QUALITY OF WORK LIFE: CONCEPT OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE, THE REASON FOR ITS GROWING CONCERN IN THE ORGANIZATION AND THE NEED OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

*Aparajita Singh
Ph.D. Scholar,
Joseph School of Business Studies and Commerce,
Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture Technology and Science,
Prayagraj, U.P. (India).

**Dr. Sneh.P. Daniel
Assistant Professor,
Joseph School of Business Studies and Commerce,
Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture Technology and Science,
Prayagraj, U.P. (India).
Email: prateekcdaniel@gmail.com
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Abstract

The paper aims at giving an insight on the concept of quality of work life the reason for its growing concern in the organization and the need of quality of work life. The study provides an insight of all the factors affecting the quality of work life and also details the advantages of these factors to the organization and the employees. The next section presents the measures which will help the organization to improve the quality of work life. Along with the literature review to support the above points. The study also clarify the picture of quality of work life with the help of examples to understand the Indian scenario in terms of Quality of Work life. The last section throws a light on the best practices to follow in the Indian scenario.

Keywords: Quality work life, factors, healthcare, Concept of Quality, safe work environment, occupational health care, suitable working time, appropriate salary.

Introduction

Quality of work life which is a latest concept explains the quality of an employees working life. Broadly, the concept of QWL involves four major aspects: (i) safe work environment, (ii) occupational health care, (iii) suitable working time, and (iv) appropriate salary.

Quality of life includes factors such as income, health, social relationships, and other factors such as happiness and fulfillment. The Quality of work life describes all those inputs or determinants of an organization serving the purpose of employees satisfaction and also increase effectiveness of the organization. The phrase 'Quality of Work Life' (QWL) connotes different meanings to different people. Some consider it an industrial democracy or co-determination with increased employee participation in the decision-making process. The Concept of QWL depicts improvement in

psychological dimension of the working aspects in order to bring required improvement in productivity as per the managers and administrators. Currently the concern of quality of work life has shown significant increase on account of following factors:

- increase in education level and consequently job aspirations of employees;
- association of workers;
- significance of human resource management;
- widespread industrial unrest;
- growing of knowledge in human behavior, etc.

A few definitions given by eminent authors on QWL are given below:

1. "QWL is a concept of working process of an organization, enabling its people throughout to engage actively and more participative to develop the kind of organizational environment, methods and results all with betterment. The QWL concept is a value oriented process aiming to meet up dual goals, one is increase in effectiveness of the organization and other is improvement in quality of work life for its members."

   —The American Society of Training and Development

2. Robbins[1] (1989) defined, "QWL is a process by which an organization responds to employee needs by developing mechanisms to allow them to share fully in making the decisions that design their lives at work," i.e., it refers to the favorableness or favorableness of a total work environment for people. It enjoins management to treat workers as human resources that has to be developed rather than simply used.

3. "QWL is a thought process of the organization, its members and the work as its unique aspects are:

   (i) a concern about the impact of work on people as well as on organisational effectiveness, and

   (ii) the idea of participation in organisational problem-solving and decision making." —Nadler and Lawler[2]

Objectives of Quality of Work Life:

- To increase in individual productivity, accountability and commitment.
- For better teamwork and communication.
- For improving the morale of employees.
- To reduce organizational stress.
- To improve relationships both on and off the job.

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[1] Robbins, S.P. Organizational Behavior: Concepts, Controversies, and Applications, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs.
[2] Nadler & Lawler, E. E. (1984): Accounting for the Quality of Work Life. Journal of Occupational Behavior, 5, 197-212.

- To improve the safety working conditions.
- To provide adequate Human Resource Development Programs.
- To improve employee satisfaction.
- To strengthen workplace learning.
- To better manage on-going change and transition.
- To participate in management at all levels in shaping the organization.

Factors Influencing Quality of Work Life:

1) **Work life balance-** Fair working hours, Work-life atmosphere, Opportunity for doing religious ceremonies, Ergonomics, No physical and mental damages, Distance between workplace and home

2) **Social factors-** The importance of work in the society, social integration in organization, Social networks in work, Respecting employees, Self-esteem feeling in the organization, Good colleagues.

3) **Economic factors-** Salary, Health service, Insurance, Retirement, Job security.

4) **Job content-** Team working, independence, meaningful work, rich and challenging work, ownership feeling in work, the need of creativity in work, growth opportunity.

Benefits

Work-Life Balance Benefits To The Organization

- Measured increases in individual productivity, accountability and commitment
- Better teamwork and communication
- Improved morale
- Less negative organizational stress

Work- Life Balance Benefits To The Individual

- More value and balance in your daily life
- Better understanding of what your best individual work life balance is
- Increased productivity
- Improved relationships both on and off the job
- Reduced stress

MEASURES TO IMPROVE QWL

A) QWL Through Employee Involvement (EI):

Employee involvement is the most commonly used method to generate QWL. In E.I. employees are empowered to participate in the decision that affects them and their relationship with the organization. It gives a sense of ownership for decision in which they participated and a sense of

responsibility. Though apart from being a systematic approach E.I should become the management so as to ensure the part of organizational culture.

B) Quality Circles:

Quality circles are similar group of employees who meet regularly with their common leader to identify and solve work related problems when employees are allowed to select problems they want to work on they are likely to make motivated to find solutions.

First, membership in the circle involuntary for both the leader (usually the supervisor) and the members (usually hourly workers). Secondly, the creation of quality circles is usually preceded by in-house training. For supervisors these sessions typically last for two or three days. Most of the time is devoted to discussions of small-group dynamics, leadership skills, and indoctrination in the QWL and quality circle philosophies. About a day is spent on the different approaches to problem-solving techniques. The role of supervisor as group discussion leader and information of the quality circle concept is appropriately explained to the workers. Third point is that in quality circle group also allowed to select the problem to solve of their own. Although management may be suggestive for the concerned problem yet the group is enabled and empowered enough in order to exert the decision to select the one. The selection process is not by the voting, it is actually through the consensus in general among the group members, there shall be agreement among the members for the problem of concerned. When employees are allowed to select the problems, they want to work on, they are likely to be more motivated to find solutions.

C) Socio-Technical Systems:

These are conciliation in the work situations which helps in restructuring the work grown and relationship between work and technologies. These approaches not only enlarge and enrich the jobs through realization more radical changes in the work environment.

D) Autonomous Work Group:

This is a very rare approach for employee's involvement into the work. Direct supervision is often necessary. The decision traditionally is taken by the superiors informally. Formally the company appointed leader, though their direct supervision is often necessary.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Based on definition and concept

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living Conditions (2002)

Described that the QWL is a multi-dimensional construct, made up of a number of interrelated factors that need careful consideration to conceptualize and measure. It is associated with job satisfaction, job involvement, motivation, productivity, health, safety, job security, competence development and balance between work and non-work life.

Prasad (2003), QWL is concerned about the impact of work on people as well as the organization effectiveness and the idea of participation in organizational problem solving and decision making.[3]

Khanka (2005) refers QWL as a process by which an organization responds to employees' needs in developing mechanisms to allow them to share fully in making the decisions that design their lives at work.[4]

Laar et.al. (2007) indicates that QWL is that part of overall quality of Work Life which is influenced by work. It is the widest context in which an employee would evaluate the influence of work on their life.[5]

Bhatia (2008) refers QWL to the favorableness or unavoidableness of a total job environment for people. QWL programs are another way in which organizations recognize their responsibility to develop jobs and working conditions that are excellent for people as well as for the economic health of the organization.[6]

Based on Factors

Cunningham, J.B. and T. Eberle, (1990) described that, the elements that are relevant to an individual's quality of work life include the task, the physical work environment0, social environment within the organization, administrative system and relationship between life on and off the job.

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.

Sirgy and et al (2001) categorized QWL into two major categories: lower- and higher order needs. The lower-order QWL comprised of health/safety needs and economic/family needs whereas the higher-order QWL is comprised of social needs, esteem needs, self-actualization needs, knowledge needs, and aesthetic needs.[7]

Vaghaseyyedin et al. (2005) identifies leadership and management style/ decision making attitude, shift

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[3] Prasad, L.M, ―Human Resource Management‖, Sultan Chand & Sons, 2005.

[4] Warr, P, Cook, J and Wall, T (1979): Scales for the measurement of some work attitudes and aspects of psychological wellbeing. Journal of Occupational Psychology 52, pp 129-148.

[5] Laar et.al: strategies for improving quality of work life balance, American Psychologist 37, pp 486-493.

[6] Bhatia, S. K. and Singh, Nirmal (2000): Principles and techniques of personnel management. Ed.2. New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publishers.

[7] Sirgy, H. (2001). The stress of life, New York: McGraw-Hill.

working, salary and fringe benefits, relationship with colleagues, demographics characteristics, and workload/ job strain as factors which affect the overall QWL of the employees.[8]

Based on need /importance

Sharma (1989)[9] on the basis of her investigation highlighted the importance of Quality of Work Life and organization design as significant dimensions of organizational functioning.

Havlovic (1991)[10] studied the influence of Quality of Work Life initiatives on HR outcomes. Data was collected by unionized Midwestern heavy manufacturing firm for period during 1976-1986. Results indicated that Quality of Work Life initiatives significance reduce absenteeism, minor or accidents, grievances and quits.

Barling (2003)[11]

in the research, as "Relationship between quality of working life and jobs arousal capacity' concluded that lacking quality of Working Life blow damage into the job and there is there is significant positive relationship between the quality of working life and increasing the skills, information and motivation.

Based upon an understanding of employees' various needs and their QWL experiences, management can identify the strategic gap (if any) in the organization and can take further necessary actions to improve the QWL of employees. This may be helpful for an organization to be successful and to achieve organizational objectives since employees' QWL experiences are directly related with a variety of desirable organizational outcomes, such as reduced rate of absenteeism, turnover, tardiness frequency and health care utilization (thus, reduced health care costs), and increased job performance (Warr 2005, Wright and Bonett 2007, Wright and Croppanzano 2004).[12]

It was a philosophy that considers people as the most important recourses in the organization and views them as an "asset" to the organization rather than as "costs". Hence, if organizations are concerned about developing their human resources and gaining a competitive advantage in the marketplace, it seems necessary that they attend to one of their most precious assets, namely, their human resources by employing high-quality working-life experiences in consonance their various needs eliciting favorable job-related responses in return. Further many more researches stated that the core pillar of QWL was to create a work environment that employee can work cooperatively with each other

[8] Vagheseyyedin S. N. (2005): New forms of work organization and Quality of Working Life: A select bibliography, Productivity, Vol. XXII(4), 115-121.

[9] Sharma Rakesh (1989): Job satisfaction among support staff in Michigan Academic Libraries, College and Research Libraries, Vol. 56(2), March, 157-170.

[10] Havlovic 1991. Improving the Quality of Work Life, Harvard Business Review, May-June, 12.

[11] Barling 2003. QWL Indicators: Prospects and Problems, Studies in Personnel Psychology, Spring, Vol. 6(1), 7-18.

[12] Chan, K.W. And Wyatt, T.A. (2007): Quality of Work Life: A Study of Employees in Shanghai, China. Asia Pacific Business Review, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp 501-517.

in order to achieve to organization objectives.

Organizational responses to work-life issues in India

In general, the response of Indian organizations to work-life issues have been limited. The reasons for this include a culture that does not empower women, an assumption and expectation that the (joint) Indian family is in a better position to provide support than non-family institutions, and demographic factors including a low rate of organized work-force participation among women as compared to men. Although Indian government policy on work and family issues has traditionally been patriarchal in nature, the most progressive work-family programs in Indian organizations come from the public sector. Family-friendly measures offered include reduced hours, career break leave, responsibility leave, and parental leave. A 2007 survey by the Management and Personnel Office of the Government of India found that just over 6% of the workforce employed in the public sector made use of such measures. Most of the users, not surprisingly, were women. In the private sector, most of the companies offering well-defined work-life programs are multinational and, in the IT, and ITES sectors. The motivation for multinational companies to offer family-friendly measures to their Indian subsidiaries is partly to maintain uniformity in HR practices globally, partly in response to the demands placed on them by younger men and women employees, and partly as a tool to retain talent.

Few examples

For Wipro, a leading player in both the IT & BPO sectors, encouraging employee wellness is an integral part of the corporate culture. This is reflected in Wipro's numerous health and safety initiatives which supplement health-related benefits. Some of these are nutrition consulting, health centers, medical camps, and regular well-being events like the annual Wipro marathon. The most successful Wipro project is one called Mitr which means 'friend' in Hindi. In this program, 28 employees, all volunteers, were trained to counsel fellow employees to manage stress. Mitr signifies to employees that they do have a friend in Wipro and that they should be able to confide and share their problems with a safe ally in the company.

Johnson & Johnson India established the Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI) in 2002 with the support of top management. WLI is aimed at removing barriers to the advancement of women within the company and at attracting and developing women leaders in the company. The organization is committed to fostering a culture of inclusion by building the much-needed sensitivity around the topic of gender inclusion in the workplace. WLI has task forces created to work on areas of work-life integration, policy development, learning and career development, and networking.

Striving For Work-Life Best Practices In India:

Based on the current culture, political climate, economic situation, and societal factors, there are a number of work-life initiatives that multinational organizations might consider for strategically

addressing the needs of the business and the needs of their employees in India:

- **Flexibility:**

Provide flexibility in terms of when and where work is conducted to reduce employees' conflicts, stress, and work interruptions and maintain or increase their productivity.

- **Commuting:**

Invest in transportation resources to assist employees with work conflicts and delays caused by long and difficult commutes.

- **Stress Reduction:**

Create a collegial atmosphere at work with opportunities for colleagues to interact informally, such as creating communal and casual spaces for chatting, listening to music, or getting a cup of tea or coffee with friends.

- **Health:**

Increase health consciousness by providing more information about good exercise and healthy eating, and by providing health check-ups. Though some companies provide gyms, basketball courts, and other recreational facilities, the climate and culture make it difficult to exercise at work.

- **Elder Care:**

Provide medical coverage for parents and a separate form of leave for dealing with family issues (similar to FMLA in the USA). Also, contract with well-known hospitals to provide quality nursing care, or compile a vendor list of quality elder care providers.

- **Childcare:**

Partner with local childcare providers to develop quality standards and performance guarantees on behalf of employees.

- **Training:**

Invest in training for employees to build skills, and to encourage employees to use technology more efficiently.

- **Gender Equality:**

Demonstrate that work-life programs are beneficial to the business so that both men and women recognize their importance for talent attraction, retention, and development. Continue women's advancement programs.

Conclusion:

From the above discussion we can infer that quality of work life has gained due importance in the organizations and constant efforts are being made to maintain a high level of quality of work life by the organization. This is important as maintaining a high quality of work life has benefits both for the organization as well as the employees of the organization and can be easily improved by following

measures like employee's involvement, creating quality circles, following socio technical system and creating autonomous work groups. When we look at the Indian scenario private sector has made due efforts in maintaining a high quality of work life but government sector still lacks behind in this area though the most progressive work-family programs in Indian organizations come from the public sector. In order to maintain quality of work life balance in Indian scenario we have some best practices to follow which focus on factors like flexibility, stress reduction, eldercare, child care, training, gender equality and health.

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