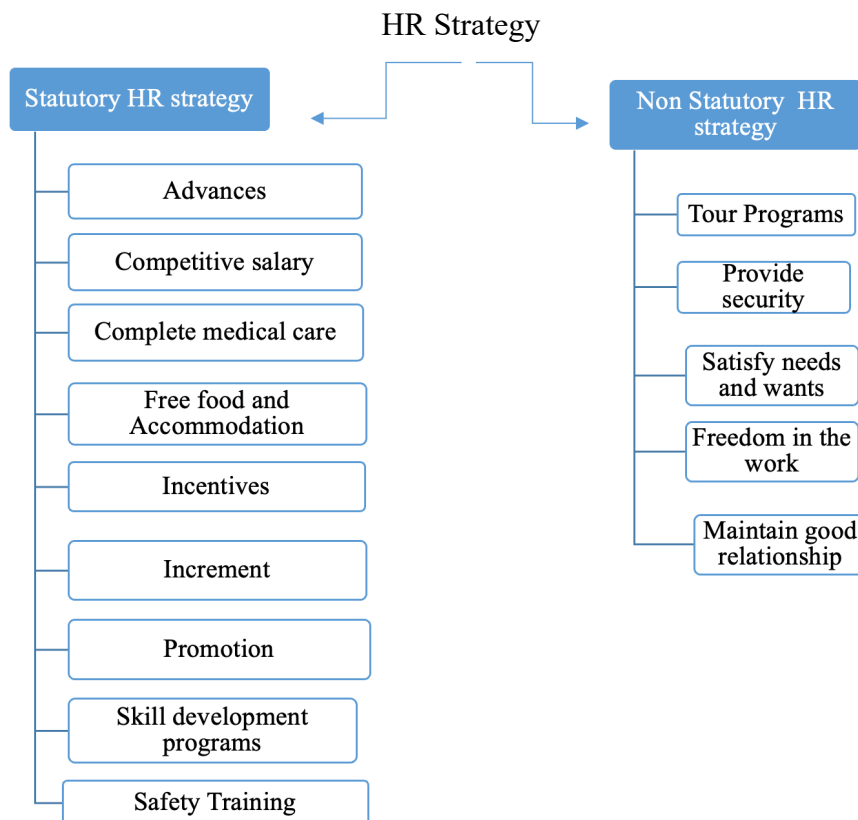
Increment	
Maintain a good relationship	
Promotion	
Satisfy the needs and wants	
Skill development programs	
Tour programs	
Provide security	
Advances	

Phase 4: Reviewing potential themes

This phase involves a recursive process whereby the developing themes are reviewed with the coded data and the entire data set. This phase is essentially about quality checking. The first step is to check the themes against the collated extracts of data and to explore whether the theme works with the data. Codes are relocated under another theme; alternatively, redraw the boundaries of the theme, so that it more meaningfully captures the relevant data (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

In this data set, while reviewing the themes, it was identified that inadequate coding has taken place, or coding evolved over a data set, and data were not recorded using the final set of codes. Revision at this stage led to the creation of additional themes. Therefore the codes were regrouped into two sub themes namely 1. Statutory HR strategy 2. Non Statutory HR strategies. Review of the theme HR strategy resulted in two subthemes, namely statutory HR strategies and Non Statutory HR strategies.

Figure 1 : Subthemes of the theme HR strategy.



Phase 5: Defining the Themes

This is the final refinement of the themes and the aim is to ‘identify the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about.’(Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92). What is the theme saying? If there are subthemes, how do they interact and relate to the main theme? How do the themes relate to each other? The two broad themes are 1. Problems faced by employers due to migrants 2. HR practices.

Human Resource Strategies

Human Resource Management (HRM, or sometimes abbreviated to HR) is concerned with all aspects of how people are employed and managed in organizations. Managing human capital is all about adding value to the organization. Human resource management is a strategic, integrated, and coherent approach to the employment, development, and well-being of the people working in organizations (Armstrong, 2016). The goals of HRM is to support the organization in achieving the objective, contribute to the development of high performance culture, create a positive employment relationships between management and employees and a climate of mutual trust(Armstrong and Taylor, 2016). To attain these objectives the steel manufacturing companies were followed statutory and non-statutory HR strategies. Statutory HR strategies aim to do regularly by all the companies to manage the employees as per the norms it includes 1. Advances 2. Competitive salary 3. Medical care 4. Free food and accommodation 5. Incentives 6. Increment 7. Promotion 8. Skill development programme 9. Safety Training 10. Flexible work timing. Non statutory HR strategies aims to implement particular interest of an employer, it includes 1. Tour Programmes 2. Provide Security 3. Freedom in the work 4. Satisfy the needs and wants 5. Maintain good relationship.

Statutory HR Strategy

Statutory HR strategies are followed by the organization as per the legal norms set by the companies. All the companies has to compulsory follow these strategies accordingly.it includes 1. Advances 2. Competitive salary 3.Medical care and free food and accommodation 4. Incentives and increments 5. Safety training and skill development 6. Promotion 7. Flexible work timing

Advances

Advances is paying an employee a portion of his salary in advance in the event of a financial emergency. Employees and employers agree on how and when to repay the money when the advance is given, such as paying in regular instalments or in one lump sum. However, no interest, service charges, or any other fees related to the advance may be deducted. “Respondents reported that “It helps to increase employee productivity and focus, boost employee morale and foster loyalty, and it shows employers care about employee welfare”.

Steel Max Rolling Pvt Ltd.

- They will be happy only when we give money, so we give advances.

Boopathi steels Pvt Ltd

- Sometimes we pay advances to the workers for their marriage function or in festival season. Usually we deduct this from the salary.

Competitive salary

Salary is the basic motivating factor for employees in doing their work effectively. The basic motivating power of money is to recognize that most people likely would not work the jobs they have if they were not paid for them. Even employees who enjoy their work would often

pursue other interests if pay were not a factor. Salary is an important part of the incentive system used by an organization to motivate employees to comply with agency rules and regulations (Mueller and Price, 1990). “All the respondents considered that salary is the only factor helps in retaining the migrant workers”. “They are much more willing to put in extra hours in the work if he paid more salary and retain the company only he feels his organization is paying a higher salary than other company”. From an organizational standpoint, salary is also a means of encouraging employee retention, affecting the desirability of leaving and subsequent turnover behaviour (e.g., Lum et al., 1998). Salary is strongly related to job performance and effort, as well as morale and job satisfaction (Crow et al., 2012; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Lambert et al., 2007). All the respondents strongly believe that salary is an important factor for the turnover intention of migrant workers.

Minar Alloys and Forgings Pvt Ltd

- We provide competitive salary giving hygiene food and accommodation quarters facility and centralized canteen facility, they don't want to prepare the food.

Hydenso Steel and Engineering Pvt Ltd

- To retain the migrants we provide good salary

Steel Max Rolling Pvt Ltd.

- We provide competitive salary and benefits to make them feel happy

Medical care and free food and accommodation

HR departments and organizations as a whole invest significant resources into design benefit packages that can be used both to recruit new employees and to retain the talent they already have. “All the respondents conveyed that they offered free food and accommodation as per their taste and preference”. Employers felt that “employees often leave the office for snacks or coffee, and a quick coffee break can easily turn into half an hour or more away from work”. “Depending on their hourly rate, it can be more cost-effective to offer free food at work”. “Moreover it helps the employee to consume a healthy diet. Offering food at work encourages mingling and retention of employees”.

Organizations that increased benefits offerings were most likely to increase health-related benefits the top reasons for increasing benefits were to retain employees, to attract new talent and to respond to employee feedback (Kennedy, Hill & Hominik, 2018), “All the respondents reported that it is obligatory to provide medical facility to the employees”. “Moreover some of the companies offer extended medical facility to their family”. “Employee felt mental attachment towards the organization and helps to retain for long time”.

World Wide Iron and Steels Pvt Ltd

- We provide medical and free food and accommodation to them.
- Compare to the other companies we provide good and hygiene food as per their taste and preferences.

Incentives and increments

Employees love incentives, this is the way to encourage them to do their best in every part of the job. The effectiveness of employee incentives is closely linked to the work context

(Herzberg, 2003). Respondents express the idea of Incentives not only motivates them to do their work, but it can also motivate them to stay longer at the business. HRM literature has widely discussed the effectiveness of monetary and non-monetary incentives on turnover (Maier et al., 2016; Riemer & Chelladurai, 1998) and performance (e.g. Breunig et al., 2013; Franck & Nüesch, 2011; Maier al., 2016). By offering something they can achieve if they hit a certain target or achieve something, they have something to work towards. Recognition for employee accomplishments, job enrichment, and clarity of expectancies are three of the most commonly studied incentives (Appelbaum & Kamal, 2000; Frey, 2007). Incentives are great for the employees' happiness and wellbeing. Respondents say that migrant workers always expect monetary rewards; they don't want incentives in the form of awards, recognition, or gifts, etc.

Salary increments exist to reward past performance while gauging future potential. Sarang. S. Bhola (2013), found that individual financial incentives and salary increments were the most important factors for the employees' satisfaction and motivation. The study suggested that companies should pay more attention to individual financial incentive programs to attract their employees. Respondents believed that it is less expensive to retain an employee than hiring and training the new one. Increments are one of the ways to value the contribution of employees and continue to grow along with the company.

Steel Max Rolling Pvt Ltd.

- We give them incentives.
- They will be happy only when we give money, so we give advances.

Boopathi Steels Pvt Ltd

- We give yearly increments even if the company faces loss.

Vanjinad Forgings Pvt ltd

- Increment in the salary based on experience.

Safety training and skill development

Employees are company's biggest asset, and investing in talent is vital to sustainable business growth and success. Investment in training and development is used to achieve multiple objectives including enhancing the commitment of employees (Wood et al., 2006), developing the employability of employees (Townsend, 2007), enhancing emotional labour (Mulholland, 2002). Every employee is weak at a certain skill and not all of them are perfect for the position. Training is needed to match the employee with the skill. "All the respondents reported that safety training is essential for the steel companies as workers face many risks due to the nature of the job". The work environment is often hot and noisy, and work tasks regularly heavy and demanding on the body, and there is an always present risk for crushing injuries and burns. "Respondents say that the steel companies have significantly improved their safety performance". Dedicated training and development foster employee engagement and engagement are critical to the company's financial performance (Gallup, 2017).

Steel Max Rolling Pvt Ltd.

- We try to keep them happy. We are providing training and skill development programs.

Minar Alloys and Forgings Pvt Ltd

- We provide skill development programs.

Vanjinad Forgings Pvt ltd

- We are giving promotion and skill development programs for retaining migrant workers.

Promotion

Promotion is said to happen when an employee makes a shift in the upward direction in organizational hierarchy and moves to a place of greater responsibility (Dessler, 2008). Promotion is a form of recognition for employees who make significant and effective work contributions. It is a way of rewarding the employees for meeting the organizational goals thus it serves as a means of synchronizing organizational goals with personal goals (Lazear & Rosen, 1981). “All the respondents stated mostly all the migrant workers deny promotion in the work. “They would like to do some work in the same workgroup”. “They are always work in a group, workers from the same place and cast form a group”. “They reject promotion If one gets promoted and moved to do something higher position”.

Minar Alloys and Forgings Pvt Ltd

- Not ready for promotion or personal development

VAP industries Pvt Ltd

- It is very difficult for upskilling migrant workers. They don't like to develop skills. They don't like to take responsibility. That's the reason they need not won't promotion.

Flexible work timing

“Flexible Working” we can say it's a broad term, its Changes in the natural history of employment essentially moves to better variety and elasticity in work pattern, changes in technology enable work to be passed out in different ways. “Flexible Contracts, Flexible Hours, Flexible Location, Flexible Tasks”. The hard-hitting working condition of steel manufacturing units makes the employee feel free to do their work. They have flexible work timing and have no pressure in doing the work. Research proved that the flexible working hours contributed to higher job satisfaction, motivation, and employee engagement (Mc Nall et al., 2010). Fynes et al. (1998), identified among the advantages gained by the staff through the implementation of flexible working hours is the ability to reduce absenteeism, reducing stress, improving staff morale, and increasing staff motivation to work. Flexible working hours are an advantage for many workers, which can help an organization to keep and retain its good and effective employees. It can also facilitate workers to become more inspired by organizing their workdays around personal needs. Flexible work timings can greatly help in enhancing employee morale and motivation levels.

Boopathi Steels Pvt Ltd

- We give freedom to their working. We won't force them to do any work. They have flexible work timings.

Minar Alloys and Forgings Pvt Ltd

- We make them happy by giving freedom to their work.

Non Statutory HR Strategy

The non-statutory HR strategies are done not as per the norms of the company, it is followed as per the interest of employers to implement particular actions. The aim of these strategies is to make the employee feel happy, self-esteem to the organization and committed to the work

etc. It includes 1. Tour programs 2. Freedom in the work 3. Maintain good relationship and satisfying needs and wants of employees 4. Employee benefits

Tour programs

The workplace of the steel industries is high risk due to the nature of the job; continuous shift, tight deadlines, and increasing demands leave the employee feel worried and overwhelmed. They lose confidence, irritable, and tendency to withdraw the job and create stress among the employees. Stress can be described as the adverse psychological and physical reactions that occur in an individual as a result of his or her inability to cope with the demands being made on him or her (Moorhead & Griffen, 1998). That is tension from extra-ordinary demands on an individual. "All the respondents reported that a motivated employee is a great asset to the company while a stressed one is liability and could be very destructive if care is not taken". "Tour programs are arranged to make them feel happy". This creates a positive feeling for the employees.

Vap Industries Pvt Lmt

- We organize tour programs and make them happy.

Freedom in the workplace

Organizations are now started realizing the value of freedom and many people attached to freedom. It is important to give employees freedom at work, employees feel comfortable when they get some freedom in their workplace. A sense of freedom leads to a higher level of motivation. Many believe that the most important element of individual satisfaction is how to provide the exact leeway of freedom to the employee in his workplace to feel responsible and more motivated to reach the organization goals, (Al-Tit et al., 2015). "All the respondents reported that companies provide an unbiased platform for employees to share feedback and express their concerns". Employees have the freedom to make choices that help them balance their work and life phases; given the freedom to work or solve a problem on their own, given the freedom to take some decision and they have the freedom in the timing of the work. They feel controlled all the time which can kill their initiatives and perceive their work as punishment so they work always under the fear however employees can perceive positively the managers that are ready to give them a leeway of freedom in their schedule, methods, and places where to work, (Kleanthis et al., 2014). The sense of freedom improves employee satisfaction and they become confident and empowered to share his / her ideas without fear of being humiliated or negated.

World Wide Iron and Steels Pvt Ltd

- We provide maximum freedom for them.

Boopathi Steels Pvt Ltd

- We give freedom to their working. We won't force them to do any work. They have flexible work timings.

Minar Alloys and Forgings Pvt Ltd

- The main thing we make them happy by giving freedom in their work.

Maintain good relationship and satisfying needs and wants of employees

Employees are organizations most important resources and coined as the most valuable assets. Maintaining healthy employee relations in an organization is a pre-requisite for any organization to achieve growth and success. According to CIPD (Chartered Institute of

Personnell & Development), Employee relations is a broad term that incorporates many issues from collective bargaining, negotiations, employment legislation to more recent considerations such as work-life balance, equal opportunities, and managing diversity. All the respondents strongly believe that there should be a balance in the relationship between employees and employers, there should be a reciprocated interdependency between the two. One depends on the other for the smooth execution of work. Employer will look forward to his employee for the timely delivery of assignments and an employee will expect his employer to assist him in his executions. Kalaski (2007) believed that effective employee relation enhances positive communication and attitude between management and employees promote the overall wellbeing of employees, and helps in preventing resolving the problems in the work situation. To maintain a good relation with the employees, an organization anticipates its future needs of the employees. Knowing employees play a crucial role in motivating employees to deliver their level best. Knowing employees helps managers to understand their needs and expectations from the organization. All the respondents opine that employees need to be appreciated for them to perform consistently. Let them feel special. In any organization, it is pertinent for the management to study the needs of workers and try as much as possible to meet those needs (Agbadudu & Ogundipe, 2000). Problems arise when managers do not acknowledge the hard work of employees. Benckhoff (1997), states that some individuals refuse to give the further commitment to work because their basic needs have not been satisfied by the organization that employed them.

Steel Max Rolling Pvt Ltd

- We maintain a good relationship with workers.

Hydenso Steel and Engineering Pvt Ltd

- We maintain a good relationship with them.

VAP industries Pvt Ltd

- To retain them we maintain a good relationship with them.

Vanjinad Forgings Pvt Ltd

- Maintain good relationships with the workers.

Employee benefits

Employee benefits have been defined by the Bureau of Labour Statistics as any form of indirect or non-cash compensation paid to an employee (BLS, 2008). All the respondents emphasizes the benefits are powerful and can either cost or save an organization a substantial amount of money associated with turnover. Benefits are important to their overall job satisfaction (Society for Human Resource Management, 2017). “The organization provides free food to the employees, offers the nutritious options not simply provide the cheapest eats”. “The majority of the organization offers health care coverage to all the employees. Sharing the costs of health care with employees is a common strategy to manage employees”. Other benefits given to the employees are free accommodation for the residence of the employees. Employers reported providing accommodations resulted in retaining valuable employees, improving productivity and morale. Organizations offer benefits to their employees because they promote job satisfaction and inspire worker loyalty, which, in turn, can lead to better financial performance (Chan, Gee &Steiner, 2000; Rutigliano, 1986).

Minar Alloys and Forgings Pvt Ltd

- We provide medical and free food and accommodation for them.
- Compare to the other companies we provide good and hygiene food as per their taste and preferences.

Minar Alloys and Forgings Pvt Ltd

- As per the rule, we provide all the facilities to the migrants. we provide free food and accommodation but they don't know how to use the facilities properly.

Boopathi Steels Pvt Ltd

- We give freedom to their work. We won't force them to do any work.
- We make them feel happy and comfortable.

Conclusion

The study on HR strategies for employing migrant workers in the steel industry of Kerala provides significant insights into the dynamics of labor migration and the human resource management practices that can enhance workforce stability and productivity. This qualitative research highlights the critical role of migrant workers in Kerala's steel manufacturing sector, where they have become indispensable due to a shortage of local labor willing to undertake unskilled jobs.

The findings underscore that the primary reasons for recruiting migrant workers include the unavailability of local labor, the competitive salaries offered, and the challenging working conditions that deter locals from pursuing such employment. The study identifies two key themes in HR strategies: statutory and non-statutory practices. Statutory HR strategies, which are legally mandated, include competitive salaries, medical care, and skill development programs. Conversely, non-statutory HR strategies focus on fostering a positive work environment and addressing the specific needs and wants of migrant workers. These include initiatives like providing free food and accommodation, promoting a good relationship between management and employees, and offering flexibility in work schedules. Such practices not only improve worker morale but also contribute to a more engaged and productive workforce. Future research could expand on these findings by exploring the long-term impacts of these HR strategies on both migrant workers and the organizations that employ them.

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