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QUALITY OF WORK-LIFE: A TOOL TO ENHANCE CONFIDENCE AMONG EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

The term Quality of Work Life refers to perception of people working in an organisation regarding the work environment characterised by humanistic and life enhancing work experience. The present study was undertaken to assess the relevance of various Quality of Work Life factors in an organisation and to identify variation in perception of employees on the basis of demographic variables. Two hundred regular employees of the different branches of HDFC Bank, Bajaj Alliance, and Punjab National Bank situated in Jammu City of the Jammu and Kashmir State constituted the target population of this study. The results indicate that job security is the most important factor affecting the Quality of Work Life in an organisation followed by fringe benefits and welfare measures. Supervision and Safe and healthy environment are the least considered factors.

KEYWORDS

Job Security, Organisation, Quality of Work Life.

INTRODUCTION

 Quality of Work Life (QWL) encompasses a wide range of organisational phenomena (Campbell, et al., 1976; Davis and Cherns, 1975; Loscocco and Roschelle, 1991; Walton, 1974). Job satisfaction, job involvement and organisational commitment are considered as the most important attitudinal outcomes reflecting the degree of goodness of the QWL in an organisation (Davis and Cherns, 1975).

The term QWL refers to perception of people working in an organisation regarding the work environment characterised by humanistic and life enhancing work experience. This may include proper working conditions, reasonable pay, healthy physical environment, employees welfare, job security, equal treatment in job related matters, grievance handling, opportunity to grow and develop, good human relations, participation in decision making and balance in life (Saklani, 2003, 2004).

The improvement of quality at the workplace is a concept that has captured the attention of managers and workers alike. A high QWL is essential for organizations to continue to attract and retain employees. May, Lau and Johnson (1999) suggested that companies offering better QWL and supportive work environments would likely gain leverage in hiring and retaining valuable people and companies with high QWL enjoy exceptional growth and profitability (Lau & May, 1998).

The concept of QWL made its appearance in Indian organisations in mid-1970s. However, the major concern was shown with the organising of a seminar titled the 'National Seminar on Improving Quality of Work Life' in New Delhi in 1982. This seminar emphasized on the improvement of QWL not only for the purpose of work reorganisation and job redesign but also to improve the life of an individual working in the organisation. This change in the view of the corporate sector was complimentary with the realisation of human resource as the most important asset. In addition, the inability of the existing methods of ensuring job satisfaction in the employees forced the management scientists to propose a new solution in this direction. Thus, QWL emerged as a tool to improve job satisfaction, job involvement, organisational commitment and self esteem among employees.

The key concepts captured QWL are job security, better reward systems, higher pay, opportunity for growth, participative groups and increased organisational productivity (Havlovic, 1991; Straw and Heckscher, 1984; Scobell, 1975). The basic objective of an effective QWL programme is improved working conditions and greater organisational effectiveness. QWL not only contributes in an organisation's ability to recruit quality people but also enhances a company's competitiveness. Also it reduces absenteeism, lower turnover and improved job satisfaction (Havlovic, 1991; Cohen, Chiang and Ledford, 1997; King and Ehrhard, 1997).

LITERATURE REVIEW ON QWL

There is a plethora of literature identifying QWL factors (Carlson, 1978; Kalra & Ghosh, 1984; Morton, 1977; Rosow, 1980; Srinivas, 1994; Walton, 1973). Attempts also have been made to empirically define QWL (Levine et al., 1984; Mirvis & Lawler, 1984; Taylor, 1978; Walton, 1975). Comprehensive delineation of the QWL concept is found in three major works: Levine et al. (1984), Taylor (1978) and Walton (1975). Other researchers have attempted to measure QWL in a variety of settings using combinations of various questionnaires such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, alienation, job stress, organizational identification, job involvement and finally work role ambiguity, conflict, and overload were studied as proxy measures of QWL. There appeared to be no one commonly accepted definition for Quality of Work Life. Heskett, Sasser and Schlesinger (1997) proposed that QWL, which was measured by the feelings that employees have towards their jobs, colleagues, and companies would enhance a chain effect leading to organization's growth and profitability. According to Havlovic (1991), Scobell (1975) and Straw and Heckscher (1984), the key concepts captured in QWL include job security, better reward systems, higher pay, opportunity for growth, and participative groups among others. Walton (1974) proposed the conceptual categories of QWL. He suggested eight aspects in which employees perceptions towards their work organizations could determine their QWL: adequate and fair compensation; safe and health environment; development of human capacities; growth and security; social integrative constitutionalism; the total life space and social relevance. In UK, Gilgeous (1998) assessed how manufacturing managers perceived their QWL in five different industries. Despite the growing complexity of working life, Walton's (1975) eight-part typology of the dimensions of QWL remains a useful analytical tool. Using samples from Standard & Poors 500 companies, Lau (2000) found that QWL companies have a higher growth rate as measured by the five-year trends of sales growth and asset growth. However, the outcome for profitability yield mixed results on Walton's (1974) conceptualisation of QWL. Saklani (2004) stressed that with the ever-changing technology and increased access to information, the study of organizations with respect to productivity, efficiency and quality of services very crucial in order to improve the performance of work in India.

The need to improve organizational productivity in the health care industry has spurred Brooks and Anderson (2005) to develop the construct of quality of nursing work life. They came out with four dimensions of the conceptual framework namely; work life/home life dimension, work design dimension, work context dimension and work world dimension. In another study done by Wyatt and Chay (2001), they found four dimensions of Quality of Work Life among the predominantly Chinese Singapore sample of employees. In Malaysia, Mohd. Hanefah et al. (2003), designed, developed and tested QWL measure for professionals, namely public and government accountants and architects. They conceptualized QWL as a multi-dimensional construct comprised of seven dimensions, namely growth and development, participation, physical environment, supervision, pay and benefits, social relevance and workplace integration. In summary, several studies that have examined QWL dimensions varied significantly not only across countries but also among researchers. The factors selected in this study are from a number of previous studies, enabling this study to accommodate a broader view of the existing literature.

NEED OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives in mind:

1. To assess the relevance of various QWL factors in an organisation.
2. To measure the level of QWL in the organisation.
3. To identify variation in perception of employees on the basis of demographic variables.
4. To identify the acute areas needed to be taken care of.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH POPULATION

Two hundred regular employees of the different branches of HDFC Bank, Bajaj Alliance, and Punjab National Bank situated in Jammu City of the Jammu and Kashmir State represent the target population of this study. Out of the two hundred questionnaires administered, 175 responded questionnaires were found useful for this study (87.5%). The remaining 12.5% were those that were not refunded by the respondents for various reasons, which could not be, count for. Thus, the sample size comprise of 175 respondents.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The survey questionnaire developed included a list of fifteen factors that were adapted from previous studies. The questionnaire asked participants to rank the survey's fifteen questions according to importance they give to these factors to ensure Quality of Work Life in their organisations. The most important factor was ranked five and least important ranked one. All factors were to be ranked and no rank could be used more than once. The participants were also asked to indicate their gender, current age.

DATA ANALYSIS

After data were collected on all the factors, excel computer programme was used to present the results. The collective rank order was determined by entering the ranking given to each of the 15 factors in the survey questionnaire. After entering the rankings given to each factor by each respondent, the total or sum of all the rankings for that factor was totalled. The factor with the least or lowest sum, was ranked number 5 or the last factor and the factor with the highest sum was ranked 1 or first. The same procedure was used to analysis the ranking of factors between the different subgroups.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF DATA

To ensure both internal and external validity the most accurate and up-to-date literature has been used. The right and relevant questions asked in the survey, the most feasible data collection method used and the tools used to analyse the data are considered to be accurate and produce valid results; the overall validity of this study is considered high. However, due to the varying nature of human beings 100% reliability cannot be considered for this study, as individual perceptions are central in this study. In other words, because we are different as individuals and that our individual wants and preferences are different, future investigations may not produce exactly the same results as reported in this study.

OVERALL FINDINGS

The results indicate that job security is the most important factor affecting the Quality of Work Life in an organisation, as 20.9% or 63 out of 175 respondents ranked it number one. It is followed by fringe benefits and welfare measures, adequate and fair compensation, opportunity for continued growth, reward and penalty system, Opportunities to use and develop human capacity, Job Involvement, Human relations and social aspect of work life, Equity, justice and grievance handling, Image of organization, Work load and job stress, Work and total life space, Participation in decision making, Supervision and lastly Safe and healthy environment (Table II).

In Table II, Column A-Shows the sum of the ranking given to each factor by the total respondents, the smaller the sum of the total rank, the lower the factor was ranked as a motivational factor, Column B. shows the number of times respondents ranked the factors most important and Column C-shows the percentage of respondents who ranked a particular factor as most important (5)

$$\text{Column C} = \frac{\text{Sum of respondents who ranked a factor most important}}{\text{Total number of respondents who ranked any factor most important}} * 100\%$$

Table I shows the categories into which respondents were divided in the factors that influence them survey carried out for this study. The collective rank order of factors by the entire group of survey employees (175) is presented and the figure makes it possible for the responses of each subgroup to be compared with others and that of the entire group. The most obvious general observation that could be made from Table 3 is that the entire group of survey participants and each of the subgroups consistently ranked "job security" the most important factor of QWL. "Supervision" and "Safe & healthy environment" have been considered as the least required necessity in introducing QWL in an organisation.

GROUP-WISE FINDINGS

GENDER (FEMALE/MALE)

When the responses of female and male employees are analysed, (Table III) no significant differences were found in the ranking of factors of QWL or preferences of the two groups. Both men and women (though placing different rankings) ranked three of the same factors among the top five most important factors. However, certain factors ranked differently by the two groups need a closer look for example male employees ranked "Opportunities to use and develop human capacity" among the five most important components, while female ranked the same factor outside the top five most important components at sixth rank.

Considering the results of this survey, one may safely assume that men are more interested in availing opportunities than women.

AGE GROUP

Three age groups (Table III) were analysed: 25 years or below, 26-30, 31 and above. The ranking of the top five factors was almost similar among these subgroups. Only variation is that the respondents under the group 31 and above consider reward and penalty system more important than having opportunities for continued growth. However, certain other factors like equity, justice and grievance handling, image of organisation and work load and job stress have been ranked differently by the sub

Irrespective of gender and age, the level to which the respondents participated in the survey had no significant difference in the ranking of the factors of QWL among the different employees in the organisation under study.

Discussion and Conclusion

The primary objective of this study is to identify the factors of QWL, which are considered as the most important by the employees working in the organisation. The respondents in this survey ranked as top five factors that motivate them as follows: job security, fringe benefits and welfare measures, adequate and fair compensation, opportunity for continued growth and reward and penalty system. This study concludes that, these factors reflect the current state of affairs in terms of employees needs and implies that especially job security must be ensured by the management of the organisation so that employees could have the feeling of a better work life in their organisation.

The most obvious and major findings emerging from this study is the clear indication of job security is the top requirement of employees. Regardless of age and gender, respondents in this survey seem to have a common interest or goal. This may have some practical implications for organisations, but perhaps its provision and implications may not be as difficult because employees seem to have similar preferences and wants. That is, they want their job to be as secure as it could be. In general, respondents in this study place high emphasis on job security and as well as monetary and non-monetary benefits.

This study has used a sound and solid theoretical base as presented in the literature review. The use of scientifically accepted methods of data collection and analysis further strengthens this study. The results from the analysis are clearly presented and they either contradict existing studies or are supported by the results of these studies. However, the sample size, the short study period, the judgement ranking of factors by respondents and the generality of the results

based on only selected number of employees could represent a weakness of this study. Nonetheless, the strengths of this study in general far outweigh the possible weaknesses.

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TABLES

TABLE I: DESCRIPTION OF SUB-GROUPS WITH THE NUMBER & PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS

Subgroups	Number of respondents	Percentage of total Respondents (175)
Gender		
Males	86	49.2%
Females	89	50.8%
Age Group		
25 and less	44	25.1%
26-30	112	64%
31 and above	19	10.9%

TABLE-II OVERALL RANKING BY THE RESPONDENTS

Factors	A	B	C	OVER-ALL RANK
Job Security	540	63	20.9	I
Fringe benefits and welfare measures	530	55	18.2	II
Adequate and fair compensation	521	20	13.6	III
Opportunity for continued growth	496	27	13.6	IV
Reward and penalty system	466	16	6.6	V
Opportunities to use and develop human capacity	458	17	8.9	VI
Job Involvement	455	41	5.3	VII
Human relations and social aspect of work life	445	41	5.6	VIII
Equity, justice and grievance handling	423	17	5.6	IX
Image of organization	331	5	1.7	X
Work load and job stress	320	5	1.5	XI
Work and total life space	315	4	1.2	XII
Participation in decision making	309	4	0.9	XIII
Supervision	299	3	0.7	XIV
Safe and healthy environment	287	2	0.5	XV

TABLE-III FACTOR RANKING BY SUB GROUPS

Factors	Females	Males	25 and below	26-30	31 and above
Job Security	I	I	I	I	I
Fringe benefits and welfare measures	II	II	II	II	II
Adequate and fair compensation	III	III	III	III	III
Opportunity for continued growth	V	IV	IV	IV	V
Reward and penalty system	IV	VI	V	V	IV
Opportunities to use and develop human capacity	VI	V	VI	VI	VI
Job Involvement	VII	VII	VII	VII	VII
Human relations and social aspect of work life	IX	VIII	VIII	VIII	VIII
Equity, justice and grievance handling	VIII	IX	IX	X	IX
Image of organization	X	X	X	IX	XI
Work load and job stress	XI	XII	XI	XI	X
Work and total life space	XII	XI	XII	XII	XII
Participation in decision making	XIII	XIII	XIII	XIII	XIII
Supervision	XIV	XIV	XIV	XIV	XIV
Safe and healthy environment	XV	XV	XV	XV	XV

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