CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Schematic Description of Chapter Contents

This chapter provides a foreword to the research work and progressively lays the foundation of rationale and significance of the study. The chapter also elucidates concerns of the Indian Media in past and how these connect with the present study. The introduction provides an insight to the world of media professionals in India and describes their work culture, hierarchy, nomenclatures, accreditation system and their challenges.

1.1.1 A Prologue

In a fast pace world that demands excellence, productivity, better output and is ambitiously result oriented in every sphere, the human touch and concern for employees in most industries appears to be vanishing. Profitability and meeting the operational costs have become essential concerns of policy makers in organisations. The cut throat competition in every field has made these commercial factors inevitable too. The ambience provided at workplace assumes special significance for any employee irrespective of the industry he/she is working in. Better standards of living, a de-stressed environment, an individual’s emotional needs and an overall balance in life- these are some of the fundamental facets that require introspection in different sectors and industries considering the contemporary needs and times. Better standard of living and needs of an employee have unfortunately gone amiss due to hectic schedules in organisations which are caught up in shackles of sales, performance and results. Their importance is yet to percolate in the Indian work culture.

An individual is influenced by several factors at his/her workplace. From emotional needs, personal circumstances, cultural background, basics necessities in life, responsibilities other than work, expectations from his/her job, personal and professional goals in life and several other factors influence the work orientation and productivity of an employee. It is the collective inputs of each employee in an organisational set up that eventually leads to team building and an overall desired result.

Among the most crucial organisations that have touched human population across all divides are those related to communication, media and entertainment systems. These media
organisations deliver information that connects the smallest segment of the public to the most advanced, therefore providing a source of connectivity in the society. The role of media organisations in the Indian context is particularly significant due to the enormous diversity of culture, tradition and living standards of its people. Be it political, sports, religious, entertainment, glamour, informative or thought provoking content- the Indian audience serves as a wide platform for media channels to interact, operate and transmit. Be it the conventional forms of media, or radio channels, print media, electronic channels or the internet- all these have touched the life of masses in some way or the other. The media organisations, through news and other mediums, significantly influence people and their perception about the world. They also give the audience or readers an insight into each event occurring in the neighborhood and the far off areas. At the onset of the day, right from which soap to use, to options of healthy breakfast and shaping perception about products, news, views- the media industry in India is catering to all these.

The responsibility of the news and media organisations in disseminating news becomes imperative in a democratic and multi-cultural society. However, understandably, there is a major challenge of surviving in the market in the face of a stiff competition. Maintaining their own economic health, especially in times when the market is flooded with news channels and news organisations, is an arduous task for media houses. In this process of meeting the costs of functioning and matching the competition- several Indian media organisations too are overlooking a crucial component indispensible for human growth. This component is the holistic well-being of media professionals working in these organisations.

Since the task of these professionals in media industry is of meeting deadlines everyday and performing in high pressure situations, their lifestyle and concerns, both professional and personal, are worth pondering upon. In past methods of improving efficacy of employees have been studied by researchers for various sectors and across different industries in the world. The most challenging task for any organisation is to sustain a healthy model of functioning of its employees with progressive environment. Human resource professionals are dedicatedly appointed to streamline functioning of employees in organisations and take care of their needs. Often, it is the economics of journalism and news generation that dominates and employee satisfaction takes a back seat in such a scenario.

The overall size of the media and entertainment industry in India and its contribution in the country’s economic growth is considerably large. Issues concerning this industry are
enormous. These may be issues like government policies concerning media, or internal policy matters related to employees, news content, news production and technology. The growth and contribution of the Indian media sector in the economic progress of the country is substantial.

The evaluation of overall contentment of an employee in an organisation is dependent on several factors like better higher education opportunities, job security, economic benefits, stress at work, autonomy at work place and family-work life balance, among others. Various inventories and methods have been designed in past to gauge various aspects of work life of employees in organisations. In the context of media industry too, the specific challenges of this field need to be considered.

1.1.2 Media Professionals in India

Media professionals in India typically enjoy a powerful status in the society due to the reach and influence of media on the masses. The media professionals include reporters, sub-editors, designers, photo-journalists and co-ordinators or editors in the news section. There is another section in the media houses which deals with the non-news part. This includes departments like response, circulation, marketing and human resource management. However, the editorial and marketing departments are the two prime sections of most Indian media organisations. While the editorial section employees deal with news and stay directly connected with the people in their respective allocated areas or beats, the marketing section however deals with advertisements- which constitutes a prime source of revenue for the organisations.

The usual hierarchy for reporters in Indian print media setup begins with correspondent at the grass root level then senior-correspondent, principal correspondent, special correspondent, city editor or co-ordinator, assistant editor, bureau chief and eventually the resident editor. However, this hierarchy may vary in different media houses. Similarly sub-editors elevate to senior-sub editors or copy writers, chief sub-editor, while photo-journalists and designers elevate to senior level, principal level and eventually head their department. Resident editors usually take care of a larger unit covering bigger cities, states or even couple of states.

Depending on their role assumed in the organisation, a routine day in the life of a media professional comprises gathering news, writing and processing news, editing and designing the pages depending on the role assumed in the organisation. Reporters and photo-journalists in newspapers conventionally cover their beats (specialized area of coverage) during the day
and file the stories in evening. The sub-editor and designers take over once the news and photos are filed and written. Hence, the night shift for most editions is peak working time for sub-editors and designers. The editor and co-ordinator of the team needs to be vigilant throughout the day. Editors are expected to convene meetings and coordinate with national edition of their newspapers for any local news of national importance in their area or vice-versa.

There is no stringent rank and hierarchy system in their print media houses in India even as reporters, who are at the bottom of hierarchy, continue to do the field job and editors, who lead the teams, coordinate all the activities. The missing hierarchy link is both a boon and bane. Reporters and sub-editors enjoy equal status and hence much more autonomy to work and with limited interference in each other’s work. This, however, leads to certain arbitrariness in the system of elevation of media professionals in Indian media houses. A systematic mechanism for promotion is missing in most media organisations, particularly in the editorial section.

The profession of journalism is challenging and media professionals in India have much higher expectations to meet since the competition is stiffer. Each day there is a pressure of performing better than rival newspapers in terms of more accurate and better packaged news.

One of the key methods to recognize full time journalists is the process of accreditation by a government agency. This system assumes significance due to widespread practice engaging stringers and part-time media professionals on a large scale by newspaper industry in India. Accreditation in most states in India is done through the Public Relations department of the local administration or government. For acquiring accreditation, different media houses have different policies. While certain media houses restrict their employees to draw any benefits from the government directly or indirectly, others however are liberal and permit employees to get accreditation. Certain public relations departments also restrict the number of media professionals from one media organisation acquiring accreditation from public relations department. Usually regular or contractual media professionals who are working full time are given accreditation by state after the concerned local editor approves the names. In some cases even veteran journalists and free-lancers are provided accreditation after submission of certain documents. Reporters, sub-editors, photo-journalists, designers and editors are eligible for accreditation, but on recommendation of local editor. Accreditation in the Indian media
context simply connotes that the media professional is employed full time with the organisation or has contributed significantly to the field of journalism.

1.1.3 Media Industry and the Work Culture

*Media Organisations:* The functioning of media industry and the process of news generation is exciting, challenging and employees in this industry need special qualities and unusual energy to work under the extreme pressure of deadlines. The work atmosphere in this sector is most often that of high pressure (Stovall, 2005).

While the editorial content, fairness and style of news coverage by journalists are often deliberated upon (Weaver & Drew, 1995), what seldom gets highlighted is the Quality of Work Life led by professionals in this field, particularly in the environment of deadlines and work expectations.

Contentment for a journalist revolves around professional autonomy, which is an important component for research in mass communication and journalism. Having independence of thought and working style is crucial for journalists. Autonomy has a significant place in this profession (Singer, 2007).

Extreme work pressure to meet deadlines one day after another, as embedded in the nature of media industry, could lead to distortion in Quality of Work Life for media professionals. A newspaper requires completion of several arduous tasks by its reporters that include reporting, covering spots with precision, quick and critical thinking, aggression, deadline, speed, accuracy, fairness, a sense of moral righteousness, and civic duty to name a few (Chaturvedi, 2009).

The measurement of satisfaction and overall contentment of an employee with his job in an organisation depends on several factors. There are certain factors about an employee’s contentment levels which can be gauged with few parameters. These include his earning, benefits given by organisation, education among others. However, there are certain other aspects which cannot be measured as such, for instance job security, opportunities to advance forward or how much authority has been given to the employee (Wright, Olin & Dwyer, 2000).
There are certain other parameters like levels of stress, personal independence given to employee and how connected the employee feels socially within the framework (Sengupta, Edwards & Tsai, 2009) which are also significant.

Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry with KPMG highlighted, in a report published in 2012, the projected growth of the Media & Entertainment industry in India. It reports that nearly 15 percent compounded annual growth is expected by the year 2016 in this industry. The size of the Media & Entertainment industry will then be worth Rs 1,457 billion.

Workplace issues have always been a cause of concern for human resource professionals. The quality of various kinds of jobs has been increasingly noticed by both policy makers and even academicians studying these areas (Sengupta, Edwards, & Tsai, 2009).

Quality of Work Life: The origin of the word Quality of Work Life, one goes back to the reference of an international conference in Geneva. In 1972 at the labor relations conference, the term Quality of Work Life originated (Hian & Einstein, 1990).

The initiatives related to Quality of Work Life taken by any organisation are crucial factors in employee retention, productivity and an excellence output. Quality of Work Life improvement measures may also serve as an inspiration for an employee.

Leadership Styles: A significant aspect of functioning of a team in any newspaper or print media organisation is the style of their leaders in that industry. Editors or the team coordinators in the media organisations, who are the leaders in these organisations, make crucial day to day editorial and other key decisions which may have significant impact in the organisation. Leader is a dynamic factor that makes things happen in an organisation.

Leadership is one area of study which has differing theories and perspectives of how it is practiced and developed (Cummins, 2007).

Stordeur et al (2001) opined that leaders who enable employees to participate in decision-making and encourage communication among subordinates generate favorable work culture. When it comes to studying the leadership styles of professionals in the media industry a suitable definition and context had to be found out. The explanation of Kouzes & Pozner (1995), was found apt as they said that leadership mobilizes others towards a common goal or
aspiration. Therefore, in this context, leadership behavior is reflected when the leader motivates others so strongly in order to desire and move towards a shared vision.

**Organisational Commitment:** Commitment of the media professionals towards their organisation could be influenced by several factors and one of the aspects is how the editor or the team leader deals with employees to keep them committed. In order to create an environment which is conducive for an employee, the leader’s behavior makes a crucial difference.

From the employee’s perspective, the organisational commitment leads to career advancement and rewarding position as suggested by several researchers in human resource management field.

Commitment research has shown that people are more likely to develop higher levels of commitment when they can identify with the values and standards of the organisation (Wiener, 1982).

An employee’s commitment includes several aspects of how he/she perceives his/her organisation and the goals. One of these aspects is the belief in the goals of his/her organisation and the acceptance of this belief. Another is the amount of effort he/she puts in achieving that goal and third is the desire to retain association with the organisation (Porters et al, 1974). From the perspective of the employer, to retain an employee also requires ensuring that the staff thinks and works in synchronization with the goals of organisation.

1.2 Media Professionals and Their Workplace

Most studies concerning the media largely revolve around effects of media consumption and usage. Some other studies are about shaping of news by journalists and perceptions of journalists. The professional role of journalists and their political views have been well researched by social scientists like Patterson & Donsbach (1996) among others.

A research conducted on media professionals reveals how this category of professionals does not know much about the history of their subject. Carey (2007) highlighted has mentioned in a research work that journalists have this perception that journalism has always been like it is today. According to this researcher, media professionals or journalists will benefit if they are trained better and are imparted with some knowledge related to their work more systematically.
Researchers like Altmeppen (2008) have also studied newsroom structure and the work schedule of media persons. 

One of the key works on media professionals is related to work place issues and problems for journalists. Among the recent research works in this direction include those by McQuail (2000) as well as Preston (2009) who focused on the work life of journalists. Shoemaker & Reese (1996) gave a model on levels of influence, which elaborates how news making is influenced at various levels (Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011).

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) which is a global federation of journalists’ trade union published a report in collaboration with WageIndicator, a partner of Amsterdam Institute of Advance Labor Studies, University of Amsterdam. This report- Gender Pay Gap in Journalism (2013) mentions that women journalists continue to face discrimination in terms of wages and benefits.

Besides gender studies, researchers have also probed the connection of the market forces with the newsroom and the culture within the media organisations. Plasser (2005) finds that the media organisations too are driven by profit motive and in the age of commercial environment, cutbacks in newsroom and staff to ensure profitability in organisations is acceptable. Cutting costs is also a part of this profit driven system.

The commercial environment and profit oriented media organisations also affects the content and the profession itself (Plasser, 2005). The profession is focused on ratings and circulations and due to this motive the obvious drift is towards attracting more audience or readership through suitable editorial content to ensure there is no loss of circulation.

Not only the media organisations, but even the journalists are affected by these market forces. Some researchers have worked in this direction to find what print journalists think of the news business and how it affects the opinionated journalism (Kuhn & Neveu, 2002). When media professionals use their own personal judgment, it has no concrete or direct evidence.

Prior to these researchers, Blumer & Kavanagh (1999) found that journalism was constantly and increasingly under the pressure of matching the goals of media organisation. The style of journalism had to be in synchronization with media goals of the company.
The ownership of the media organisations has interested mass communication and journalism researchers, in particular their effect on the work style of media professionals. In past researchers like Weaver & Willnat (2007) have studied these aspects.

Hanitzsch & Mellando (2011) point that this aspect of ownership of media organisations vis-à-vis the news production and other dimensions has long been a significant factor.

Even today media industries are undergoing significant change and there is increasing transformation. Collectively the social, political, economic and technological changes are responsible for visible change in media system in comparison to the last century (Neilsen, Esser, & Levy, 2013). Media systems are no longer isolated and independent, in fact, several aspects of society are affecting them.

In the broader aspect of journalism across the globe today, an American political journalist David S. Broder has said that the press is on the verge of collapse. And this, he mentions, is due to loss of values in journalism as well as the economics of the media and news business (Broder, 2004).

1.3 Emerging Trends in the Indian Media Industry

There are certain issues related to media professionals specific to the Indian Media Industry. These include issues like uneven wages, contractual appointments, promotional policy which have been highlighted by certain journalist federations and research bodies in past.

Following is a brief synopsis of reports concerning the Indian media professionals.

1.3.1. Paid News Culture- Report by International Federation of Journalists (2012)

A report published by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) titled ‘New Frontiers, New Struggles: Press Freedom in South Asia 2011-2012’ highlights these issues related to Indian media professionals and the media system in India. The report elucidates the culture of paid news in India. As a case study, the report highlights the case of 2012 state assembly elections in five states. The root cause of the new-fangled paid news culture in India, which casts a question mark on the integrity of media reporting in India, has to be investigated from a more subtle level questioning the system in organisations.
1.3.2 Job Security of Media Professionals- Press Council of India’s Report (2010)

The statutory body of press- the Press Council of India (PCI) highlighted in its report on ‘Paid News’ issued in 2010 the concern of job security among journalists citing that it is mandatory in order to ensure reliability of news. This report, issued on July 3, 2009, stressed on the importance of having media professionals including correspondents on regular jobs to make sure that malpractices can be controlled in the media sector and fairness ensured. It also raised a concern on the role of correspondents reduced to agents for collection of advertisement in certain newspapers and organisations.

1.3.3 Wages of Journalists- Justice Majithia Commission Recommendations (2010)

Wage fixation process in India was initiated around 1958 and other countries in South Asia followed suit. Despite this, wages of media professionals in present times remains ambiguous and ironical (International Federation of Journalists, 2012). On October 25, 2011 the Union Cabinet of the Government of India officially gave a go ahead to the recommendations of G.R. Majithia Wage Board for journalists and non-journalists, the report for which was submitted in December 2010 to the Ministry of Labour and Employment. These recommendations were the basis of increased wages for newspaper workers. A key problematic area for fixing wages of journalists and non-journalists in media industry was assessment of industry’s capacity to pay its employees. In July 2011, the Supreme Court declined to stay the implementation of this wage board, indicating that media houses have to increase wages. Small newspapers like the Assam Tribune and Maghyamam, have already implemented the wage board recommendations citing an example for the industry. In 2014, the Supreme Court of India upheld its decision of swift implementation of wage board recommendations. However, the execution is awaited at the ground level by media houses.

1.4 Rationale of the Study

It is though prudent to explore the perceived Quality of Work Life and Organisational Commitment of media professionals at this significant moment in the history of Indian media industry when the statutory body- Press Council of India expressed its concern over the “paid news syndrome” (Highlighted in the 2014 Press Release by PCI on General Elections and PCI’s report of 2009-2010 as well), at the same time several changes are being observed in the style of news coverage with the advent of scores of electronic, digital and social media channels; the verdict of Supreme Court of India to uphold implementation of Justice Majithia
wage board recommendations to fix wages for journalists and non-journalists came about in the year 2014.

The rationale behind the study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of work life of accredited media professionals and to study the work-atmosphere in the media organisations which may affect the lifestyle and functioning of these professionals. The study aims to find whether leadership styles of editors and quality of work life of these media professionals has a significant impact on their decision to continue with the organisation.

A critical analysis of the present status of the work environment in media industry of India is undertaken. Since the Indian media industry is pegged as the fourth estate of world’s largest democracy, hence work life of employees in this industry assumes significance.

1.4.1 Significance of the Study

This study assumes special significance since it involves a relevant concern prevailing among practicing journalists in the present times- Quality of Work Life of media professionals. Media professionals have the onus of transmitting news, more often than not their own work lives are the least talked about as well as discussed. Typically organisations pay heed to Quality of Work Life of its employees to ensure that the work environment is good, profitable output and to achieve overall excellence, whether in terms of retaining employees or productivity. However, first there is a need to understand if Quality of Work Life is valued or Quality of Work life measures existing in a particular system of functioning. Its relevance, say researchers, is still to be understood by most Indian organisations (Sinha, 2012).

An in-depth analysis of Quality of Work Life of media professionals in India will give an overview of the state of human resource management and work life of journalists’ in this industry. This in turn can be an excellent base for future research in this industry and also enable an evaluation of improvisations needed for concern of journalists in India. This study assumes special significance since this facet of journalists’ life has not been researched upon in past.

Including media professionals, a major concern of employees in most sectors is the problems in juggling their work and family life and responsibilities. The work hours, the practice of both parents earning leads to a situation where nobody is at home to take care of family. Eventually the frustration effects both work and family life. Because of this, several organisations have now begun to focus on “totally integrated employee benefits system” to enable their employees to adjust (Morrison, 1992).
Studying Leadership Styles in the context of Indian media is a pertinent subject particularly when editorial stewardship is dominated by profit motives in media organisations. The power and influence exerted by the Indian editors as leaders has another side to it. This is how their subordinates relate with their supervisors as leaders in this industry. The study assumes significance since it gauges and evaluates this fundamental component of the media industry- the leadership styles of the editors in this industry.

The correlations being explored in this study related to Quality of Work Life and Leadership Styles with Organisational Commitment of media professionals, aims to explore the reasons of commitment or non-commitment of media professionals in India towards their organisations. Studies based on Organisational Commitment, Quality of Work Life and Leadership Styles have been conducted in past for different sectors in various industries in India and world over.

This study opens up avenues to explore organisational climate in media industry and thereby finding ways of improving efficacy of media professionals. The current scenario in the Indian media set-up, as media professionals keenly await effective implementation of Justice Majithia wage board recommendations for better pay scales, these concerns of work life, leadership and commitment of these professionals makes the present study more significant to the industry needs and circumstances.