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CONTENTS

| Sr. No. | TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S) | Page No. |
|---------|---|----------|
| 1. | A DIAGNOSTIC STUDY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF FISHERMEN: AN INSIGHT OF KARNATAKA STATE <i>KIRANKUMAR BANNIGOL & S. G. HUNDEKAR</i> | 1 |
| 2. | POPULATION GROWTH AND ECONOMIC DEPENDENCY IN INDIA <i>DR. REJI B, PINKI & ANURADHA KUMARI RAI</i> | 5 |
| 3. | AN ASSESSMENT OF LEADERSHIP STYLE OF PROJECT MANAGERS ASSOCIATED WITH PROJECT SUCCESS IN COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION <i>COLLINS MUDENDA</i> | 9 |
| 4. | PERFORMANCE OF MGNREGA SCHEME IN PURULIA AND BIRBHUM DISTRICTS: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS <i>DR. DHANANJOY RAKSHIT</i> | 14 |
| 5. | VENDOR DEVELOPMENT PROCESS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY <i>DR. R. K. KUSHWAHA, SHYAM SUNDER PARASHAR & DR. ALOK SINGH</i> | 23 |
| 6. | A STUDY ON CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS HOME LOANS PROVIDED BY HDFC BANK IN COIMBATORE CITY <i>DR. ESWARI. M & DR. MEERA.C</i> | 30 |
| 7. | PROBLEMS AND MARKETING STRATEGY OF HANDLOOM SECTOR <i>R. VINAYAGAMOORTHY & DR. B. BASKARAN</i> | 34 |
| 8. | A STUDY ON TYPE OF POLICY-HOLDING AND POLICY HOLDERS SATISFACTION ON THE POLICIES OF SELECTED PRIVATE LIFE INSURANCE COMPANIES <i>D. INDHUMATHI & DR. B. SEKAR</i> | 36 |
| 9. | A STUDY OF PERCEPTION OF CUSTOMER TOWARDS PLASTIC MONEY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HDFC BANK <i>ANAND TRIVEDI, NAND KISHORE SHARMA & VANDANA SHARMA</i> | 40 |
| 10. | PRODUCTION FUNCTION ANALYSIS OF MEMBERS DAIRY COOPERATIVE SOCIETY FOR MILCH BUFFALO IN DISTRICT ETAWAH, INDIA <i>ASHISH CHANDRA & DR. ARUN BAHADAURIA</i> | 48 |
| 11. | ROLE OF GROWTH IN MONEY MARKET WITH CONTEXT TO INDIAN ECONOMY <i>M. SUGANYA & R. BHUVANESHWARI</i> | 52 |
| 12. | SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT ON CONSUMER PURCHASING DECISION: STUDY OF AMU CENTER MURSHIDABAD <i>MONIRUL ISLAM</i> | 54 |
| 13. | SKILL DEVELOPMENT: THE KEY TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY <i>ANJALI JAIN</i> | 62 |
| 14. | A CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON PRADHAN MANTRI JAN-DHAN YOJANA: A TOOL FOR FINANCIAL INCLUSION (THE SUCCESS RATES AND AN OVERVIEW OF PEOPLES ACCEPTANCE) <i>SINDU AKILESH</i> | 64 |
| 15. | STANDARDIZATION OF PERCEIVED PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS SCALE FOR POLICE PERSONNEL <i>RASMITA DAS SWAIN & SHIV MANGAL SINGH</i> | 69 |
| 16. | REDEFINING MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES FOR THE 'DIGITAL' GENERATION <i>DR. DEEPIKA DABKE</i> | 73 |
| 17. | QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK <i>SHAHNEYAZ A BHAT, SUHAIL A BHAT & MUNEEER A KHAN</i> | 79 |
| 18. | TECHNICAL ANALYSIS OF BONUS ISSUES: A STUDY OF INDIAN STOCK MARKET <i>NEHA ROHRA & SHWETA JAIN</i> | 83 |
| 19. | ON THE NEOCLASSICAL AND KALDORIAN PERSPECTIVES <i>MERTER MERT</i> | 94 |
| 20. | PUNJAB Vs. HARYANA: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE ON ECONOMIC GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT <i>SHILPI SALWAN</i> | 99 |
| | REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK & DISCLAIMER | 103 |

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QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

In the present context employees working in an organization are becoming more quality conscious about their working life. Their efficiency is determined to the substantial extent by the quality of work life prevailing in the organization. Basically, quality of work life is a philosophy and a set of doctrine in an organization which enables employees at different levels to actively contribute towards the replenishment of organizational climate, methods and outcomes. It is actually concerned with the overall climate of work. Now it has become an important consideration for the HR manager of an organization to determine the better ways for improving the quality of work life. The purpose of this study is to explore the various factors that affect the quality of work life in an organization. It also determines the linkage/relationship between quality of work life and employee performance on the job. The findings of the study are based on the review of literature on the relationship between quality of work life and employee performance. This paper aims to contribute to the academic theory and add on to the existing body of literature by developing a theoretical model (linking QWL and employee performance) based on the presumptions derived from the body of literature available on the subject under study.

KEYWORDS

employee performance, organizational climate, quality of work life, working environment.

INTRODUCTION

Due to the knowledge explosion the present society has been dominated by knowledge workers and intellectuals which has given rise to the knowledge societies. The intellectual pursuits have taken precedence over the physical efforts. Some knowledge workers work for more than 60 hours a week. As a result of this, their personal tastes and interests clash with their work. Life is a bundle that contains all the strands together and hence the need to balance work life with other related issues. One must have both love and work in one's life to make it healthy. Gone are the days when the priority of employees used to be for physical and material needs. With the increasing shift of the economy, the meaning and quality of work life has undergone a drastic change. Quality of work life (QWL) refers to the favourableness or unfavourableness of a job environment for the people working in an organisation. The period of scientific management which focused solely on specialisation and efficiency, has undergone a revolutionary change. The traditional management (like scientific management) gave inadequate attention to human values. In the present scenario, needs and aspirations of the employees are changing. Employers are now redesigning jobs for better QWL. The QWL as strategy of Human Resource Management has assumed increasing interest and importance. Many other terms have come to be used interchangeably with QWL such as 'humanisation of work' 'industrial democracy' and 'participative work'.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE**QUALITY WORK LIFE**

Over the last years, QWL has been understood as the dynamic and comprehensive management of physical, technological, social and psychological factors that affect culture and renew the organizational environment. Sometimes, it is understood in terms of the effect it has on the worker's well-being as well as on the productivity of the company. Furthermore, it is sometimes associated with the intimate characteristic of technologies introduced into the companies and their impact to the economic elements like salary, incentives, bonuses, or even to the factors connected to one's physical and mental health, safety and, in general, to the workers' well-being (Rainey, 2003).

According to Walton, (2005) QWL has been devised into eight major conceptual categories i.e. (1) adequate and fair compensation, (2) safe and healthy working conditions, (3) immediately opportunity for continued growth and security, (4) Opportunity to use and develop human capacities, (5) Social integration in the work organization, (6), Constitutionalism in the work organization, (7), Work and total life space and (8), Social relevance of work life. Several published works have addressed the constructs that make up the QWL domain and key elements of QWL programs.

Another aspect that has been prioritized is the group of categories needed to assess QWL and how they relate to each other. Hackman and Oldham (1976) propose eight conceptual categories for assessing QWL. These were: adequate and fair compensation, safety and health conditions at work, immediate opportunity to use and develop one's capacity, further opportunity for continuous development and safety, social integration in the working organization, constitutionalism in the work organization, the total space of life and the social relevance of the worker's life (Mueller and McCloskey, 1990; Kalliath and Morris, 2002; Gill and Feinstein, 1994).

Taylor (1979) 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 notions of the nature of the work itself. He suggested that relevant Quality of working life concepts may vary according to organization and employee group.

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.

According to Straw R. (1984), Quality Work Life 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 they should be treated with dignity and respect. The elements that are relevant to an individual's Quality Work Life include the task, physical and social environment within the organization, the pay and career development plans. Thus Quality 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.

Hackman and Oldham (1980), highlights the constructs of Quality Work Life in relation to the interaction between work environment and personal needs. The work environment that is able to fulfil employee's needs is considered to provide a positive interaction effect which will lead to an excellent Quality Work Life. They emphasized that personal needs are satisfied when rewards from the organization such as compensation promotion, recognition and development meet their expectation.

Some studies suggest the importance of measuring professional satisfaction and identifies the association of satisfaction at work with a better quality of life, work-related stress and smaller prevalence of Burnout Syndrome symptoms associated with work roles as good pointers of employees QWL (Kalliath and Morris, 2002).

EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Martison and Cheung (2001), concluded from their research that frequent changes in work environment directly and indirectly influence the performance and productivity of IS specialists and therefore the organization needs to have effective coping strategies in place to handle the after effects of performance under stress.

A series of studies at Chicago Electric Company which came to be known as Hawthorn Studies revealed that money was not the only cause for increased output of workers; it was believed that the factor that best explained the increase of output was human relations. Employees perform better when treated in a positive manner.

The study conducted by Karris and Khurana (1996), found significant correlations of Quality work life of managers from three sectors of industry viz., Public, Private and Cooperative, with some of the background variables (education qualification, native/migrant status, income level) and with all of the motivational variables like job satisfaction and job involvement.

Singh (1983) conducted studies in chemical and textile factories in India that were designed to improve the Quality Work Life by reorganizing the work and introducing participatory management.

Gani (1993) in his study stated that the core of the Quality Work Life concept is the value of treating the worker as a human being and emphasizing changes in the socio-technical system of thorough improvement, in physical and psychological working environment, design and redesign of work practices, hierarchical structure and the production process brought with the active involvement of workers in decision making.

An imperative relationship exists between employee and organization. This employee organization relationship plays an important role in success of any organization. There is a need of developments in it. Managers are believed to develop a role relationship in which actions and decisions should promote the interest of organization. Employee involvement and contributions in organization is outcome of the interest. The quality of employee organization relationship requires fulfilment of needs, quality of interaction, adaptability and identification (Jacqueline, 2007).

Employee empowerment is also an effective way of satisfying them. When employees are given employee empowerment, then it leads to job satisfaction. Employee empowerment also causes customer satisfaction. Similarly, job satisfaction also leads to customer satisfaction which leads to organizational success (Isaiah, 2000).

Employee satisfaction is in fact job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is an important job organization factor. Both of them are significantly related. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain job satisfaction so that employees can be motivated. In studying job satisfaction, job rotation, work method, problem solving and goal setting are important factors to consider and job satisfaction is also influenced by employee's age, marital status and work experience (Dawal, 2009).

The impact of employee satisfaction on the success of organization is undeniable. Moreover, sustaining the satisfaction level of customers is a continuous process whose basics are intricately linked with the employees whose performance reflects through customer satisfaction and organization progress (Naseem, 2011).

Performance is the accomplishment of a given task measured against preset known standards of accuracy, completeness, cost and speed. In a work environment performance is deemed to be the fulfilment of an obligation in a manner that releases the performer from all liabilities. Performance measures are used to track an organizations progress against its strategic plan and specific performance goals. Performance measures are applied to individual projects to ensure that deadlines are met and cost controlled. In this study employee performance will be based on employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction and organizational effectiveness.

Hertzberg (1959), focused on answering the question "what do people want from their jobs?" they asked workers to identify what they felt exceptionally good or exceptionally bad about their jobs. They therefore developed the two factor theory which details differing causes of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The first of the two factors is Hygiene. Hygiene factors relate more to the environment in which people work than to the nature of work itself they affect job dissatisfaction. Closely related to theory Y assumptions are Hertzberg motivator factors which affect job satisfaction. They found out that when such factors as achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement and growth are added to employee job he or she is more satisfied with the job and become more productive. His research is credited with providing the foundation for the development of job enrichment and the movement for improving the quality of work life.

Hygiene factors are the concern of this study they include. It is believed that if these factors are addressed employee performance will be optimized.

This was put forward by Eric Trist, Ken Bamforth and Fred Emery in 1960 who at that time working as consultants at the Tavi Stock in London. They argue that the technical subsystem comprises the devices, tools and techniques needed to transform inputs into outputs in a way which enhances the economic performance of the organization. The social system comprises the employees (at all levels) and the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and needs they bring to the work environment as well as the reward system and authority structures that exist in the organization. The cornerstone of the socio-technical approach, as the work of these researchers became named, was that the fit was achieved by a design process aiming at the joint optimization of the subsystems: any organizational systems will maximize performance only if the interdependency of these subsystems is explicitly recognized. Hence any design or redesign must seek out the impact each subsystem has on the other and design must aim to achieve superior results by ensuring that all the subsystems are working in harmony.

Land (2000), there are two conflicting set of values underlie much socio-technical thinking. The first is a belief in the importance of humanistic principles. The main task of the designer is to enhance the quality of working life and the job satisfaction of the employee. In turn the achievement of these objectives will enhance productivity and yield added value to the organization. The second set reflects managerial values. Socio-technical principles are merely instruments for achieving primarily economic objectives. Humanistic objectives have no value in themselves but if their achievement produces a better performance from employees leading to the fulfilment of the economic objectives well and good.

Brooks and Gawel (2001), state that efforts to understand the theoretical underpinnings of Quality Work Life can be traced back to socio-technical systems theory. Socio-technical system theory maintains that engaging employees fully in designing work gives them a sense of well-being as they find their work fulfilling. At the same time, it is productive in that it helps the organization reach its goals. This theory has emerged as a significant approach to designing organizations, especially at the technology and people interface. It recommends simultaneous modification of technical and social systems to create work designs that can lead both to greater task productivity and to increased fulfilment of organization members.

Unmotivated employees are likely to spend little or no effort in their jobs, avoid the workplace as much as possible, produce low quality work and exit the organization if given the opportunity. On the other hand, employees who feel motivated to work are likely to be persistent, creative and productive, turning out high quality work that they willingly undertake. Motivation can be defined as something inside people that drives them to action. Motivation is the willingness to work at a certain level of effort. Motivation emerges out of needs, values, goals, intentions and expectations. When employees have high autonomy, receive feedback about their performance and have an important, identifiable piece of work to do, which requires skill variety, they may experience feelings of happiness and therefore intrinsic motivation to keep performing well (Porter and Smith, 1970).

Motivator hygiene theory divides motivating factors into 2 categories: motivator factors, which deal roughly with the work itself and Hygiene factors, which to some extent are concerned with the surrounding contextual factors (Rainey, 2003).

Job performance enhancement includes QWL, which has been empirically supported in other studies (Abagi, 1999; Nyaigotti-Chacha, 2002). The relationship between job performance and QWL has been positive but modest in empirical studies. However, correlations between QWL and job performance have been unexpectedly high and strong for professional jobs with little supervision, low and weak for manual supervised jobs (Spector, 1997).

QWL influences work motivation in general and other workplace behaviors such as turnover and absenteeism. Hackman and Oldham (1976) emphasize that satisfied employees are more likely to experience high internal work motivation and to have lower absenteeism and turnover rates than their disappointed counterparts.

Spector (1997) notes that people who dislike their jobs are more likely to search for alternative employment, making poor QWL and the leading cause of turnover. Despite its tenuous relationship with job performance, QWL remains a complex and important concept for scholars and managers to understand.

Abagi (1999) concludes that performance has a significant positive influence on job satisfaction and QWL.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

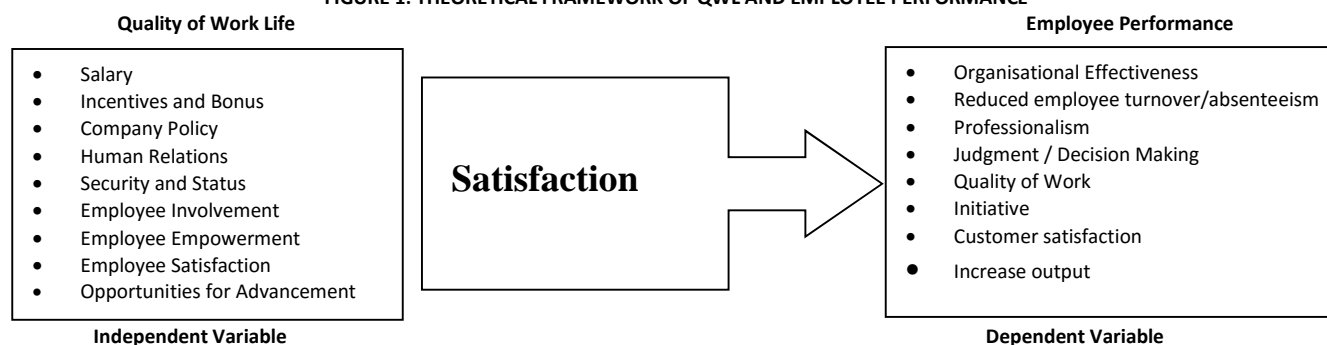
The present study has been taken with the following objectives;

1. To study the Quality Work Life and Employee Performance.
2. To explore the effect of Quality Work Life on the performance of employees.

DISCUSSIONS

One of the most important workplace issues in the present time is Quality of Work Life. The existing literature indicates strong relationship between QWL and the performance of employees. The results of QWL variables shown in figure 1 are relevant to almost all organisations. In the beginning the employees used to prioritise the physical and material needs, now has been changed to number of other needs as well which have been highlighted through the theoretical framework (figure 1). With the increasing shift of the economy, preferences and tastes of the employees and the meaning and quality of work life has undergone an extreme change. High quality work is work that is respectable, meaningful, life enhancing and employee centred. QWL offers benefits to employees, employers and to the national economic prosperity. Quality work life affects the quality of work in families and communities as well as the economic vitality of the nation. As per the literature human relations is one of the important factor that best explained the increase of output. Employees perform better when treated in a positive manner. The work environment that is able to fulfil employee's needs is considered to provide a positive interaction effect which will lead to an excellent Quality Work Life. They emphasized that personal needs are satisfied when rewards from the organization such as compensation promotion, recognition and development meet their expectation. Ultimately the present study focus that QWL should be adopted as a tool in this competitive environment to grab the opportunities which are resulted through employee performance.

FIGURE 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF QWL AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE



CONCLUSION

The study set out to review existing literature on the QWL and how it influences the employee performance in an organisation. It can be concluded that QWL is concerned with taking care of the higher order needs of employees in addition to their basic needs. The overall climate of the work place is adjusted in such a way that it produces more humanized jobs. QWL is viewed as an umbrella under which employees feel fully satisfied with the working environment and extend their whole-hearted cooperation and support to the management to improve productivity and work environment.

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