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QUALITY OF WORK LIFE PRACTICES OF ACADEMIC PROFESSIONALS IN BANGLADESH: A FACTOR ANALYTICAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Quality of work life (QoWL) is viewed as an alternative to the control approach of managing people. The QoWL approach considers people as an 'assets' to the organization rather than as 'costs'. It believes that people perform better when they are allowed to participate in managing their work and make decisions. This approach motivates people by satisfying not only their economic needs but also their social and psychological ones. The literature survey revealed that like other developed, developing countries, QoWL as an area of research have not received proper attention in Bangladesh. Therefore, the authors took interest to somewhat cover this wide research gap. In order to fill the gap the present study was undertaken. . Secondary literatures and primary data collections method were used for the study. In this study attempted to rank QoWL practices with respect to their importance in the context of Bangladesh through using 'Exploratory Factor Analysis' (EFA). The results show that four factors of QoWL practices extracted from the analysis accounted together with 56.754% of the total variance. These four practices such as 'job benefits for family', 'physically safe', 'payment for work', and 'creativity of outside work' ranked as first, second, third, and fourth respectively with respect to their importance. Outcomes of the study would benefit the academicians, researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners of Bangladesh and other similar countries.

KEYWORDS

Academic Professionals, Factor Analytical Approach, Quality of Work Life (QoWL).

INTRODUCTION

Quality of work life (QoWL) is viewed as an alternative control approach of managing people. The QoWL approach considers people as an 'asset' to the organization rather than as 'costs'. It believes that people perform better when they are allowed to participate in managing their work and make decisions. This approach motivates people by satisfying not only their economic needs but also their social and psychological ones. To satisfy the new generation workforce, organizations need to concentrate on job designs and organization of work. Further, today's workforce is realizing the importance of relationships and is trying to strike a balance between career and personal life. Successful organizations support and provide facilities to their people to help them to balance the scales. In this process, organizations are coming up with new and innovative ideas to improve the quality of work and quality of working life of every individual in the organization. Organizations are enjoying the fruits of implementing QoWL programs in the form of increased productivity, and an efficient, satisfied, and committed workforce which aims to achieve organizational objectives.

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE: THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL OVERVIEW

A number of researchers and theorists have been interested in the meaning of the quality of work life concept and have tried to identify the kinds of factors that determine such an experience at work (Kalra and Ghosh, 1984; Mirvis and Lawler, 1982; Kerce and Booth- Kewley, 1993). Given the many perspectives by these researchers, the questions remain, what constitutes a high quality of work life? A high QoWL is essential for organizations to continue to attract and retain employees. QoWL refers to a sense of well-being and satisfaction experienced by people under their current life conditions (Lehman, 1983).

According to Straw and Heckscher (1984) QoWL is a philosophy, a set of principles, which holds that people are the most important resource in the organization as they are trustworthy, responsible, capable of making valuable contribution and they should be treated with dignity and respect. Robins (1990) stated that QoWL 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 (as cited in Islam & Siengthai, 2009). According to Akdere (2006), the issue of work life quality has become critical in the last two decades due to increasing demands of today's business environment and family structure. Hackman and Oldham (1976) described as psychological growth needs (i.e., skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback) as relevant to the consideration of QoWL. They suggested that such needs have to be addressed if employees are to experience high quality of working life.

Taylor (1979) more pragmatically identified the essential components of QoWL 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 a number of other aspects could be added, including; 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. Further, he suggested that relevant Quality of working life concepts may vary according to organisation and employee group.

Warr and colleagues (1979) considered a range of apparently relevant factors of QoWL, including work involvement, intrinsic job motivation, higher order need strength, perceived intrinsic job characteristics, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, happiness, and self-rated anxiety. In particular, they found evidence for a moderate association between total job satisfaction and total life satisfaction and happiness, with a less strong, but significant association with self-rated anxiety. Baba and Jamal (1991) listed what they described as typical indicators of QoWL, including: job satisfaction, job involvement, work role ambiguity, work role conflict, work role overload, job stress, organizational commitment and turn-over intentions. They also explored reutilization of job content, suggesting that this fact should be investigated as part of the concept of QoWL.

QoWL is not a unitary concept, but has been seen as incorporating a hierarchy of perspectives that not only include work-based factors such as job satisfaction, satisfaction with pay and relationships with work colleagues, but also factors that broadly reflect life satisfaction and general feelings of well-being (Danna & Griffin, 1999). More recently, work-related stress and the relationship between work and non-work life domains (Loscocco & Roschelle, 1991) have also been identified as factors that should conceptually be included in QoWL. Sadique (2007) indicated that the designation, experience and age of sugar mill employees in Bangladesh do not alter their rating of the existing and expected QoWL.

May, Lau and Johnson (1999) pointed out that companies offering better QoWL and supportive work environments would likely gain leverage in hiring and retaining valuable people and companies with high QoWL enjoy exceptional growth and profitability. The reality is that in the organization the sharing of social understanding and the participation of all parties concerned would constitute positive attitude for better QoWL and higher productivity. Enhancing QoWL will result in productivity improvement and gains from productivity improvements in turn will strengthen QoWL (Walton, 1972 as cited in Sadique, 2007). Clark (1997) considered such an approach as rational if it is accepted that an increase of work quality is important for an increase of job benefits which employees acquire. Namely he pointed out that job satisfaction can be as close as it is likely to have a close measure of job benefits (as cited in Wooden and Warren, 2003).

The above literature survey reveals that like other developed, developing countries, QoWL as an area of research have not received proper attention in Bangladesh. Therefore, the authors took interest to somewhat cover this wide research gap. In order to fill the gap the present study was undertaken.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following three objectives were under taken for the study:

1. To determine a set of factor that can adequately represent the conception of QoWL;
2. To rank the QoWL practices of the academic professionals in Bangladesh with respect to their importance; and
3. To offer some policy implications to enhance the QoWL of academic professionals in public and private universities in Bangladesh.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodologies of the present study were outlined below.

SAMPLE

A sampling frame of eleven universities was prepared comprising of three public universities[Chittagong University(CU), Chittagong University of Engineering & Technology(CUET) and Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Sciences University(CVAS)] and eight private universities[Independent University of Bangladesh (IUB), Premier University(PU), Southern University(SU), International Islamic University of Chittagong (IIUC), East Delta University (EDU), BCG Trust University, University Science and Technology Chittagong (USTC), University of Information Technology and Sciences (UITS) approved by the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh(UGC) from Chittagong, Bangladesh. Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor were considered as separate strata of academic professional. Therefore from each stratum ten percent of the academic professionals were selected from each university. In this way 202 academic professionals (i.e., Lecturer = 61; Assistant Professor = 57; Associate Professor = 47 and Professor =37) were selected randomly for direct personal interview.

QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT

Since this study is not a replication of any previous studies, the questionnaire was developed through literature and a mix and match approach was undertaken from Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel and Lee (2004) to modify the sentence or complete withdrawal wherever necessary to suit the local context. While academics assisted in assessing face validity. The final questionnaire was pre-tested on 20 academic professionals. The coefficient values were all above 0.7, thus meeting Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) recommendation of >0.7 as the acceptable reliability level. The overall alpha value was 0.783.

RESPONSE SCALE

A 16-items Likert type questionnaire (where 1=strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) was developed with some modifications from Sirgy et al., (2004) to measure the QoWL.

ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

The quantitative data collected was subjected to inferential statistics (i.e., exploratory factor analysis). For the study, entire analysis is done by personal computer. A well known 'statistical package for social sciences' (SPSS) 13.0 version was used in order to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results and discussion were discussed under the following sub-heads.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE RESPONDENTS

Of the respondents, 66.3 percent is male and 33.7 percent is female. The majority of the respondents are aged below 30-39 years (39.6%), followed by below 29 years(37.1%), 40-49 years (13.9%), 50-60 years (6.9%) and above 60 years (2.5%). 34.7 percent of the respondents are

single and 65.3 percent are married. The majority has master’s degree (77.2%), doctorate (12.4%), post-doctoral (5.4%) and honours (5%). In terms of length of service, 73.8 percent of the respondents have less than 10 years of working experiences of which 26.2 percent from these respondents have greater than 10 years of working experiences.

RELIABILITY OF THE SCALES

Before applying factor analysis, testing of the reliability of the scale is very much important as its shows the extent to which a scale produces consistent result if measurements are made repeatedly. This is done by determining the association in between scores obtained from different administrations of the scales. If the association is high, the scale yields consistent result, thus is reliable. Cronbach’s alpha is most widely used method. It may be mentioned that its value varies from 0 to 1 but, satisfactory value is required to be more than 0.6 for the scale to be reliable (Malhotra, 2002; Cronbach, 1951). Its value is estimated to be 0.783. If we compare our reliability value with the standard value alpha of 0.6 advocated by Cronbach (1951), we find that the scales used by us are highly reliable for factor analysis.

SAMPLING ADEQUACY

After checking the reliability of scale, we tested whether the collected data is appropriate for factor analysis or not. The appropriateness of factor analysis is dependent upon the sample size. In this connection, MacCallum, Windaman, Zhang and Hong (1999) stated that the minimum sample size depends upon other aspects of the design of the study. According to them, as communalities become lower the importance of sample size increases. They advocated that if all communalities are above 0.5, relatively small samples (less than 300) may be perfectly adequate (For details please see table-2). It is clear that a sample size of three hundred as is used in the present study is good for a suitable factor solution because all communalities are 0.5 and above. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is still another useful method to show the appropriateness of data for factor analysis.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett’s test

Kaiser – Meyer- Olkin Measures of Sampling Adequacy		.885
Approx.	Chi- Square	1007.907
	df	.120
	Significance	.000

Source: Field Study

From the table-1 it is seen that the KMO statistics varies between 0 and 1. Kasier (1974) recommended that values greater than 0.5 are acceptable. Between 0.5 and 0.7 are mediocre, between 0.7 and 0.8 are good, between 0.8 and 0.9 are superb (Field, 2000). In this study, the value of KMO for overall matrix is 0.885(For details please table-2), there by indicating that the sample taken to process the factor analysis is statistically significant.

APPROPRIATENESS OF THE COLLECTED DATA

Bartlett’s test of sphericity (Barlett, 1950) is the third statistical test applied in the study for verifying its appropriateness. This test should be significant i.e., having a significance value less than 0.5. In the present study, test value of Chi -Square 1007.907 is highly significant (as also given in table-2) indicating that the data is appropriate for the factor analysis.

FACTOR ANALYSIS

After examining the reliability of the scale and testing appropriateness of data as above, we next carried out factor analysis is to measure the QoWL. For this, we employed Principal Component Analysis (PCA) followed by the varimax rotation, (Generally, researchers’ recommend as varimax). It is worth mentioning out here that factor loading greater than 0.30 are considered significant. 0.40 are considered more important and 0.50 or greater are considered very significant (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black, 2003). For parsimony, only those factors with loadings above 0.50 were considered significant (Pal, 1986; Pal & Bagi, 1987; Hair, Anderson, Tatham, &Black, 2003). Further then one variable (i.e., QoWL-8) is dropped from the analysis because of its low loadings and difficulty of interpretation, it is shown the following table-2.

Table 2: Rotated Component Matrix

Variables of QoWL	Factor(s)				Communalities (h ²)
	1	2	3	4	
QoWL-16	.773				.684
QoWL-14	.753				.675
QoWL-15	.736				.604
QoWL-12	.720				.564
QoWL-11	.544				.584
QoWL-13	.543				.505
QoWL-4		.783			.624
QoWL-5		.691			.693

QoWL-2		.577			.528
QoWL-9		.517			.506
QoWL-1			.743		.644
QoWL-3			.694		.546
QoWL-7			.583		.538
QoWL-10			.569		.535
QoWL-6				.872	.785
Eigen Value	5.546	1.329	1.160	1.046	
% of Variance	22.379	14.578	12.747	7.050	
Cumulative %	22.379	36.957	49.704	56.754	

Source: Field Study

Each of four QoWL’s factor listed in table- 2 is labelled according to the name of the value that loaded most highly for those QoWL. The higher a factor loading, the more would its test reflect or measure as QoWL (Pallant, 2005). The QoWL’s variable getting highest loading becomes the title of each factor of QoWL. e.g. ‘creativity of outside work’ - title of QoWL factor-I and the like.

Factor-I: Creativity of outside work - This factor is represented by six variables of QoWL with factor loadings ranging from 0.773 to 0.543. They are ‘creativity of outside work’, ‘professional skills’, ‘creativity involvement’, ‘potential’, ‘realization’, and ‘learning new things’.

Factor-II: Payment for work – Four variables of QoWL ranging from 0.783 to 0.517 belongs to ‘payment for work’, ‘jobs secure’, ‘healthy benefits’, and ‘appreciation’.

Factor-III: Physically safe- This factor comprises four variables like ‘physically safe’, ‘healthy and fit’, ‘good friends’, and ‘respectation’ ranging from 0.743 to 0.569.

Factor- IV: Job’s benefits for family - Job’s benefits for family comprises this factor, its loadings is 0.872.

FACTOR SCORE

Ranking of the above practices in order of their importance along with factor score is shown in Table 3. The importance of these practices as perceived by the respondents has been ranked on the basis of factor score.

Table 3: Ranking of QoWL practices according to their importance

Key QoWL Practices	Factor Score ¹	Rank
Factor1 : Creativity of outside work	0.169	4
Factor 2 : Payment for work	0.238	3
Factor 3 : Physically safe	0.249	2
Factor 4: Job’s benefits for family	0.698	1

Source: Field Study

As depicted in table 3, the QoWL Practices: ‘job benefits for family’, ‘physically safe’, ‘payment for work’, and ‘creativity of outside work’ ranked as first, second, third, and fourth respectively with respect to their importance

CONCLUSION

The present study identified four factors of QoWL practices with 56.754% of the total variance. These four practices such as ‘job benefits for family’, ‘physically safe’, ‘payment for work’, and ‘creativity of outside work’ ranked as first, second, third, and fourth respectively with respect to their importance. Outcomes of the study would benefit the academicians, researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners of Bangladesh and other similar countries.

SUGGESTIONS

The following policy implications may be useful for overall improvement of QoWL of academic professional of the universities in Bangladesh.

1. Universities should provide job security, conducive working environment, research facilities, and overall career advancement opportunities for their academic professionals.
2. Universities should offer minimum reasonable salaries and benefits to their academic professionals.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

It is hoped that the study will contribute greatly to the literature of QoWL in Bangladesh and other similar countries. Besides, suggestive recommendations will have much effect on improving QoWL. The suitable policy formulation based on the findings of the study, to the best interest of the academic professionals as well as of the country will go a long way to open a new era in the field of the country’s human resource development.

¹ Factor score = Composite scores estimated for each respondents on the derived factors. The Factor scores for the ith factor may be estimated as follows: $F_i = W_{i1}X_1 + W_{i2}X_2 + W_{i3}X_3 + \dots + W_{ik}X_k$

Where

F_i = estimate of ith factor; W_i = Weight or factor score coefficient; K = number of variables

*Factor Score = Factor loadings X Component Score Coefficient

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DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE RESEARCHES

Researches usually stem from the need of the society. Generally, a research raises more problems and issues than it proposes to solve. To fulfil the existing need and to identify problems, it is naturally expected that the present study will encourage, stimulate and even provoke future researches in the area of QoWL in Bangladesh and similar countries. A few suggestions for further researches based on the experience of the present study are given below:

1. The comparative study of QoWL of academic professionals between the public and private universities with in Bangladesh may be made.
2. The comparative study of QoWL of academic professionals among SAARC countries and Bangladesh can be made.
3. A separate study may be done regarding the relationships between QoWL and Job related outcomes.
4. A separate study may be done between educational level and QoWL on Job satisfaction.

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ANNEXURE

Annexure: 1: Survey items/ Research Instrument

[Based on Seven point Likert scale i.e., strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7)]

Variable Relates to Quality of Working Life	
QWL1	I feel physically safe at work.
QWL2	My job provides good health benefits .
QWL3	I do my best to stay healthy and fit .
QWL4	I am satisfied with what I am getting (paid) for my work.
QWL5	I feel that my job is secured for life.
QWL6	My job does well for my family .
QWL7	I have good friends at work .
QWL8	I have enough time away from work to enjoy other things in life.
QWL9	I feel appreciated at work.

QWL10	People at work and / or within my profession respect me as a professional and an expert in my field of work.
QWL11	I feel that my job allows me to realize my full potential.
QWL12	I feel that I am realizing my potential as an expert in my line of work.
QWL13	I feel that I am always learning new things that help do my job better.
QWL14	This job allows me to sharpen my professional skills .
QWL15	There is a lot of creativity involved in my job.
QWL16	My job helps me develop my creativity outside of work .



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