



Awareness and Implementations of Decent Work Practices: A case study of Pakistan Railways

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Abstract- The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding about the awareness and implementation of Decent Work Practices in Pakistan Railways. This study is exploratory in nature. The qualitative data were collected using in-depth face-to-face interviews. Eighteen different respondents from nine core departments of the Pakistan Railways agreed to participate in our study. Purposive sampling methods were used to identify and select the key informants of the study. This study has found that the awareness as well as the implementation of key Decent Work Practices in Pakistan Railways is lacking. However, the employees are willing to continue working despite the poor working conditions due to the high unemployment rate and few employment opportunities available in the labor market. Yet the level of their curiosity to know about their labor rights in terms of Decent Work Practices is very high. Another interesting finding of the study is that the perceptions of higher authorities, their level of awareness and concern to the employee's issues is very low. This also represents a significant communication gap between different levels of management. Moreover, there is a significant lack of a fully functional and distinct Human Resource Department.

Keywords: Decent work practices, Pakistan Railways, Sustainable Development Goals.

I. INTRODUCTION

Various dimensions of jobs have received a growing amount of public policy and scholarly attention over the last two decades. Analysts have noted that getting a work alone could not be sufficient to guarantee even a basic quality of life for many people. (Brendan Burchell, Kirsten Sehnbruch, 2014).

At the beginning of new millennium in 2000, world leaders gathered at the United Nations in order to shape a vision for fighting against poverty and its dimensions. These include income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion. They are also basic rights—the rights of each person to health, education, shelter and security. This was translated in the “Millennium Development Goals” MDG’s and became development framework for the past 15 years (United Nations, 2015). As described by Bill Gates, the MDGs have become a type of global report card for fighting against poverty for the 15 years from 2000 to 2015. Despite shortfalls, MDG’s played an important role in securing the progress. It was suggested that globally accepted goals should continue beyond 2015. The idea of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) gained grounds because of urgency of sustainable development for the entire world (Sachs, 2012).

“Experience shows that economic growth, on its own, is not sufficient. We must do more to empower individuals through decent work, support people through social protection, and ensure the voices of the poor and marginalized are heard.”

(UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon).

Economic, social, and environmental protection are also addressed in the 2030 Agenda. It has 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will draw on the Millennium Development Goals' success (MDGs). Goal 8 emphasises the role of decent work in promoting sustainable development. It seeks to "promote equitable and sustainable economic growth, full employment, and opportunity for all." (ILO, 2015).

There is increasing consensus among scholars that employment generation does not guarantee social, economic and political inclusion, citizenship and basic rights (Klink, 2015).

Moreover employment generation is also impeded by minimum wage increases and other laws (Reich & West, 2015). Globalization and the economic crisis poses enormous obstacles, as well as opportunities, in the workplace, for advancing civil rights such as the right to fair jobs. It is already commonly accepted that neoliberal policies across the last three decades have resulted in increased income disparity and poverty.

It has an effect on people's desire to pursue good jobs and enjoy decent lives. (Macnaughton & Frey, 2007). The terms job quality, quality of work, quality of employment and decent work are used interchangeably in the literature (Burchell, Sehnbruch, Piasna, & Agloni, 2014).

Half of the world's population already exists on less than \$2 a day, and getting a career does not mean that you will be able to avoid poverty in many countries. According to studies, upholding decent job conditions will also contribute to increased employee participation..(Kashyap, Nakra, & Arora , 2021).

The government of Pakistan acknowledges the value of Decent Work as a way to alleviate poverty and inequality as one of the first member countries to plan and introduce DWCPs (Decent Work Country Programs). Pakistan is reportedly the world's sixth most polluted region.

Pakistan is a lower middle income country with a gross national income per capita, in 2021 of US \$1190. The country has the world's ninth largest labor force, with around 61 million workers (Newcomb, 2016). Young employees presents an important labor market segment as Pakistan undergoes a demographic transition. In 2020 Pakistan Labor force participation rate stood at 50.2%. According to the Decent Work Country Profile of Pakistan, Pakistan has decent work deficits in all four fields of the Decent Work Agenda: work rights, economic development, social protection, and social dialogue. In Pakistan, six out of ten workers are at risk of losing their jobs. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 75 percent of the female population is vulnerable, compared to 55 percent of male employees. Pakistan's labour force is also growing at a faster pace than the country's population, reducing job opportunities. Long-term unemployment, job instability, informality, working poverty, and gender imbalances are all issues that need to be addressed. Minimum wage coverage is limited, and enforcement is ineffective. Poor workplace health and safety are often recorded and thought to be universal. (ILO, 2014). The limited number of decent or quality jobs combined with a rapid growing labour force is becoming problematic. People are forced to accept work under inferior conditions, or move into the informal economy. ILO defined a vulnerable person as one who is working under inadequate conditions because of weak institutional employment arrangements, and therefore is under risk of lacking decent work.

The concern about decent work needs historical reference, back in 1960, in the golden age of developed countries, the rights of workers and the constitution of welfare state were compatible with fast and stable growth. Dynamic efficiency and social justice were considered complementary rather contradictory. Since 1970, mass employment and focus on job creation and innovation led the organizations to tradeoff between economic efficiency and social justice (Boyer, 2006). The Preamble to the 1919 Constitution of ILO states that "universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice" (Macnaughton & Frey, 2007). Most disadvantaged people in the developed world have jobs, but the challenge is that eradicating poverty is all about ensuring that the amount and nature of potential work is such that it will contribute to poverty elimination rather than creating sustainable growth and livelihood opportunities (Bell & Newitt, 2010).

Countries, like Pakistan, describe their Decent Work Objectives in National Plans of Action for Decent Work (NPADW), which are aligned with national policy structures and international agreements including the International Labour Standards (ILS) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Pakistan's progress towards the Millennium Development Goals were affected by events both within and outside the world. Natural disasters, man-made crises, institutional shifts, shaky promises to systemic economic reforms, and a lack of localization of the MDG agenda at the regional level are among them. (Planning Commission, 2014). In Pakistan, six out of ten employed people are considered to be vulnerable, or "at risk of lacking decent work" (ILO, 2015). The creation of "full and productive employment and decent work for all" is a major challenge in Pakistan. Pakistan's performance in the past, in terms of achieving MDG's (Millennium Development Goals) does not seem very encouraging. This situation demands for devising a strategy that is able to involve and actively engage different social groups of Pakistani society towards attaining the SDGs.

According to the Pakistan Development Review, the lack of proper safeguards is one of the most prominent features of Pakistani workplaces. This state of affairs is found to extend to the organised market as well. Long working hours are another facet of Pakistan's job crisis. In Pakistan, one-third of the employed work for 56 hours or more a week; Longer working hours, along with lower pay and poor working conditions, are significant problems.

As for the SDG's, planning commission is active and is trying to engage provincial and development departments. Thus the question that arises is that, are the employees of Pakistan aware of the concept "Decent Work" and what is the situation of its implementation in public sector organizations of Pakistan. As Pakistan is committed towards the achievement of SDGs. The study will explore the ways by which employees can be provided with the decent work conditions.

Following questions will be the main focus of the study:

- 1) What is the situation of decent work practices? Determine the extent to which, decent working conditions are provided in Pakistan Railways?
- 2) How decent working conditions can be provided to employees and what will be its benefit?
- 3) What are the challenges in the way of “implementation of decent work practices in Pakistan Railways” and what are the ways to cope with these challenges

Based on the above research questions, following are the objectives of the study:

- 1) To determine the level of Decent Work Practices in Pakistan Railways
- 2) To identify the ways for providing decent working conditions to employees of Pakistan Railways
- 3) To investigate the challenges in the effective implementation of decent work practices in Pakistan Railways

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. What is decent work?

Mr. Juan Somavia, Director General of the International Labor Organization (ILO), coined the word "decent jobs" in his speech to the 87th International Labor Conference in 1999. Mr. Somavia described decent work as "productive work that protects rights and produces a sufficient income with adequate social security.

ILO identified a set of indicators to measure decent work which are eleven general characteristics which people around the world consider important elements of decent work. These are as follows:

1. Employment opportunities
2. Unacceptable work
3. Adequate earnings and productive work
4. Decent hours
5. Stability and security of work
6. Fair treatment in employment and at work
7. Safe work environment
8. Social protection
9. Combining work and family life
10. Social dialogue and workplace relations
11. Economic and social context of decent work

Throughout the study, we focus on these indicators to find out the extent of decent work.

Decent work agenda is a coordinated set of objectives resulting in actions and policies, which empower both men and women. Studies show that there is a positive relationship between job quality and quantity while some observers in developed countries argue that there is a tradeoff between the two. Several arguments are put forward to support this view like cost associated with quality prevents hiring and effect competitiveness in the countries with high quality standards while others argue that quality has a positive impact on quantity as good working conditions enhances productivity and better conditions make work more attractive so there is a positive correlation among two (Ernst, Hagemeyer, Marcadent & Oelz, 2012).

In 2004, Sachs identified that despite scientific and technical advancement, there are two major problems: mass unemployment and growing inequalities. In order to solve these issues, a re-approximation between ethics, economics and politics is needed. Employment not only affects household income but also other dimensions of wellbeing at individual and societal level. It impacts self-esteem, mental and physical health and social cohesion so influence of employment on wellbeing depends both on availability of job opportunities but also on its characteristics (Ostermeier, Linde, Lay, & Prediger, 2015).

In 2008, employment target was incorporated in Millennium Development Goals framework, “achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people”. In developing countries, states have competing power structures, the financial and administrative problems make it difficult to reach the bulk of population (Baccaro, 2001).

The inclusion of decent work in Sustainable Development Goals also demonstrates its importance. Following dimensions of decent work will be discussed.

2.1.1. Employment Opportunities

According to ILO, the jobs crisis is one of the biggest security risks of our time. Job creation and employment opportunities is essential but not sufficient condition for decent work and poverty reduction,

it involves a reorientation in favor of the poor (pro-poor growth). Researches showed that there must be an integration between skill policy and employment policy (Meager, 2009).

Unemployment causes a great wastage of resources, depressing the income of people. In Pakistan, the most frequent reasons of reduced employment opportunities are reduction in foreign direct investment, challenges faced by agricultural sector such as water and energy shortage, climate changes and technological backwardness, reduction in trade and industrial activity and rapid growth of population (Akram, Khan, Nawab Khan, & Tufail, 2012).

According to Pakistan Economic Survey, employment opportunities depend on resources, technological advancements and strategies of institutions, Human capital skills and competency defines the outcome of employment and contributes in achieving sustained economic growth. Statistics show that labor force increased from 50 million in 2005-6 to 57.2 million in 2020 so 7.2 million people joined the labor force in a decade (Ministry of Planning Development and Reforms Pakistan, 2020). In the international Labor Review of 2013, five main causes of unemployment in less developed countries were identified: First is overpopulation relative to the resources of the country, second is restrictions on exports to developed countries, third is overvalued foreign exchange rates, fourth is low levels of productivity and fifth is a too high propensity to import (Jouhau, 2013). Even in countries with low unemployment rates, there is a segment of individuals who find it difficult to get employed in regular labor market (Eppel, 2017).

Researchers suggested ways to enhance employment opportunities in Pakistan by providing effective security measures, promoting industrial development in competition free environment, reducing energy crisis, arrangements for skill development and effective policy measures (Habib-Ur-Rehman, 2012).

2.1.2. Adequate earning and productive work

Every country set certain rules and regulations in order to ensure that the laws of minimum wages are not violated. Despite this, labor force faces serious problems and is not paid properly. The employers try to maximize the profits negating the right of employees regarding wage and other labor standards. The concept of unpaid overtime is increasing not only in developing countries but also in developed countries. Jefferson and Preston (2010) reported the experiences of labor market and reforms and found that women face a lot of challenges including unpaid overtime, low wages, long working hours and changes in employment conditions. Moreover confidentiality agreements to keep pay a secret is also a signal that differences exist.

Skill level can increase position of workers. According to labor and social policy, work can get people out of poverty (Lloyd & Mayhew, 2010). Pay is an important factor for motivating employees but it is declining due to decline in employment from 5.2 million to 3.2 million, decreasing union density, changes in organization of work (Arrowsmith & Marginson, 2010). Unemployment decreases the bargaining power of the employees and affects the wage share negatively. Productivity per worker decreases the wage share due to capital intensity in production. The type of industry also moderates this relationship as the wage share will be higher in the labor intensive as compared to capital intensive industry (Bengtsson, 2014). The policies relevant to minimum wages are more beneficial to high skilled workers. (Nguyen, Ni Lin, & Ngwenya, 2021)

Wage dispersion can enhance firm productivity, skill of the workforce and working conditions moderates the relationship between the two (Mahy, Rycx, & Volral, 2011). The differences in the performance pay can be studied on the bases of subjective and objective differences (Xiu & Gunderson, 2013). It is found that people in occupations of providing care for others such as childcare and teaching suffer a wage penalty. They are paid 6% less than their peers in other occupations. Many caring jobs are done by women, which mean that such penalties will contribute to the gender differences (Barron & West, 2013). Social actors can play a role in shaping pay-equity outcomes of minimum wage (Grimshaw, Bosch, & Rubery, 2013). Employees performance is influenced by pay structure and incentives (MERRIMAN & SEN, 2012). Government of Pakistan raised the minimum wage rate from Rs. 14000 to Rs. 17500 for unskilled workers with effect from April, 2021.

2.1.3. Decent Hours

According to the Marxist economist, employees are paid only for the fraction of the working hours and the profits come from this under payment. Another commonly noticed phenomenon, unpaid overtime increases the working hours of employees thus decreasing the wage rate. It was found that men have 11% more probability of unpaid overtime as compared to women while age is decreasing this trend. White collar workers are also showed 18% more probability of unpaid overtime as compared to white collar job holders. The policy of reduced working hours can be very effective (Ioannides, 2014). Economists

observed that reduction in working hours enhanced the productivity of employees (Pencavel, 2015). In the same way Kallis et.al (2013) found that reducing working hours can absorb unemployment in the short run and can contribute positively for the quality of people's life as rich countries do not become rich by working more, they actually worked less as they grew richer and more productive (Kallis, Kalush, O'Flynn, Rossiter, & Ashford, 2013). Moreover long working hours affect the health of workers resulting in increased stress, impaired mental health, headaches, increase in risk-inducing behavior and reduction in sociability time (Devetter & Rousseau, 2011). Excessive hours and rigidities about it exist in labor market and these impair welfare of employees (Böheim & Taylor, 2004). Now a days work is characterized by high workloads and weak relationship between workers and organizations (ELLEN, 2016). Recently effect of reduced working hours on health is also studied (Anchez, 2017).

2.1.4. Stability and security of Work

According to the International Labour Organization, social stability refers to employers' safety from changes in earned wages as a result of job loss. Job losses may occur during economic downturns, as part of consolidation, or for a variety of other causes. In several parts of the world, the rise of non-standard jobs – contractual assignments, temporary agency and dispatched work, dependent self-employment, marginal part-time work – has heightened employees' fears about job stability over the past few decades. Employment security refers to the extent to which organizations provide stable employment to employees (Zacharatos, Barling, & Iverson, 2005). Organizations provide employment security in long term perspective as it is an investment of time and resources in employees which would be reciprocated in terms of loyalty to the organization (Tsui et al., 2013). Employment security results in trust in management which is associated with organizational performance (Author & McAllister, 1995). Employees feel more secure in public sector jobs and least secure in temporary jobs (Clark & Postel-Vinay, 2009) thus reducing turnover intention of employees (Gielen & Tatsiramos, 2012). Organizations invest in training and development of employees in order to increase productivity (Bjerregaard, Haslam, & Morton, 2016). The economic situation of a country shapes the views of people about the political structure as the economic insecurity resulted in downfall of major democratic regimes so governments take care of employee's rights (Anderson & Pontusson, 2007). Organizations are now trying to change their age discriminatory approaches (Muller-camen & Flynn, 2014). Moreover flexible arrangements for aging population are introduced by employers (Atkinson & Sandiford, 2016). Government of Pakistan devised labor policies to ensure that rights of employees are protected. The constitution of Pakistan contains provisions regarding labor rights as article 37 make provision for securing just and human conditions of work.

2.1.5. Fair treatment in employment

Hundreds of millions of workers face discrimination at jobs, according to the International Labor Organization, which not only violates a fundamental human right but also has broader social and economic implications. Discrimination stifles opportunity and exacerbates socioeconomic divisions and disparities by wasting human talent required for sustainable development. Despite tremendous progress, women nevertheless believe they must overcome obstacles to succeed (Ghorbani & Tung, 2007).

Employees are concerned about how fairly they are treated on the outcomes they receive and treatment within the organization (Williams, Pitre, & Zainuba, 2002). Relationship between employees and employer defines their perceptions of fairness (Trefalt, 2013). As Greenberg also found that both distributive (Organization reward system) and procedural justice (Organization decision making process) accounts for fair treatment with employees (Greenberg, 1990). There can be many types of unfair treatment and Cortina (2008) studied that workplace incivility is also a masked discrimination against some groups (Cortina, 2008). Discrimination and unfair treatment against women still persists in developing countries despite government policies and laws (Othman & Othman, 2015). Organizations can reap long term benefits by providing a fair and just environment to its employees as Staff develop a general belief about their organisation based on how much it works for their welfare and values their commitment, according to Organization Support Theory (OST). (Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997). Similarly, according to Social Exchange Theory (SET), whenever one party treats the other well, a mutual arrangement develops between them, and the other party reciprocates with favourable care. (Blau, 1964). Furthermore, staff cooperation in unpredictable circumstances is contingent on the organization's trustworthiness (Melkonian, Monin & Noorderhaven, 2011).

2.1.6 Safe Work Environment

In order to maintain a healthy workplace atmosphere, occupational safety seeks to avoid injuries caused by improper employee conduct and/or an unsafe work environment (Sadullah & Kanten, 2009). Psychological climate refers to the employee perception of work environment and when these perceptions are shared by a group of employees in an organization, it is called organization climate (Neal & Griffin, 2002). Safety culture of an organization affects the attitude and behavior of employees about the organization's health and safety performance (Cooper, D.M., 2008). The trust in management and perceived safety climate of employees leads to High Performance Work Systems in Organizations. HPWS assumes that employees are a source of competitive advantage and will perform at higher levels if they are motivated to do so (Zacharatos et al., 2005). It is believed that 60-80% of accident causations are attributed to human factors so senior management commitment to safety should be monitored regularly (Flin, 2003). If employees are provided with a safe work environment then the productivity and profitability of the organization increases and the rate of accidents and losses decreases (Agwu, 2012). Employee's attitude towards safety performance is moderated by safety climate i.e. adherence to safety procedures and carrying out work in a safe manner is high in organizations where there are strict rules and regulations about safety (Clarke & Ward, 2006).

As Kath (2010) studied that workers, managers, policy makers and leaders are all stakeholders of workplace safety as workplace injuries are fatal and devastating to both workers and organizations (McGonagle & Kath, 2010).

2.1.7 Social Protection

The term "social security" refers to a series of policies and services aimed at reducing poverty and insecurity by fostering competitive labour markets, lowering people's risk exposure, and improving their ability to protect themselves from hazards and lack of income (ADB, 2003). Socio-economic security is important for the wellbeing of individuals and families. By responding to the need of the people, social protection enhances social inclusion and cohesion by providing building blocks of secure communities and stable societies (García & Gruat, 2003). Social protection is a powerful tool for tackling poverty, inequality, food security, income security, education and health thus helping in achievement of at least six of eight Millennium Development Goals. 80% of the global population has no access to social protection (Piece, 2012). Social protection has been largely neglected in the developing countries as more emphasis has been placed on economic growth but now the overall rationale for pursuing social protection is to promote dynamic, cohesive and stable and sustainable societies through increased equity and security (Norton, Conway, & Foster, 2001). Social protection programs can help in achieving greater equity and supporting national, human and economic development (Unicef, 2012). Social protection programs must incorporate strategies for improving gender equalities as targeting women for social protection benefits significantly improves the education, health and growth of children. So social protection must be provided to all without any discrimination (Nyst, 2012). Providing social protection to all individuals is obligatory for the state as it involves the basic human rights (Ehrenpreis, 2006).

Economically, social security programmes have been criticized for having a negative effect on economic growth. Critics contend that these strategies are expensive and limit opportunity to spend in other focus areas; but, by the end of the twentieth century, these arguments had been disproved by the examples of countries that had achieved economic, political, and social progress (García & Gruat, 2003). In order to promote social protection, a range of policy reforms, programs and delivery mechanisms are required. (Coudouel, Ezemenari, & Grosh, 2001).

2.1.8 Work-life balance

In today's dynamic market world, striking a balance between work and family life is critical. Lack of commitment, absenteeism, attrition, low productivity, lack of innovation, and poor retention will all result from a work-life imbalance (Lazăr, Osoian, & Rațiu, 2010).

Work family conflict can take three forms: Time conflict, Conflict between roles and behavioral conflict and it affects both mental and physical health of an individual (St-Amour, Laverdure, Devault & Manseau, 2007).

Work-life balance policies should be included in organization's strategic plans. This will help in attracting and retaining employees with great skills and expertise (Ojo, Salau, & Falola, 2014). Modern organizations

put too much pressure on employees to be competitive. In Pakistan employees face increased level of stress and conflict as organizations are becoming globally competitive (Hussain, Mujtaba, Southeastern & Lauderdale, 2012). Work-life imbalance reduces the effectiveness of individuals at work (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003).

Flexible work hours, shortened work weeks (employees work a full week's worth of hours in four days and take the fifth off), work at home (telework), job share (sharing a full-time job with two employees), family leave services (e.g., parental leave, adoption leave), on-site childcare, and financial and/or informational support are some of the ways that companies attempt to maintain work-family harmony. (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Work/life balance is also a concern for employees and according to Sturges and Guest some early career graduates spend more time on job depending on their psychological contract and organizational commitment. Organizations have to devise their policies and practices to take care of employees work and non-work life (Sturges & Guest, 2004). Now a day's demographic changes are leading to aging workforce compelling firms to introduce practices which ensure inclusion of all employees regardless of age (Muller-camen & Flynn, 2014) thus embracing decent work for all.

2.1.9. Social Dialogue

The International Labor Organization defines social dialogue as "all forms of or simply between, or among, members of governments, employers, and employees on matters of mutual interest relating to economic and social policy." The strongest tool for fostering improved living and working environments, as well as social justice, is social dialogue. It serves as instrument and a tool of good governance in various areas from making the economy more performing and competitive to its contribution for more equitable and stable society. Social dialogue can be bipartite (only labor unions and employers) or tripartite (involving government as an official party to dialogue). There is a strong relationship between trade union commitment and union participation (Bolton et al., 2007).

Employees join unions in order to negotiate fair wages and working conditions. Collective bargaining provides the basis for sound labor relations. Employees join unions to engage in social dialogue. Unions represent and negotiate on behalf of working people (Ethical Trading Initiative, 2010). The literature on unions is vast and most of it focuses on its efficiency reducing role while some economists find a positive aspect in union (Donado & Wa'ldé, 2012). Unions exert a strong pressure on employer organization as well as on govt. for economic and social uplift of its members. Unions negotiate on unemployment, job security, opportunity for advancement, tariffs, health care, wages and social security (Malik, Basit, & Qazi, 2011). Decent work practices ensure that employee's voice and concerns are heard, traditionally it was believed that union membership enhance the perception of voice at organizational level (Benson & Brown, 2010). Decent Work is more than core labor standards. The absence of slavery, abusive child labor and the most basic forms of discrimination are not sufficient conditions to make work "decent".

2.1.10 Economic and social context

Now a day, labor market security assesses the ability to obtain work; it is determined by unemployment, under employment, regulation at work and difficulty in finding work (Kantor, 2006). The global job crisis is one of the strongest risks. People do not have sufficient work opportunities and the available ones lack decent conditions. Economic growth is not sufficient; there must be policies in favor of poor. This needs change in laws, policies and practices.

2.2 What decent work practices can achieve

Despite major advances in human society, the world is facing humanitarian crisis (Reuben, 2014). Working conditions can affect the level of motivation and performance of employees. In most of industries work environment is not safe which can affect productivity of employees and profits of organizations (Chandrasekar, 2011). Employees join trade unions to get their voices heard as they find it difficult to speak to management individually (Ethical Trading Initiative, 2010). So organizations can create a decent and just environment where employees can communicate with the management freely.

Decent work can help in specifying the development objective. It helps in achieving both economic and social wellbeing of a society (Fields, 2003). The objective of employment helps in utilizing the full potential of qualified members of society, the second objective, work rights helps in improving the social conditions and eliminating the discrimination, in the same way fair and just environment is impossible without representation and dialogue (Majid, 2001).

To keep up with the rise of the working-age population, over 600 million new jobs will be required by 2030. That works out to around 40 million people a year. We must also change the lives of the 780 million women and men who serve but do not raise enough to pull themselves and their families out of poverty on a daily basis. We would see increased better employment opportunities as well as more robust, equitable, and poverty-reducing growth if we place job creation at the centre of economic policy-making and development plans.

According to International labor organization, decent work is not only an objective but a way towards sustainable development. With its focus on a living wage, job stability, and social justice for individuals and households, decent employment is a clear way to minimize economic power disparities.

III. PAKISTAN RAILWAYS IN CONTEXT

In 1947, after Pakistan became an independent state, 1,947 route miles (3,133 km) of North Western Railways were transferred to Pakistan from British India.

Pakistan Railways is one of the oldest and largest public sector institution. There are more than 90,000 employees working in Pakistan Railways. It contains 10 core departments which work in collaboration with each other. There are eight divisions of Pakistan Railways, researcher decided to conduct an exploratory research on one division which includes 29 districts. Multan Division was selected as it is the largest division of Pakistan on the basis of its area and jurisdiction.

All the major decisions about Pakistan Railways are taken by government. The current study will investigate that how government is ensuring Decent Work Practices in a public sector institution majorly influenced by its decisions. Qualitative research method was used and face to face interviews were conducted. The results of this study will help in identifying the factors in Pakistan Railways that need to be considered in order to achieve the goal 8 of "Sustainable Development Goals" which is to achieve decent working conditions and economic development for all.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This part describes the methods used in this study to include clarity in the research process. The analysis process, sampling method, data sources, and research instrument are all discussed.

The use of a proper research approach is an important part of successful research. Based on the style of study used, there are three kinds of testing designs: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed process (Creswell, 2007). We chose a qualitative approach for this study for several compelling reasons. O' Leary, (2010) argued that scientific methodology is used to investigate a "single fact" obtained from mathematical evidence and analysis, according to the argument. A greater number of people are involved in this. The knowledge extracted, however, is less detailed. The 'how' part of a study issue, on the other hand, is normally answered using a qualitative approach, which allows for more variation and depth of response.

A case study is a robust research method especially when in depth investigation is required. It allows exploration and understanding of complex issues (Zainal, 2007). Considering that this research examines decent work practices and their effective implementation in Pakistan, the case study method is considered appropriate for this research. When using the case study method, researchers are faced with deciding between utilizing single or multiple cases (Yin, 2003).

Information from secondary sources was collected prior to conducting interviews in order to provide background information about Pakistan Railways. This includes policies, reports and labor statistics.

To facilitate the validity of the results and the earlier requirement for an accurate understanding of the data, the main source of data were taken from face-to-face individual interviews with members from different departments. Participants were selected on the basis of their ranks and scales. This approach was a reflection of the theory that case studies often use triangulation or multi-method to ensure the validity of its results (Tellis, 1997).

To determine the implementation of decent work practices in Pakistan Railways, there is a need to operationalize the key term: Decent work was divided into the four aspects and eleven indicators as reported in the literature. O' Leary (2010) explained that in exploratory research, it is appropriate to

select key informants who have a deeper understanding of a particular situation rather than resorting to representative samples (O' Leary, 2010). Thus we used Purposive Sampling in which the researcher uses his or her own judgment about which respondents to choose, and picks those who best meets the purposes of the study. We selected 18 employees from nine core departments of Pakistan Railways, Multan Division. Two core Informants from each department were selected. We tried to include employees of lower, middle and upper ranks.

The systematic analysis was done in order to categorize the data into some meaningful classification scheme. The significant statements were identified from the transcribed interviews that pertain directly to the studied phenomena and formulated the meaning of those statements. Categories were created and then subcategories were developed for each category based on the answer given. Furthermore, interviewees and organizations were numbered and coded as well to link the answers. In the end the similarities and differences with respect to Decent Work Practices were determined. Microsoft Excel is used by the researcher to analyze the data and color coding to identify the key themes. The statements were breakdown in parts to identify the similarities and differences in responses. Different colors were assigned to differentiate and identify the themes separately.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 5.1. Employment Opportunities

5.1.1. Job Openings

The respondents from the case organization were asked to describe about frequency of job openings. This question was asked in order to know about job opportunities in Pakistan Railways. They identified that frequency of job openings depend upon no. of vacant positions, govt. policies, promotion of employees, economic situation of country, unions's pressure, new project implementation and approval from ministries. The most influential factor remained policies of government.

A respondent from commercial branch stated that:

"New jobs are announced by Govt. of Pakistan. It depends on the number of vacant positions. There is no specific time interval."

Similarly a respondent, who was an officer in engineering department, described that:

"From 1 to 10 scales, this is under railway administration following the same standardized procedure of advertisement, taking approvals from Establishment ministry of Railways and finance administration etc. For the next level, procedure remains same but they come under FPSC, there are also some CSS officers each year."

He explained the process of job opening and its implications.

5.1.2. Internal vs. external hiring

Respondents were asked about hiring decisions. They were asked about promotion of employees through internal hiring versus external induction. All the 18 employees described that both mechanism are used in Pakistan Railways and there is quota for employees of Pakistan Railways.

One employee from engineering branch stated that

"Both mechanisms are used in Pakistan Railways. One has to go through the same process for both type of hiring process. It depends on the nature of job and vacant positions. There is certain quota for internal hiring and they have to follow the same process. The number of seats reserved for internal hiring depends on the policies devised by ministry of railways."

An employee from vigilance department described about quota of employees and their children, he stated that

"There is quota for internal employees and employees children also. Preference is also given in some cases. The external hiring is on open merit with a few exceptions of quotas for certain categories like women, old age, disabled, minorities etc. The mechanism is same for both; all have to pass the written examination, medical fitness test, interviews etc"

Quota for employees is less. Most of the promotions remain due because of this factor.

So both type of hiring is used. 10 out of 18 employees stated that quota for employees is less and it is violating their right

5.1.3. Equal Employment Opportunity

Respondents were asked about employment decisions and how disabled, women, minorities and other groups are given equal opportunity to work. All of them responded that there is a quota for such categories and it is mentioned in the advertisement each time vacancies are announced. 5 out of 18 employees responded that the quota depends on the discretion of ruling government. 3 of them responded that in some departments there is no space for disabled such as police and traffic control department. So it also depends on the nature of work.

A respondent stated that:

"It is mentioned in the advertisement each time. There is equal opportunity for all. There is quota for minorities, retired army men and women. As it is a security force so there is no place for disabled people."

So the laws of equal employment opportunity are not updated according to current needs. The rules and regulations of Pakistan Railways were set hundred years ago and are still being followed.

Theme 5.2. Workplace Safety and Security

5.2.1 Facilities for Disabled Employees

Respondents were asked about facilities provided to disabled employees working in Pakistan Railways. 12 out of 18 employees stated that there are no special facilities. Disabled people are hired keeping in view their disability factor and their job is designed according to that. Apart from this there are no special facilities for disabled employees.

A respondent from Finance department stated:

"There are no employees with major disabilities. In the same way such persons are small in number. So no special arrangements are made."

A union member stated that

"No special arrangements are made. Mostly they are in clerical job."

They are placed at a position suitable to their needs and keeping in view their disability factor and their colleagues support them.

5.2.2 Risky Environment

Respondents were asked about the risks involved while they were on duty. It was identified that Pakistan Railway Police, Engineering Branch, Traffic Control department face risky environment. Moreover in these departments, lower level employees have such issues. Officers have no such problems. Officers said that Pakistan Railways is trying to provide maximum security while lower level staff (mostly of grades 1-10), who are working in fields face risky environment.

They identified the following risks involved while they are on duty. No arrangement for uncertain situation, posting to distant areas, lack of proper armaments, risk of terror attacks, robbery attacks in train, electricity breakdowns, engine faults and signal problems.

3 out of 18 employees, who were officers of 16 and 17 scale stated said that there are risks but government tries to mitigate those risk no such issues.

5.2.3. Workplace Injuries

Respondents were asked about frequency of workplace injuries and security measures. All the respondents stated that there are cases of workplace injuries. There are some major accidents in the history of Pakistan Railways. Some of the injuries are due to negligence and lack of proper security measures. 13 respondents stated that there are no proper security measures even after accidents.

Chief booking clerk from commercial department stated:

"Workplace injuries and death can occur. There may be different reasons. Most of the time negligence of employees is the major cause. There can be some technical problems too. Some most dangerous accidents in the history are caused by negligence."

Employees also told that nothing changes even after accidents and deaths because this too requires approvals from ministries. A structural change is required in order to bring reforms in this department. So we found that there are no proper security measures for employees of Pakistan Railways. There are some departments which are very risky. Cases of injuries are also there. System change is required in Pakistan Railways.

Theme 5.3. Working Hours

5.3.1. Overtime/Extra Hours

Respondents were asked about their working hours and whether they work extra hours or not. They told that officially they are paid for 8 hours but mostly they work extra hours which is considered part of their duty. There are 2-3 departments where employees leave offices on time. 15 out of 18 employees stated that they do work extra hours. Women interviewees reported that they do not work extra hours and leave on time. They have no problems about it. This practice was same for officers as well as junior employees. All of them have long working hours. DSE engineering described it as:

"The nature of work is like we have to work extra hours. It's a moving wheel department and we say in our unofficial language, we have to move with its wheels."

So researchers found that all employees with the exception of few (clerical employees and women) have to work extra hours. In case of police, it is considered as part of their job.

5.3.2. Payment for Overtime

Researcher asked respondents that whether they are being paid for the overtime or not. It was found that only drivers get compensated for the overtime in form of mileage travelled. There is no compensation for overtime to other employees. Employees work for more than 8 hours but they are paid for 8 hours only. Employees get TA (travelling allowance) when they move out of their city. A respondent from engineering branch described

"There is no concept of payment of overtime for officers. We are only paid for travelling, when we are moving out of the city then we are paid for it. In certain departments, employees are paid for it such as drivers of Pakistan Railways are paid for it."

It means that employees are working for long hours but they are getting nothing in return. The overtime payment of Finance department shows that these rules were set years ago but never updated.

5.3.3. Flexitime

Respondents were asked that whether they are provided any option of selecting their working hours. Researcher found that there is no such option at all. All 18 respondents reported that there is no such option at all.

One of the respondents from personnel branch stated that it is not possible to avail this option due to nature of work in certain departments.

"No, the duties in various departments vary. Flexitime is not possible in certain departments."

So employees have no such facility at all.

5.3.4. Overtime Productivity

Respondents were asked about productivity during off-hours. It was found that it becomes difficult for employees to continue with same spirit and interest. They take it as burden. One of the employees stated that after 10 hours we become unable to handle emergency situation because we are tired and consider it as fatigue.

"Yes of course, we are human beings and we cannot be the same all the time, we can be very active for 8 hours or maximum 10 hours but after that obviously we feel tired and we remain physically present only not mentally or even actively. In this situation, if there is certain emergency then I think employees are not able to handle it in an appropriate way."

Employees of Pakistan Railways have to work extra hours. There is no flexitime option due to nature of their work. They are not paid for this overtime except drivers who are paid as per their route. Employees are unable to work with same enthusiasm during off-hours and their families are also disturbed.

Theme 5.4. Stability and Social Protection

5.4.1. Benefits and Allowances

Benefits and allowances are important for stability and security of employees. Respondents were asked about benefits in Pakistan Railways. They said that benefits are for all permanent employees of Pakistan Railways. E.g. pension There are no benefits and allowances for contractual employees. One of the contractual employees who is a gang man in telecom department stated

"No I am not getting any such benefit. I am working on contract base and for contractual employees there is pay only."

Respondents told that their benefits depend on their scales and ranks. One of the employee stated

"We have housing facilities, medical benefits, travelling facility and other benefits according to our ranks. Pakistan Railways try to provide very good facilities and benefits."

Some of the benefits are as follows:

These are some of the benefits and allowances which are given as per rank and scale of employees. It is found that lower level employees face difficulty in getting all the benefits.

Researcher found that there are certain benefits and allowances which are given as per the ranks and scales of employees. For future security of employees, there is a pension for all the permanent employees. Officers even reject some facilities but lower level employees struggle to get these benefits.

5.4.2. Employee's Termination

For decent working conditions, it is important to provide secure employment. Respondents from Pakistan Railways are asked about termination of employees. All of them said that there is a proper mechanism and no one is expelled out without any reason. Chief booking clerk from commercial department reported

"Employees are not terminated without any reason. Organization has to follow the rules and regulation. Employees are well informed about this."

Employee's termination is according to set rules but in case of lower level employees, they have no job security.

5.4.3. Turnover Intention

Respondents were asked about their job switching intention; researcher found that 10 out of 18 employees do not want to switch from their job as there are fewer opportunities and high rate of unemployment. Some have spent more than 20 years and are about to retire so they do not want to switch. Moreover it is difficult for employees to look for another job as department does not give them NOC to do so. A Computer operator told that there are certain opportunities but she is not able to avail.

"I want to avail opportunities but it is very difficult to get an NOC in order to apply for other jobs."

Some junior level employees stated that they will switch job if they get some better opportunity.

So researcher identified that employees want to look for better opportunities except for those who are about to retire. They are unable to do this because of lack of opportunities, high unemployment rate, lack of skills and non-availability of NOC from department.

Some of the reasons behind this turnover intention are as follows:

Transfer to distant areas, better opportunities, slow promotion, work family conflict, lack of training and development, non-competitive salaries and complex structure of Pakistan railways. So there is a difference of opinion between upper and lower level employees.

Theme 5.5. Work Family Conflict

Due to extended working hours, it is difficult for employees to give proper time to their families. Moreover there are no family friendly policies for employees. Researcher found that men face this problem more seriously as compared to women. As female employees of Pakistan Railways are more relaxed and are also supported by their colleagues.

Chief Booking clerk from commercial department reported

"It is a problem for both. Men relocate more often than women in this department. Women are given the clerical work in commercial department and they remain in the head quarter i.e. Multan. They are not relocated."

A head supervisor from signal branch described that:

“Organization provides a little flexibility for family needs. We have houses near to workplace where our families live, we can avail holidays as per schedule and if someone has serious concern than he/she can share with higher authorities.”

Theme 5.6. Employee-Employer Relationship

Employee-employer relationship plays a vital role for success of both employees and organization. Researcher tried to find the nature of this relationship in Pakistan Railways. A respondent from Commercial department reported:

“This relationship is weak here and I think it is weak in most of the govt. organizations. People get satisfied if they get a job, they are not concerned with the work environment. Unemployment and lack of awareness is the main issue.”

3 out of 18 employees think that employee-employer relationship exists in private jobs only.

5.6.1. Communication Mechanism

Respondents were asked about communication between employer and employee. Here employer is government so the respondents were asked that either they can put suggestions in defining the working conditions or not. 15 out of 18 respondents said that it is a one way relationship. We are not asked for suggestion.

Senior clerk from personnel branch reported that

“As we are under federal govt. and in such jobs suggestions of employees does not matter a lot. We can complain if we have any problem but we can never think of changing the work environment or in anything else.”

5.6.2. Grievance Handling

Respondents were asked about grievance handling mechanism and their preference to join union in order to get their voices heard. Researcher found that employees want to join union as they think that unions can help them in protecting their rights. Again officers and lower level staff have contradictory views. Officers are against unions while lower level employees stated that unions help in getting our rights. Security forces cannot be part of union so there is no union of Pakistan Railway Police.

14 out of 18 employees stated that there is proper mechanism of grievance handling. There are certain rules and regulations but their compliance is questionable.

5.6.3. Lack of Human Resource Management Department

Another reason of this gap is that there is no HRM department in Pakistan Railways. Employees know that there is a dire need of HR department but government is not taking it seriously.

Theme 5.7: Fair Treatment

Respondents were asked if there is any kind of discrimination with employees. It was found that lower level employees of scale 1-10 are dissatisfied with polices and they that they are discriminated on different accounts.

One of the clerks stated:

“In this organization, one must be backed by strong reference to get their voice heard. We must have approach to higher authorities to remain in the head quarter or near to it. Moreover in order to get other benefits we should have a strong reference.”

Political influence is very high in this organization. One of the respondents stated:

“Hiring process is influenced by political parties. It depends on the ruling government and its

So policies in Pakistan Railways are influenced by the ruling government.

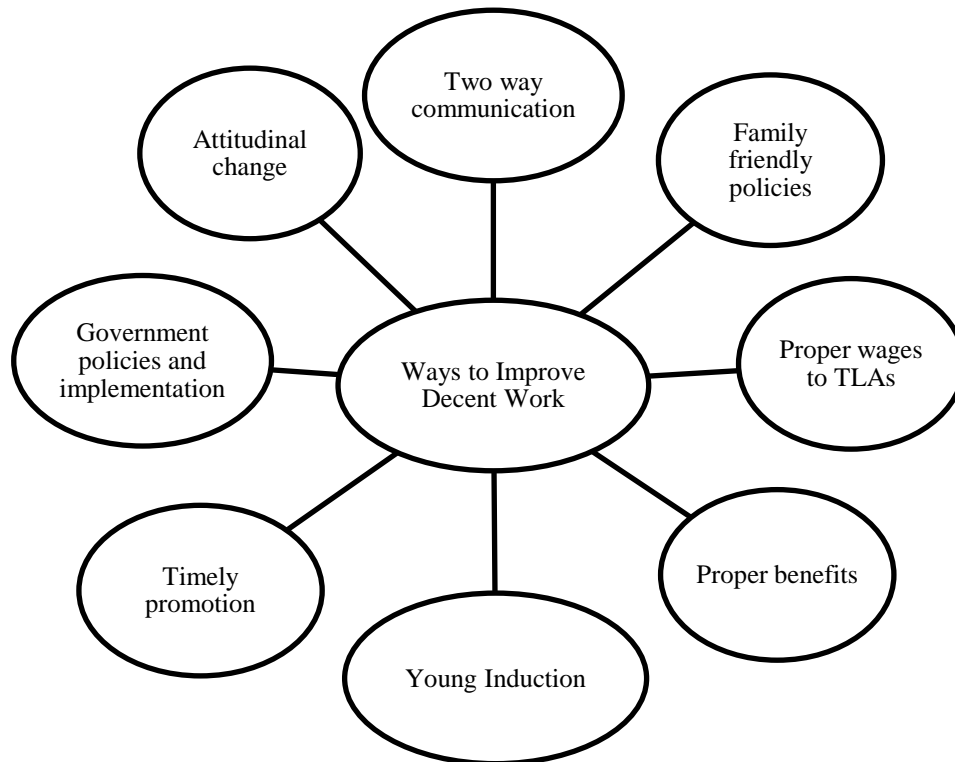
Employees of scale 11-18 are well satisfied with the policies and procedures and they consider it fine. An officer of scale 17 stated:

“No there is no such discrimination, policies are for everyone. Some of our colleagues from minorities are at the same post and enjoy the same facilities without any discrimination.”

These results show that there is a communication gap between higher and lower level employees. Higher authorities are not aware of employee’s issues and think that everything is going well. Employees have their own concerns which remain unheard as there is no mechanism to say.

Theme 5.8: Ways to Improve Decent Working Conditions

Following ways were identified to improve decent working conditions.



It is important that government should consider its role as a major stakeholder and devise policies for revival of this organization. It is a complex structure and management is lacking. There is a lot of political influence on all the major decisions of this organization. It is necessary for higher authorities to build trust of employees and maintain a relationship with them. There must be proper Human Resource Department which can handle all the issues of employees. Moreover policies and procedures needs to be updated. The rules for the institution were devised hundred years ago and very little amendments were made over the years.

The study was focused to see the awareness and implementation of Decent Work Practices in Pakistan Railways. It is the 8th goal in Sustainable Development Goals SDGs that there must be decent working conditions for all. Pakistan is determined towards achievement of these goals so this research was conducted in order to see awareness of employees in one of the public sector organization of Pakistan. The study was conducted to determine the level of awareness of employees of Pakistan Railways about decent work practices, extent of their implementation and ways to enhance such practices. Researcher tried to find the extent to which decent working conditions are provided to employees of Pakistan Railways. Interview guide was prepared keeping in view the decent work indicators provided by International Labor Organization (ILO).

Based on the responses of 18 respondents from 9 different departments of Pakistan Railways, It was found that employees want good working conditions but they do not consider it as their right. Unemployment rate is so high that people are ready to work anyways. Higher authorities are aware of these terms to some extent. Senior management pay less attentions towards the employees problems (Huang & Gamble, 2015).

Respondents were questioned about their hiring process, workplace safety, training and development, promotion and increments, fair treatment, working hours, stability and social protection, wages and salaries, work family issues, overtime payment. Hence they were asked on 11 indicators.

In Pakistan Railways employment opportunities and new hiring is quite rare and is influenced by ruling government. Quota for employees is less and career progression is slow. Government is the main stakeholder but is not taking its active part. There are some cases of discriminatory practices during hiring process. Unions try to influence this process in some ways. Policies should be introduced for the training and development of employees. Their promotion mechanism should be updated. They should get equal chance to excel.

Researcher found that there are no proper policies for ensuring decent working conditions. Organization's initiatives for ensuring skill enhancement, motivation and opportunities contribute positively towards organizational performance (Lepak & Baer, 2012).

Employees of Pakistan Railways work in unsafe environment and there have been many cases of injuries and deaths but no changes have been made yet. No special facilities for disabled employees are provided. Most of the employees are considered on 24 hours duty as they stated that it is a moving wheel department and employees have to move with the wheels. It is difficult for them to manage time for families. Managing work and life has become a priority for most of the employees now a days (Sturges & Guest, 2004). Employees have to work extra hours but they are not paid for it.

There is no proper HR department so employees prefer to join unions to get their voices heard. They believe that unions work for welfare of employees. Higher authorities are against unions and think that unions should be banned. Sometimes unions try to misuse their power and authority. There is no proper mechanism of grievance handling. It is difficult for lower level employees to communicate their problems with higher authorities. Their voice is suppressed. There are some social protection benefits but low rank employees find it difficult to get these benefits. Previous researches showed that in this competitive environment, issues of human resource need to be solved and strategic decisions should be made (Zehra Alakoç Burma, 2014). Little attention is paid to the function of Human Resource at business implementation level (Tsui, 1987). So a fully functional Human Resource Department, which can ensure decent work practices, is lacking in Pakistan Railways.

Ensuring fairness can help in boosting productivity and motivating employees. Unfortunately in Pakistan Railways, employees feel strongly dissatisfied. There is a trend of nepotism and favouritism. Social justice is missing in this institution.

While discussing ways to improve these practices, researcher identified that structural change is required for revival of this department. The communication gap between employees and high authorities should be addressed so that they may know their issues. Employees do not own their work and organization and have high turnover intentions. Employees sense of self worth is undermined by the discrimination and inequalities at work (Lucas, 2015). Wages given to TLAs (temporary labor arrangements) should be competitive. Promotion and career progression should be on time. In case of promotion, discrimination with employees can cause serious dissatisfaction (Anderson, 2011).

The greatest challenge in the implementation of decent work practices is the lack of policies and compliance with them. Attitudinal problems of higher authorities in keeping strict check and balance.

Traditionally the specification of HRM practices varies considerably and depends on the work systems (Snape & Redman, 2010). In Pakistan Railways, there is no Human Resource department. It was found that all the issues related to decent work practices can be solved by HR department. Lack of HR department is acting as a barrier towards the achievement of Decent Work Practices. Human resource functions can enhance firm performance and employee commitment (Chang, 2005).

VI. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For ensuring decent work practices in Pakistan Railways, commitment of government as a major stakeholder is required. All the major decisions are influenced by ruling government. A strong management is required for the proper functioning of this institution. Establishment of Human Resource Department can help in solving employee's issues and maintaining a relationship with employees at every level. Decent working conditions in Pakistan Railways can be provided by devising better policies and initiatives of the state in this regard. Attitudinal change at every level is required.

Decent working conditions can increase motivation and morale of employees ultimately increasing the productivity of both employees and organization. Employees will work with more diligence and spirit, if organization takes care of their rights. So it is a two way process, decent working conditions can lead to economic growth as well. The results of this study will help in understanding the problems with the implementation of decent work practices in Pakistan Railways. It will help decision makers to look in to the major issues with the employees and suggests the ways to improve the situation. It will help decision makers to look in to the major issues with the employees and suggests the ways to improve the situation.

Lower level employees face most of the workplace issues and a proper HR department can work. This study will help in understanding the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders for improving working conditions of employees.

Because the study collected data by means of interviews, the quantity of data collected was limited. Moreover researcher focused on one Division of Pakistan Railways due to time constraints. Additional research can be conducted to compare the situation with other Divisions. I was unable to interview some government representatives in order to know their views about the situation. They can better explain the nature of policies. Few recommendations for future researchers are as follows. Firstly, there is a need to construct a scale in order to measure decent work practices. Secondly, future research can be conducted with different organizations. It will help to compare results of both. Thirdly, future work can be done in other divisions of Pakistan Railways as well. Fourth, there is a need to study other goals from SDG's as well. It will help to explore how SDG's can be localized and prioritized according to different contexts. Lastly, future researches should compare private and public sector organizations in order to compare the level of commitment. The difference in the policies can also be compared and analyzed.

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