

AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON IMPACT ON QUALITY OF WORK LIFE OF EMPLOYEES

Dr.C.DHANALAKSHMI

Assistant professor

Commerce (AICM)

Sree Krishna arts and science college, coimbatore

FASLA N.P

PhD Research scholar

Sree Krishna arts and science college, coimbatore

ABSTRACT

In the life of a working individual, the quality of work life holds prime importance. Over a period of time, numerous opportunities have been created in the corporate world, each offering a more conducive work environment to the employee than the last. This has given rise to employee expectations, which coupled with the acceptance of the importance of employee retention, has forced employers to think even about the minutes of parameters which influence the quality of work life.

Keywords: *Quality of Work Life; stress; work life balance.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the life of a working individual, the quality of work life holds prime importance. Over a period of time, numerous opportunities have been created in the corporate world, each offering a more conducive work environment to the employee than the last. This has given rise to employee expectations, which coupled with the acceptance of the importance of employee retention, has forced employers to think even about the minutest of parameters which influence the quality of work life. Though the quality of work life has always been of paramount importance. For different industries, organizations and individuals there exist different set of factors, which influence the quality of work life and in turn motivate or de motivate the employees.

Quality of Work Life has emerged as one of the most important aspects of job that ensures long term association of employees with the organization. It is essential for the organization to develop quality relation between its employees and working environment because now-a-days, demanding of job creates imbalance between family and work life due to job pressure and conflicting interests.

2. The Origin of Quality of Work Life

The legislation was enacted in the early 20th century to protect the employees from job injury and to eliminate hazardous working conditions. The unionization movements established in 1930 and 1940s emphasis on job security. During 1950 and 1960s different theories had been developed by psychologists proposing a positive relationship between morale and productivity. Later attempts have been made to introduce, equal employment opportunities and job enrichment. Finally, in 1970s the ideal of QWL was introduced by Walton in broader sense than these earlier developments which explains the values that were at the heart of these earlier reform movements' and human needs and aspirations'. QWL activity gained importance between 1969 and 1974, when a broad group of researchers, scholars, union leaders and government personnel development shaped interested to know how to improve the quality of an individual through her/his job experience. The United States department of health, education and welfare sponsored a study on this issue, which led to the publication of work in America. Simultaneously, the pressure of inflation promoted the US Government to address some of these issues. Accordingly, a Federal Productivity Commission was established. This commission sponsored several labor management QWL experiments which were jointly conducted by the University of Michigan quality of work programme and the newly evolved National Quality of Work Centre.

The term quality of work life was introduced by Louis Davis in the conference held in Toronto in 1975 on QWL. The International Council for Quality of Work Life was established in 1972. From 1980 onwards

QWL was increasingly placed on employee centered productivity programs. From 1990s till today as corporate faced with many challenges of corporate restructuring and economize, there are rising concerns for QWL, career and personal life planning, QWL offers a value frame and the social technology of organizational change leading to task effectiveness of micro entities through utilization and unfolding of human potential. Some evidence of the rising tide interest in the quality of work life issue is the fact that the second International Conference on quality of work life held in Toronto in 1981 attracted 1,500 participations. The 200 unionist and 750 management people combined outnumbered academicians, consultants and government officials in attendance. Quality is no more a specialized word but has become a necessary and a must work for the best endurance. In this era, Quality of human inputs is the greatest asset to any organization. Rise in the quality of work life would help employees well being thereby the well being of the whole organization. This is an attempt to capitalize the human assets of the organization.

Quality of work life has its roots in the theories of Maslow, Herzberg and McGregor. The needs for fulfillment as that of Abraham Maslow's motivational theory of needs hierarchy are comparable with those of the factors of Quality of Work Life. Basic needs like monetary benefits come first, following with good working conditions. Later it came-career planning, growth and development of human capabilities to satisfy. Maslow's esteem needs are comparable with opportunity to use and develop human capabilities. Lastly challenging work is advocated by Walton to satisfy self actualization need in need hierarchy. QWL concerns itself with satisfying both hygiene factors and motivators as identified by Herzberg to improve the work life of employees. The assumptions of McGregor can be divided into two sets i.e., those under, Theory 'X' and those under Theory 'Y' gave realization of changing attitudes values and work culture of employees. Quality of Work Life assumes that all employees basically belong to Theory Y'. Thus, it is evident that the Quality of Work Life has had its origin in these theories of motivation.

3. MEANING AND DEFINITION OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

Several authors define QWL differently. According to Keith (1989), quality of work life refers to the favorableness and unfavourableness of job environment for people., whereas Trehan Ruchi (2008) defines QWL means the sum total of values, both material and nonmaterial, attained by a worker throughout his career life. QWL includes aspects of work-related life such as wages and hours, work environment, benefits and services, career prospects and human relations, which is possibly relevant to worker satisfaction and motivation. Cascio (2005), defines QWL as a set of objective organizational conditions and practices (e.g., promotion from within policies democratic supervision, employee involvement, safe working conditions) on one way. The other way QWL is defined as employees perceptions that they are safe and relatively well satisfied, they have reasonable work-life balance, and they are able to grow and develop as human beings.

4. Dimensions of Quality of Work Life

Several studies have brought out the dimensions of QWL (Rethinam, 2008, Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy, 2013). However European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2002) have published several reports since 2002 and the reviews state that there are five elements which have direct relationship with QWL: Health and Wellbeing, Job Security, Job Satisfaction, Competence Development and the Balance between Works with Non-Work Life. Each of these dimensions of QWL from the perspectives of employees is briefly discussed below:

1. Health and Well being

Health and wellbeing of QWL refer to physical and psychological aspects of an individual in any working environment. Asakura and Fujigaki (1993) examined the direct and indirect effect of computerization on workers health and wellbeing. Their results were similar to the study of Iacovides, Fountoulakis and Kaprins (2003) that higher job demand leads to higher strain work environment, thus it affects their health and well being. An unstrained work environment ensures good health and psychological conditions which enable the employees to perform job and non-work related functions without inhibitions. Thus, it leads to a non-stressful work environment providing comfortable work life. There are many definitions of stress as it is deemed as a subjective phenomenon of QWL. Chan et al. (2000) defines stress as a response to the perceived relationship between the demands on individuals and the ability to adjust to their work environment. Carayon, Smith and Haims (2001) revealed that stress arises in the process of interaction between a person and the work environment that threatens the individual's physical, psychological and physiological homeostasis. Physical illness and psychological disorders increase when pressure at work increases. Stress causes problems to the muscular system and circulation thus, increasing the risk of myocardial infarction which is well documented in psychosomatic studies. Therefore it is important to note that health and well being considered as an important dimension of Quality of Work Life.

1. Job Security

Job Security Job security the central aspect of QWL represents strength of the organizations to provide permanent and stable employment regardless of the changes in work environment. Watson et al (2003) states that a dramatic change of workforce in contemporary work environment has revealed a significant amount of organization change. Organization change such as downsizing, rightsizing and outsourcing have adversely affected employees loyalty, morale, motivation and perceived threat to job security. Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (1996) highlighted that job security is the most controversial issue in contemporary work environment. Hence, providing a sense of security is important especially in the work environment where many facets of jobs can be out sourced. Later, cognitive and behavioral components were added to this definition. The cognitive aspect represents an employee's belief about his job or job situation. This means an employee may believe that his or her job is interesting, stimulating, or otherwise. The behavioral component represents an employee's behavioral tendencies toward his or her job which is all about the attending work regularly, working hard and intending to stay in the organization for long period of time and shows the positive behavior which indicates job satisfaction. In contrast, negative behavioral outcomes reveal dissatisfaction in job. Job satisfaction of an employee differs in meaning and importance in relations to the facets of work. Some may feel pay and fringe benefits that meet his expectations to be extremely important; another, it may be essential to have a job that provides an opportunity for challenging assignment. The results of previous studies indicate that many different aspects of the job, such as pay, promotions, supervision, fringe benefits, one's coworkers support, and excessive working hours are associated with levels of satisfaction (Watson et al., 2003).

2. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is the favorableness or unfavorableness with which employees view their work. As with motivation, it was affected by the environment. Job satisfaction is impacted by the job design. Jobs that are rich in positive behavioral elements-such as autonomy, variety, task identity, task significance and feedback contribute to employee's satisfaction. Likewise orientation is important because the employee's acceptance by the work group contribute to satisfaction. In sort, each element of the environmental system can add to, or detect from, job satisfaction.

3. Competency Development

Growth in skills and knowledge is an important aspect of competency development that enhances QWL. Therefore competency development is equipped as the nature of the job that provides opportunities and stimulates growth in skills and knowledge either for career or Organizational development. Career development opportunity will provide essential training that will help the individual employees to equip with the new skills to spearhead in their career. Most Contemporary organizations do not limit themselves to just training an employee for a job, but they go beyond to furnish them with a support system that encourages workplace learning. Learning opportunities and skill discretion have also proven to have a positive effect on job satisfaction and reduced job stress that will lead to better QWL. The opportunity to develop and the use of skills are associated with learning mechanisms. This applies especially when the job requires employees to deploy cognitive skills. With respect to learning, greater autonomy on job enhances the acquisition and utilization of knowledge whilst greater participation is held to promote cognitive growth via increased knowledge transfer among employees (Scully, Kirkpatrick and Locke 1995). Such a job environment expands knowledge base, leads to a better understanding of how the job is related to other organizational practices and a greater ability to solve problems. In such a situation, employees gain the cognitive and behavioral repertoire to predict, control or cope with uncertain demands thus reducing the likelihood of poor QWL. In contrast, high job demands with inadequate control reduce the ability and opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge and thus enforce negative attitudes and anxiety which deteriorate QWL.

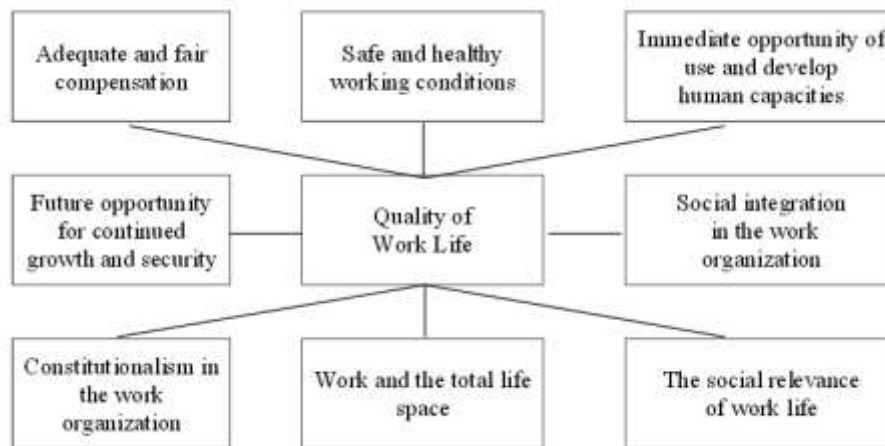
4. Work and Non-Work Life Balance

A major component of QWL, which is important for both the employees and the employers, is the relationship between work and home life. In an increasing competitive environment, it is difficult to separate home and work life. Employees today are more likely to express a strong desire to have a harmonious balance among career, family life and leisure activities. This has been suggested at the international level the need for national policies in many countries. An ILO convention that was adopted in 1981, states that it is necessary for organizations to help employees to balance their work and non-work demands (Lewis, 1997). Reducing the level of spillover may help reduce the perceived stress and psychological stress and assist to maintain some amount of balance between the two environments (Aminah, 2002). The existing low level of organizational support with increase in work life conflict provides the risk of lower QWL. Organizations need to provide alternative means of employment practices to eliminate the pressure of spillover without influencing the career progression.

The balance is important particularly among the employees in order to nurture and develop the sustainable human resource practices in the work environment. Therefore, balance between work and non work life is suggested as one of the measures of QWL.

5. Walton Model of Quality of Work Life

The other approach to QWL is provided by Walton (1973). Walton proposes an ideal quality of work life programme which will include practices in eight major areas as discussed below:



Walton Model of Quality of Work Life

1. Adequate and Fair Compensation

This is fundamental to QWL. Human beings work for livelihood. Therefore success of rest of the initiatives depends on fulfillment of this. However, important here is that compensation offered must be adequate implying it must be proportionate to labour, and there should be internal consistency among salaries of employees.

2. Safe and Healthy Working Conditions

Unsafe and hazardous working conditions cause problems to both employers and employees. There may be little advantage to the employer in short term but in medium and long terms, it adversely affects the productivity. Therefore, adequate investment must be made to ensure safe and healthy working conditions.

3. Immediate Opportunity of Use and Develop Human Capacities

The works have become routine, meaningless and too specialized, depriving the employees of fulfillment satisfaction. Therefore, efforts should be made to increase the autonomy, perspective and exposure to multiple skills.

4. Future Opportunity for Continued Growth and Security

This is related to career aspects of employees. Meaningful career paths must be laid down and career mapping of employees is to be followed. The provisions of advancement opportunities play a central role in QWL.

5. Social Integration in the Work Organization

Relationships between and among the employees facilitates a healthy work organization. Therefore, opportunities must be provided for formal and informal interactions. All kinds of classes religions, races, crafts, and designations must be treated equally on a social platform. In other words, it creates egalitarian environment.

6. Constitutionalism in the Work Organization

This is related to organizational norms that affect the freedom of an individual employee. Efforts must be made to see right norms are formed in the organization. It means norms that accommodate the privacy of an individual employee, freedom of speech, equity and freedom to dissent on some aspects.

7. Work and the Total Life Space

Employees should not be allowed to continuously exert themselves. The continuous hard work causes psychological and physical strains. Therefore, there has to be a balance between personal and professional life. Organizations must create proper works to enrich the life of employees.

8. Social Relevance of work life

The social relevance of work life includes, array of action such as behaving ethically, support non-profit organization, treating employees fairly. Organizations must pay proper attentions for the above aspects.

6. Importance of Quality of work life

It has been argued that Quality of Work life influences the performance and commitment of employees in various industries, including healthcare organizations. A high Quality of Work Life is essential to attract new employees and retain a work force. Consequently, health organizations are seeking ways to address the issues of recruitment and retention by achieving a high Quality of Work Life. Focusing on improving Quality of Work Life to increase the happiness and satisfaction of employees can result in many advantages for the employee, organization and consumers. These include strengthening organizational commitment, improving quality of care, and increasing the individual's and organization's productivity. According o sirgy et al. (2001), a happy employee is productive, dedicated and committed. On the other hand, failure to manage these factors can have a major impact on employee behavioral responses (e.g. organizational identification, job satisfaction, job performance, turnover intention, organizational tour over and personal alienation) as well as outcomes of the organization.

The importance of Quality of Work Life has been increasing because of several factors. These include, increase in education level, job aspirations of employees, association of workers, significance of human resource management, widespread industrial unrest, growing knowledge about human behavior, and so on. The elements of Quality of Work Life comprise of health and wellbeing, job security, job satisfaction, competence development and the balance between works with non work life. In this context, for improving the Quality of Work Life of all the stakeholders take responsibility such as employers, workers, professional organizations, government, and managers. Therefore, quality circles, management by objectives, suggestion system and other forms of employees participation in management help to improve Quality of Work Life in the industry circles. Techniques to improve quality of work life include job redesign, career development, flexible work schedules, job security and the like. If any organization properly adopts these techniques, the Quality of Work Life will certainly be improved to the desired levels (Reddy and Reddy, 2010)

RESULTS OF HIGH QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

- Increase organizational effectiveness
- High employee satisfaction
- High morale
- Reduce the absenteeism and labour turn over.
- Increase the quality of life of employees
- High productivity

7. CONCLUSION

Quality of work life is an important constrain in every field of work. it includes an individuals job related well being and the extent to which work experiences are rewarding, work life balance of employees, job satisfaction, stress and other negative personal consequences. The quality of work life has been increasing several factors. These include increase in education level and consequently job aspirations of employees, good employer employee relationship, significance of human resource management, wider spread of industrial unrest, growing of knowledge in human behavior etc. so quality circle, management by objectives, suggestion system and other form of employees participation in management help to improve QWL. Technique of improving quality of work life include job redesign, career development, proper work life balance, flexible work scheduling, provide job security etc. if the organizations are properly adopt these changes there should be appositve change.

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