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QWALITY OF WORK LIFE (QWL)

Abstract

QWL has been defined by many researchers in a variety of ways, thus presenting some disagreement on a precise definition; however, there is a general consensus of it multidimensional qualities and usefulness as a concept (Baba & Jamal, 1991).

It is almost impossible today to observe an organizational life without finding a reference to quality of work/ working life. In the search for improved productivity, manager and executives alike are discovering the important contribution of QWL. The QWL entails the design of work systems that enhance the working life experiences of organizational members, thereby improving commitment to and motivation for achieving organizational goals. Most often, this has been implemented through the design of jobs that afford workers more direct control over their immediate work environment. More specifically, QWL may be set into operation in terms of employees' perceptions of their physical and psychological well-being at work. It includes virtually every major issue that employees have fought for during the last two decades.

The scope of the concept QWL is not an end, it is broader and ever expanding. With a view to tackle job boredom, modern organizations have been experimenting with several forms of alternate work schedules such as four-day work a week, flexi-time and part-time work. Compressed work week is a work schedule in which a trade is made between the number of hours worked per day, and the number of days worked per week, or order to work the standard length hours-four days, 10 hours each day or three days, 12 hours each day are examples of the QWL schedule.

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In India, there is cross-cultural fusion as result of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalisation, the western approach to QWL may not be applicable to Indian context. In India, it is predicted that by 2012, nearly 3 million new jobs will be available IT Sectors. It is also estimated that 60% of the female population qualified in Non-IT career will move to IT career in the near future. Several barriers are identified for such a drastic shift such as pay and compensation, QWL, exclusion from the formal and stereo typed work culture, work life and family balance, travel abroad chances, social status, etc. Quality of Work Life (QWL) is a philosophy, a set of principles, which holds that people are the most important resource in the organization as they are trustworthy, responsible and capable of making valuable contribution and the should be treated with dignity and respect. Quality of Work Life consists of opportunities for active involvement in group working arrangements or problem solving that are of mutual benefit to employees or employers, based on labor-management cooperation. People also conceive of QWL as a set of methods, such as autonomous work groups, job enrichment, high -involvement aimed at boosting the satisfaction and productivity of workers.

The management in every organization should sincerely invite their employees to suggest ways to improve their operation and the quality of their work life, only if these ideas are received in a spirit of appreciation. The employees should then be asked to participate in studying the feasibility ad recommended appropriate means of implementing each suggestion then be enhanced. A management practice that manifests concern about job enrichment, employees security, career opportunities, and the opportunities for employees to have voice in matters which affect them is entirely consistent with meticulously controlled operations in the interest of efficiency, effectiveness, quality assurance, customer service, profitability and high employee morale.

Thus, Quality of Work Life is a comprehensive construct that includes an individual's job related well-being and the extent to which work experiences are rewarding, fulfilling and devoid of stress and other negative personal consequences.

QWL has been defined by many researchers in a variety of ways, thus presenting some disagreement on a precise definition; however, there is a general consensus of it multidimensional qualities and usefulness as a concept (Baba & Jamal, 1991). For instance, Carayon (1997) defines QWL as the complex interactions of the elements of the work system, namely the individual, the tasks, organizational factors, the environment, tools and technology. Still others view QWL as the effect of the workplace on job satisfaction, which spills over into satisfaction with non-work domains, and translates into overall satisfaction with life and subjective well being (Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel, & Lee, 2001). Davis (1983) has defined QWL as "the quality of the relationship between employees and the total working environment, with human dimensions added to the usual technical and economic considerations". The Socio technical Systems Theory (STS of Trist, 1981), the Organizational Health Model of Sauter. Lim, & Murphy (1996) and the Balance Theory (Smith & Carayon-Sainfort, 1989) provide theoretical perspectives for examining work systems. The STS emphasizes the interrelatedness of the social and technical systems within an organization, integrates job and organizational design perspectives by linking the job design theories of human relations, job enrichment and participation. The Organizational health Model asserts that organizational characteristics (e.g. management practices, organizational values) directly influence organizational health i.e. performance outcomes and satisfaction outcomes, Sauter et al. (1996). The Balance Theory is a theoretical framework that examines job and organizational design characteristics within each component of the work system that interact to influence the "stress load" upon an individual Smith & Carayon-Sainfort (1989). It identifies sources of occupational stress

(stressors or psychosocial work factors) that can influence stress, attitudes and behaviors (e.g. turnover intention).

Walton (1974) one of the scholarly contributors of QWL proposed eight major dimensions of the concept, adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy environment, development of human capacities, growth and security, social integration, constitutionalism, the total life space and social relevance.

It is almost impossible today to observe an organizational life without finding a reference to quality of work/ working life. In the search for improved productivity, manager and executives alike are discovering the important contribution of QWL. The QWL entails the design of work systems that enhance the working life experiences of organizational members, thereby improving commitment to and motivation for achieving organizational goals. Most often, this has been implemented through the design of jobs that afford workers more direct control over their immediate work environment. More specifically, QWL may be set into operation in terms of employees' perceptions of their physical and psychological well-being at work. It includes virtually every major issue that employees have fought for during the last two decades.

The conceptual framework of QWL must be built around an equitable pay programs. In future, more workers may want to participate in the profits of the firm. Since, workers are now better organized, educated and vociferous, they demand more from the employers all over the world, apart from the pay, in the form of social security and welfare benefits as matter of right which were once considered a part of the bargaining process.

In an organizational context the conditions in work environment must be created by the employer which will give all the employees freedom from fear of losing their jobs. A system must be created in which there are healthy working conditions with optimum financial security. The points viewed by the scholars are essential to improve the QWL in organizations. The

scope of the concept QWL is not an end, it is broader and ever expanding. With a view to tackle job boredom, modern organizations have been experimenting with several forms of alternate work schedules such as four-day work a week, flexi-time and part-time work. Compressed work week is a work schedule in which a trade is made between the number of hours worked per day, and the number of days worked per week, or order to work the standard length hours-four days, 10 hours each day or three days, 12 hours each day are examples of the QWL schedule.

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The research literature in IT and the popular press suggest that technology professionals are particularly vulnerable to work exhaustion and stress, Kalimo & Toppinen (1995); McGee

(1996). Quality of work life (QWL) is a broad and general concept, which includes the subjective experience of employees. The term QWL is perceived by many as implying improves management of human resources to bring about overall improvement and change in organizational effectiveness. The concept quality of working life is seen as encompassing workplace democracy, increased workers participation, in management as well as and productivity improvement through optimized input.

The management in every organization should sincerely invite their employees to suggest ways to improve their operation and the quality of their work life, only if these ideas are received in a spirit of appreciation. The employees should then be asked to participate in studying the feasibility ad recommended appropriate means of implementing each suggestion then be enhanced. A management practice that manifests concern about job enrichment, employees security, career opportunities, and the opportunities for employees to have voice in matters which affect them is entirely consistent with meticulously controlled operations in the interest of efficiency, effectiveness, quality assurance, customer service, profitability and high employee morale.

Quality of work life is not to be confused with some socio-political concept of democratic management. Managers who have evidence of concern of Quality of Work life continue to be accountable for carrying out their responsibilities effectively. If they learn that inviting opinion or collective wisdom' in problem solving or decision making from the persons they supervise is likely to lead to better quality and acceptance of those solutions or decisions, they can become better managers.

The American Society of Training and Development (1979) defined Quality of Work Life as "a process of work organization which enables its members at all levels to participate actively and efficiently in shaping the organization's environment, methods and outcome. It is a value based process, which is aimed towards meeting the twin goals of enhances

effectiveness of organization and improved quality of life at work for employees". Walton (1973) defines Quality of Work Life as a process by which an organization responds to employees needs for developing mechanism to allow them to share fully in making the decisions that design their lives at work. According to Glaser (1976) the term Quality of Work Life (QWL) means more than job security, good working conditions, adequate working conditions, adequate and fair compensation, more even than an equal employment opportunity. Davis (1985) defined Quality of Work Life (QWL) as the quality of relationship between employees and the total working environment.

In fact, no directing line can be drawn between areas which are covered under quality of work life and those under quality of work life on the whole. Since as mentioned earlier quality of work life is part and parcel of quality of life itself most of the areas my overlap each other, thereby forming common bondage between the two. Some of the areas covered under quality of work life through they may be covered under quality of life also.QWL covers all areas which are directly or indirectly related to the work environment.

The International Labour Office lists the following areas as concerns of QWL

- Hours of work and arrangements of working time
- Work organization and job content
- Impact of new technologies on working conditions
- Working conditions of women, young workers, older workers and other special categories
- Work-related welfare services and facilities
- Shop floor participation in the improvement of working conditions

In general, the benefits of quality of work life include: (a) healthier, satisfied, and productive employees; and (b) efficient, adaptive, and profitable organizations.

Specifically, the benefits are as follows:

- More positive feeling towards one's self (greater self-esteem).

- More positive feeling towards one's job (improved job satisfaction and involvement).

- More positive feeling towards the organization (stronger commitment to the organization's goals).

- Improved physical and psychological health.

- Greater growth and development of the individual as a person and as a productive member of the organization.

- Decreased absenteeism and turnover, and fewer accidents.

- Higher quality and quantity of output of goods and services.

Thus, Quality of Work Life is a comprehensive construct that includes an individual's job related well-being and the extent to which work experiences are rewarding, fulfilling and devoid of stress and other negative personal consequences.

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