

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE : AN OVERVIEW

Ritu Sharma¹

Prairna Gupta²

ABSTRACT

Quality of Work Life (QWL) is be defined as “The Quality of the relationship between the man and task at workplace”. QWL has gained prominence in the Organizational Behavior as an indicator of the overall of human experience in the work place. QWL refers to the relationship between a worker and his environment, adding the human dimension to the technical and economic dimensions within which the work is normally viewed and designed. Quality of work life Movement initially a loosely organized network of a few dozen academics in the early 1970’s, the QWL Movement had grown by the 1980’s into an international grouping of trade union officials, personal managers and social scientist generally. QWL will have direct and indirect relationship with the economic and social well-being of large portion of population which lies beyond the domain of Industry. QWL provides for the balanced relationship among work, non-work and family aspects of life. We therefore, have undertaken this study influence of workers QWL This study is based on the assumption that "A job is more than just a job". Work is an integral part of our everyday life. On an average we spend around one third of our entire life at our workplace & it does influence the overall quality of our life. It should yield job satisfaction, give peace of mind, a fulfillment of having done a task, and having spent the time fruitfully, constructively and purposefully Concept of QWL, various challenges faced in QWL, barriers and measures to overcome the same is briefly discussed.

KEYWORDS: QWL, Quality of Work Life, Employees, Organizations, Work-Related Quality of Life (WRQoL), Job & Career Satisfaction (JCS), General well-being (GWB), Stress at Work (SAW), Control at Work (CAW), Home-Work Interface (HWI).

¹ Assistant Professor, Chandigarh Business School, Chandigarh Group of Colleges, Mohali (Landran)

² Assistant Professor, Chandigarh Business School, Chandigarh Group of Colleges, Mohali (Landran)

Introduction

In 1995, the University of Pennsylvania took initiatives to broadly introduce the concept "Quality of Work Life" to enhance faculty and staff opportunities for a constructive, productive, and positive work experience. QWL means "The degree to which members of a work organization are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experience in the organization". QWL has gained deserved prominence in the Organizational Behavior as an indicator of the overall of human experience in the work place. The Quality of Work Life (QWL) has assumed increasingly interest and importance in all the countries of the World. It is very significant in the context of commitment to work, motivation and job performance. It is also means to facilitate the gratification of human needs and goal achievement. Work life naturally means the life of workers, physical and intellectual, in their work environment in office or factory or field-working. What is expected of the worker? What are the conditions of the work place? What is the compensation that the worker gets? What are the incentives offered to him? How about his contentment with the work environment and the compensation? These are the questions to be tackled by the Researcher in any study of work life. Research has established that good quality of work life leads to physically & psychologically healthier employees with positive feeling .

Literature Review

This study was pursued by many researchers to identify and suggest improvement in quality of work life. Herzberg (1959) used "Hygiene factors" and "Motivator factors" to distinguish between the separate causes of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. It has been suggested that Motivator factors are intrinsic to the job, that is; job content, the work itself, responsibility and advancement. The Hygiene factors or dissatisfaction-avoidance factors include aspects of the job environment such as interpersonal relationships, salary, working conditions and security. Of these latter, the most common cause of job dissatisfaction can be company policy and administration, whilst achievement can be the greatest source of extreme satisfaction. Hackman and Oldham (1976) drew attention to what they described as psychological growth needs as relevant to the consideration of Quality of working life. Several such needs were identified to bring the job close to the person as, Skill variety, Task Identity, Task significance, Autonomy and Feedback. They suggested that such needs have to be addressed if employees are

to experience high quality of working life. However Taylor (1979) suggested that relevant quality of working life concepts may vary according to organization and employee group. Taylor more pragmatically identified the essential components of quality of working life as basic extrinsic job factors of wages, hours and working conditions, and the intrinsic job factors like, Individual power, Employee participation in the management, Fairness and equity, Social support, Use of one's present skills, Self development, A meaningful future at work, Social relevance of the work or product, Effect on extra work activities. And Mirvis and Lawler (1984) suggested that quality of working life was associated with satisfaction with wages, hours and working conditions, describing the "basic elements of a good quality of work life" as :Safe work environment, Equitable wages, Equal employment opportunities and Opportunities for advancement. In the same field Baba and Jamal (1991) listed what they described as typical indicators of quality of working life, including: Job satisfaction, Job involvement, Work role ambiguity, Work role conflict, Work role overload, Job stress, Organizational commitment and Turn-over intentions. Baba and Jamal also explored routinisation of job content, suggesting that this facet should be investigated as part of the concept of quality of working life. And Sirgy (2001) suggested that the key factors in quality of working life are: Need satisfaction based on job requirements, Need satisfaction based on work environment, Need satisfaction based on supervisory behavior, Need satisfaction based on ancillary programmes, Organizational commitment. Ellis and Pompli (2002) identified a number of factors contributing to job dissatisfaction and quality of working life, including: Poor working environments, Resident aggression, Workload, inability to deliver quality of care preferred, Balance of work and family, Shift work, Lack of involvement in decision making, Professional isolation, Lack of recognition, Poor relationships with supervisor/peers, Role conflict, Lack of opportunity to learn new skill.

Objectives of the Study

This study tries to find out the relevance of QWL with national environment and that too with a private company. The main focus of the study is whether the above factors play the key role and the contribution of each as a QWL and organizational performance index. At the same time it aims at studying the various parameters of QWL employees, how QWL leads to high job satisfaction and the factors related to organizational performance

QWL IN INDIA

The quality of work Life (QWL) Apart from ensuring fair pay, the fair treatment of employees and safe working conditions, many companies respond to specific employee needs. In India, some of the companies that emphasize the quality of work life are Hewlett-Packard, Smith Kline Beecham, American Express, Colgate Palmolive, Gillette, Dr.Reddy's Laboratories, Reliance and Maruti Udyog Limited. HP allows flexible working arrangements for its employees and follows certain innovative practices such as allowing employees to avail leave for special occasions (marriage, exam preparation, adoption of a child, bereavement in the family, and paternity). QWL in India has emerged as a movement. Following are the factors that led to the QWL movement in our country: 1. Changing profile of the Indian worker from and illiterate, rural, low caste individual to educated, urban and essentially belonging to upper strata of caste structure has made him/her more concern for own hopes and aspirations.

2. That worker is not just like other factors of production such as, machinery, land, and capital but a human being with feelings and emotions, has made organizations behave with workers accordingly. The establishment of a separate Ministry of Human Resource Development by the Government of India is a testimony to such realization.

In India, around 10 per cent of workers in organized sector are unionized. The past record relation to labour unions lends enough evidence that the unionized work force has been much vocal for demands of one type or other. That human behavior is highly unpredictable and complex underlines the need for the study of organizational behavior. QWL is one of the newer concepts experimenting how to make effective utilization of human resources. QWL in India seems in practice in a variety of operational systems like workers participation, job enrichment, quality circles, etc. Here, an attempt has been made to give an overview of these in terms of their broad coverage and experiences of Indian organization with them.

MEASUREMENT OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AT THE WORKPLACE

MEASUREMENT OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AT THE WORKPLACE: There are few recognised measures of quality of working life and jobs, and of those that exist few have evidence of validity and reliability, although the **Brief Index of Affective Job Satisfaction** has

been systematically developed to be reliable and is rigorously psychometrically validated. A recent statistical analysis of a new measure, the **Work-Related Quality of Life scale (WRQoL)**, provides support for the psychometric structure of this instrument. The WRQoL measure uses six core factors to explain most of the variation in an individual's quality of working life: Job and Career Satisfaction; Working Conditions; General Well-Being; Home-Work Interface; Stress at Work and Control at Work.

The **Brief Index of Affective Job Satisfaction (BIAFJS)** is a 4-item, purely affective as opposed to cognitive, measure of overall affective job satisfaction that reflects quality of working life. The BIAFJS differs from other job satisfaction measures in being comprehensively validated not just for internal consistency reliability, temporal stability, convergent and criterion-related validities, but also for cross-population invariance by nationality, job level, and job type. Reported internal consistency reliabilities range between .81 and .87.

The **Job & Career Satisfaction (JCS) scale** of the Work-Related Quality of Life scale (WRQoL) is said to reflect an employee's feelings about, or evaluation of, their satisfaction or contentment with their job and career and the training they receive to do it. Within the WRQoL measure, JCS is reflected by questions asking how satisfied people feel about their work. It has been proposed that this Positive Job Satisfaction factor is influenced by various issues including clarity of goals and role ambiguity, appraisal, recognition and reward, personal development career benefits and enhancement and training needs.

The **General well-being (GWB) scale** of the Work-Related Quality of Life scale (WRQoL), aims to assess the extent to which an individual feels good or content in themselves, in a way which may be independent of their work situation. It is suggested that general well-being both influences, and is influenced by work. Mental health problems, predominantly depression and anxiety disorders, are common, and may have a major impact on the general well-being of the population. The WRQoL GWB factor assesses issues of mood, depression and anxiety, [life satisfaction](#), general [quality of life](#), optimism and [happiness](#).

The **WRQoL Stress at Work sub-scale (SAW)** reflects the extent to which an individual perceives they have excessive pressures, and feel stressed at work. The WRQoL SAW factor is assessed through items dealing with demand and perception of stress and actual demand overload. Whilst it is possible to be pressured at work and not be stressed at work, in general, high stress is associated with high pressure.

The **Control at Work (CAW) subscale** of the WRQoL scale addresses how much employees feel they can control their work through the freedom to express their opinions and being involved in decisions at work. Perceived [control at work](#) as measured by the Work-Related Quality of Life scale (WRQoL) is recognized as a central concept in the understanding of relationships between stressful experiences, behaviour and health. Control at work, within the theoretical model underpinning the WRQoL, is influenced by issues of communication at work, decision making and decision control.

The **WRQoL Home-Work Interface scale (HWI)** measures the extent to which an employer is perceived to support the family and home life of employees. This factor explores the interrelationship between home and work life domains. Issues that appear to influence employee HWI include adequate facilities at work, flexible working hours and the understanding of managers.

The **Working Conditions scale** of the WRQoL assesses the extent to which the employee is satisfied with the fundamental resources, working conditions and security necessary to do their job effectively. Physical working conditions influence employee health and safety and thus employee Quality of working life. This scale also taps into satisfaction with the resources provided to help people do their jobs.

The factors that influence and decide the Quality of work life are:



1. **Attitude:** The person who is entrusted with a particular job needs to have sufficient knowledge, required skill and expertise, enough experience, enthusiasm, energy level, willingness to learn new things, dynamism, sense of belongingness in the organization, involvement in the job, inter personnel relations, adaptability to changes in the situation, openness for innovative ideas, competitiveness, zeal, ability to work under pressure, leadership qualities and team-spirit.
2. **Environment:** The job may involve dealing with customers who have varied tolerance level, preferences, behavioral pattern, level of understanding; or it may involve working with dangerous machines like drilling pipes, cranes, lathe machines, welding and soldering machines, or even with animals where maximum safety precautions have to be observed which needs lot of concentration, alertness, presence of mind, quick with involuntary actions, synchronization of eyes, hands and body, sometimes high level of patience, tactfulness, empathy and compassion and control over emotions.
3. **Opportunities:** Some jobs offer opportunities for learning, research, discovery, self-development, enhancement of skills, room for innovation, public recognition, exploration, celebrity-status and loads and loads of fame. Others are monotonous, repetitive, dull, routine, no

room for improvement and in every sense boring. Naturally the former ones are interesting and very much rewarding also.

4. Nature of Job: For example, a driller in the oil drilling unit, a diver, a fire-fighter, traffic policeman, train engine driver, construction laborers, welder, miner, lathe mechanic have to do dangerous jobs and have to be more alert in order to avoid any loss of limb, or loss of life which is irreparable; whereas a pilot, doctor, judge, journalist have to be more prudent and tactful in handling the situation; a CEO, a professor, a teacher have more responsibility and accountability but safe working environment; a cashier or a security guard cannot afford to be careless in his job as it involves loss of money, property and wealth; a politician or a public figure cannot afford to be careless, for his reputation and goodwill is at stake. Some jobs need soft skills, leadership qualities, intelligence, decision making abilities, abilities to train and extract work from others; other jobs need forethought, vision and yet other jobs need motor skills, perfection and extreme carefulness.

5. People: Almost everyone has to deal with three set of people in the work place. Those are namely boss, co-workers in the same level and subordinates. Apart from this, some professions need interaction with people like patients, media persons, public, customers, thieves, robbers, physically disabled people, mentally challenged, children, foreign delegates, gangsters, politicians, public figures and celebrities. These situations demand high level of prudence, cool temper, tactfulness, humor, kindness, diplomacy and sensitiveness.

6. Stress Level: All these above mentioned factors are inter-related and inter-dependant. Stress level need not be directly proportional to the compensation. Stress is of different types – mental stress/physical stress and psychological or emotional stress. A Managing Director of a Organization will have mental stress, a laborer will have physical stress, a psychiatrist will have emotional stress. Mental stress and Emotional stress cause more damage than physical stress.

7. Career Prospects: Every job should offer career development. That is an important factor which decides the quality of work life. Status improvement, more recognition from the Management, appreciations are the motivating factors for anyone to take keen interest in his job. The work atmosphere should be conducive to achieve organizational goal as well as individual development. It is a win-win situation for both the parties; an employee should be rewarded appropriately for his good work, extra efforts, sincerity and at the same time a lethargic and

careless employee should be penalized suitably; this will motivate the former to work with more zeal and deter the latter from being so, and strive for better performance.

8. **Challenges:** The job should offer some challenges at least to make it interesting; That enables an employee to upgrade his knowledge and skill and capabilities; whereas the monotony of the job makes a person dull, non-enthusiastic, dissatisfied, frustrating, complacent, initiative – less and uninteresting. Challenge is the fire that keeps the innovation and thrill alive. A well-accomplished challenging job yields greater satisfaction than a monetary perk; it boosts the self-confidence also.

9. **Growth and Development:** If an organization does not give chance for growth and personal development it is very difficult to retain the talented personnel and also to find new talent with experience and skill.

10. **Risk Involved and Reward:** Generally reward or compensation is directly proportional to the quantum of work, man-hours, nature and extent of responsibility, accountability, delegated powers, authority of position in the organizational chart, risk involved, level of expected commitment, deadlines and targets, industry, country, demand and supply of skilled manpower and even political stability and economic policies of a nation. Although risk is involved in every job its nature and degree varies in them; All said and done, reward is a key criteria to lure a prospective worker to accept the offer.

Social Relevance of Work Life

Social relevance is a distinct concept that relates to an employee's desire to remain with an organization out of a sense of loyalty, emotional attachment and financial need Employees must be given the perspective of how his/her work in the organisation helps the society. This is essential to build relevance of the employee's existence to the society he/she lives in relationship between and among the employees is an indicator of healthy work organisation. Therefore, opportunities must be provided for formal and informal interaction. All kind of classes' religions, races, crafts, and designations must be treated equally on a social platform. In other words, it creates egalitarian environment. This leads to organizational commitment which can be defined as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization (Porter and Smith, 1970)⁶⁸. Employees' commitment can be characterized by at least 3 related factors: 1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values;

2) a willingness to exert a considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and 3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization.

CONCLUSION:

QWL is a very crucial factor in determining employee satisfaction in almost in each and every organization. The above discussion concludes that in today era QWL holds great significance and if it is undermined then it can affect the organization adversely. Therefore in order to become employer of choice as well as the best organization to work for every organization must provide a healthy quality of work life to its employees.No doubt in today's scenario, many factors like, changing demographics of the work force,Increasing expectation of the employees and greater stress level are posing major challenges tothe organizations but if these issues handled strategically than organization can reap the desired benefits so maintain QWL is the need of hour.

REFERENCES

1. .Likert, Rensis,1967. The Human Organization, Its Management and value, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York,p.1.
2. Davis-Keith,1977. Human Behaviour at Work, Organizational behaviour, Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Co.
3. Subba Rao, P. and V.S.P. Rao, Personnel/Human Resource Management, Konark Publishers, New Delhi,p.
4. Robert H. Quest, Quality of Work Life-Learning from Terrytown, Harvard Business Review, July-August 1979,pp.28-39.
- 5 .Nadler,D.A. and Lawler, E.E., 1983. Quality of Work Life, Perspective and Direction, Organizational Dynamics, Winter, Vol.II (3),pp.20-30.
- 6.Ahmed, N. 1981. Quality of Work Life, A need for Understanding, Indian Management,Vol.20(II),pp.29-33.
- 7.Hackman, J. R., and lawler, E. E., (1971), "Employee Reactions to Job Characteristics",Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 55, pp. 259-286.

8. Eaton, A.E., Gordon, M.E., and Keefe, J.H., (1992), “The impact of quality of work life programs and grievances system effectiveness on union commitment”, *International and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 45, No. 3. p. 591-603.

9. Gilgeous, V., (1998), “Manufacturing managers: their quality of working life”, *Integrated Manufacturing System*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 173-181.

10. Gilgeous, V., (1998), “Manufacturing Managers: their quality of working life”, *Integrated Manufacturing System*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 173-181.