

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE : AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract:

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. A qualitative work life gives satisfaction and eagerness to look forward. This paper will shed some light on aspects such as Reasons for growing concern for QWL, Factors that influence & decide quality of work life, measurement of QWL. Concept of QWL, various challenges faced in QWL, barriers and measures to overcome the same is briefly discussed.

Keywords: Quality of work life (QWL), 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).

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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. Quality of Work life programs has become important in the workplace for the following reasons: Improve workplace morale, Increased women in the workforce, Increased responsibility for elders, Increased demands at work, the need for enhanced workplace skills, Greater competition for talent, Encourage employee commitment, Support recruitment, Encourage retention, Enhance productivity, Reduce absenteeism, Support increased educational level & consequently the job aspirations of the workforce.

Literature Review:

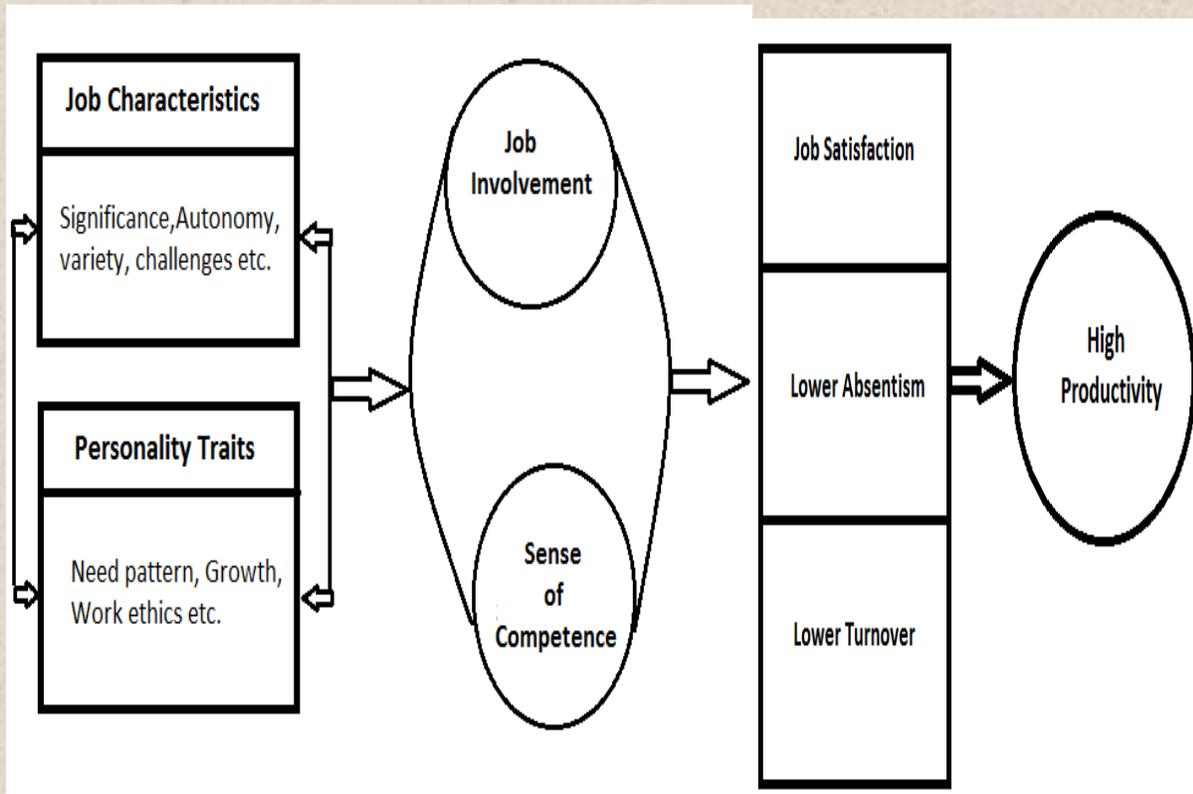
This study was pursued by many researchers to identify and suggest improvement in quality of work life. **Herzberg (1959)** used "Hygiene factors" and "Motivator factors" to distinguish between the separate causes of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. It has been suggested that Motivator factors 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 .

WHAT IS QUALITY OF WORK LIFE?

Quality of work life refers to the extent to which members of a work organization are able to satisfy their personal needs through their work experience in the organization. It covers the person's feelings about every aspect of work including economic rewards, benefits, security, internal & external equity, working conditions, career opportunity, decision authority & organizational & interpersonal relationships, which are very meaningful in a person's life. The term quality of work life (QWL) has different connotations to different persons. For example, to a worker in an assembly line, it just means a fair day's pay, safe working conditions, and a supervisor who treats him/her with dignity. To a young new entrant, it may mean opportunities for advancement, creative tasks and a successful career. To academics it means the degree to which members of work organization are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experiences in the organization.

A conceptual model for quality of work life:-



Benefits arise due to quality of work life, are as follows:-

- More job involvement
- More job satisfaction
- Greater performance on job
- Lower Absenteeism
- Lower Turnover
- High productivity

DETERMINANTS OF QWL:

Attitude: The person who is assigned 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

personal relations, adaptability to changes in the situation, openness for innovative ideas, competitiveness, zeal, ability to work under pressure, leadership qualities and team-spirit.

Environment: The job may involve dealing with individuals who have varied tolerance level, preferences, behavioral pattern, level of understanding, which needs lot of concentration, alertness, presence of mind, sometimes high level of patience, tactfulness, empathy and compassion and control over emotions.

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.

Nature of Job: Nature of job also affects QWL to a great extent 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.

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 thieves, robbers, physically disabled people, mentally challenged, children & politicians etc. These situations demand high level of prudence, cool temper, tactfulness, humor, kindness, diplomacy and sensitiveness.

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 company 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.

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.

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.

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.

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 criterion to lure a prospective worker to accept the offer.

MEASUREMENT OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AT THE WORKPLACE:

There are few recognized measures of quality of working life, and the Work-Related Quality of Life scale (WRQoL) is one among them & indicates that, this assessment device should prove to be a useful measure. The WRQoL measure uses six core factors to explain most of the variation in an individuals quality of working life: Job and Career Satisfaction; Working Conditions; General Well-Being; Home-Work Interface; Stress at Work and Control at Work.

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.

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.

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.

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)[17] 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.

CHALLENGES FACED IN OWL:

In today's world, the structure, content, and process of work have changed. Work is now:

- more cognitively complex
- more team-based and collaborative
- more dependent on social skills
- more dependent on technological competence
- more time pressured
- More mobile and less dependent on geography.

In today's world, you will also be working for an organization that is likely to be very different due to competitive pressures and technological breakthroughs. Organizations today are:

- leaner and more agile
- more focused on identifying value from the customer perspective
- more tuned to dynamic competitive requirements and strategy

- less hierarchical in structure and decision authority
- less likely to provide lifelong careers and job security
- Continually reorganizing to maintain or gain competitive advantage.

BARRIERS:

1. A proper definition. Confusion exists about the definition of quality. " Many companies are similarly confused in defining quality. Three prevalent definitions of quality Quality is a process, not a program. While programs-or training-provide tools to implement the process, there is the danger that such activity will become an end in itself or perceived.

2. Focus on quick fix. Management is under constant pressure to find and fix problems quickly, with immediate results. This leads to treating symptoms instead of solving problems. Treating symptoms is like taking two aspirin and drinking orange juice for the common cold. You might feel a little better but you still have a cold. Implement a problem-solving process. Management must provide a long-term focus and look towards the future.

3. who's responsible? The great mystery of management is ""who's responsible" for something rather than "what happened," and "how can we prevent this problem from occurring in the future?" This barrier includes what' we know and don't know about people, equipment, processes, products, and services. It is important for employees and managers to realize what we know as well as what we don't know opportunity to really do their job and have **pride of workmanship.**

5. Failing to fix problem People issues, management vs. leadership, processes, procedures, and systems can all cause problems. Many times we treat symptoms and overlook problems. The manager's role is to find and fix problems.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS:

Barriers to quality take on many shapes and forms. In general, they involve poor human resource development and deployment.. So to implement a quality approach, management must create

ways for employees to "buy in" to organizational goals-that is, genuinely have a part of the "action."

1. Show what is expected. Every member of the organization must understand what's expected of them and what requirements must be met for success. Many employees are insecure because they don't know what's expected. Management's job is to define this .Every employee has a right to know requirements for processes, people, and equipment.' These expectations should be well defined, concisely written, and clearly communicated. In fact, the employee should be included in defining requirements.

2. Involve people. People involved in the decision-making process take more responsibility for finding and implementing solutions. Involve people in ownership of the ideas. A team' process lets individuals contribute to the long-term success of a business, thus overcoming barriers. Earlier I discussed the focus on the quick fix, failing to fix problems, and selfishness. Involving people throughout t he organization, at all levels, can help overcome these barriers.

3. Take a long-term approach. A long-term look is essential. In contrast, less enlightened companies expect instant results. Can we implement Such a short-term outlook generally creates problems instead of overcoming barriers. A long-term plan is important to success. What is long-term?

The answer depends on your situation. Anything less than three years is probably short-term.

4. Start small In beginning the Quality Improvement journey, start small. Baseball teams are successful when they hit many singles "bunched together" instead of two or three home runs scattered through the course of a game. That is true in business as well. Look for the Small gains by starting small. Begin the quality process by departments, for example, instead of company-wide. Look for the small improvements. Focus attention in those areas. Why small? We must learn to walk before we run.

5) Focus on teamwork. Many-managers believe they have a team when they bring a group or task force together. It is easy to have a group, but more difficult to build a team. Teams need training in how people work together, how teams function, what process will be used, and group dynamics. Teamwork must cut across organizational lines. It is important that people from different departments work together.

6) **Impart Training** It is an important and specific management responsibility. The manager role is to identify training needs and provide needs-based training oriented to on-the job results. Training is critical to the organization's survival. Whether the training is simply how to set up a machine, how to do a job, how to operate a computer, or sophisticated statistical methods (such as designed experiments and process-control systems) it must be practical. It is imperative to identify needs that employees must meet for success. People do not need training in more than they need to know. Too much information can confuse and frustrate them.

7) **Communicate.** Employees need to know, "What's going on" to be effective. Management needs to know "what's going on" to be effective. Customers and suppliers need to be involved in "what's going on." Communications can be a four-lane highway instead of a one-way street. This can be represented by a square or a rectangle involving customers, suppliers, employees, and management. The manager ignored what the employee was saying rather than take action. Improving communication is one of the most important ways to overcome barriers.

8) **Encourage employees.** The manager's role should be that of an encourager instead of that of a nay-sayer. Good leaders assume the role of an encourager. The day of the "policeman manager" is gone. The manager's role is to be involved with people and encourage those actively involved in quality improvement. Encourage those who are not involved to get involved. The effective manager is a positive questioner and an encourager.

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 to the organizations but if these issues handled strategically than organization can reap the desired benefits so maintain QWL is the need of hour.

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