QUALITY OF WORK - LIFE-A FULCRUM TO EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The success and survival of any organization depend upon the potential and the motivation of the employees working in it. The motivation of the employees is directly associated with the quality of work life (QWL) they experience in the organization. According to Harrison “QWL is the degree to which work in an organization contributes to material and psychological wellbeing of its members.” In order to make the concept more comprehensive an attempt has been in this article to investigate whether there exists any significant difference of quality of work life of employees engaged in retail and manufacturing industries in Burdwan and Durgapur regions in West Bengal. A sample of 50 employees comprising of 25 of Retail and 25 of manufacturing industries. The 14 factors of quality of work life has been selected i.e. Optimum Utilisation of Potential, Work load, Superior Support, Promotion, Safety, Training, Career Growth, Working Environment, Job Security, Salary, Role Clarity, Employee Participation, Job Autonomy, Infrastructure Support. The scaling technique used in the questionnaire is based on Likert 5-point scale. The Cronbach’s alpha of the questionnaire was found to be 0.917. Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test i.e. U test is used to test whether there exist any significant difference of Quality of Work Life in Retail and Manufacturing industries. The results indicated that there is no significant difference of Quality of Work Life in Retail and Manufacturing industries. The authors have suggested a Quality of Work Life Model called “TRACK” that stands on five pillars i.e. Transparency, Relationship, Autonomy, Collaboration, and Knowledge which demand both the employer as well as employees commitment to the organization and an environment in which this commitment can flourish.

Keywords: Quality of Work Life; Career Growth; Job Autonomy; Collaboration; Relationship

INTRODUCTION

The fateful day December 13, 2005. At around 2 a.m on that day, Prathibha S.Murthy (24 yrs) who was working in the BPO unit of HP, as per schedule got into the cab which was expected to reach her to her office on Hosur Road. Unfortunately, she was not taken to her office but to a remote place where she was raped and murdered by the driver of the cab. If we turn the pages of the newspaper, everyday we will come across such type of incidents where one or more precious life was lost, either by suicide or by a cold blooded murder due to some workplace issues. These incidents badly affect the quality of work life in an organization which directly or indirectly have an impact on the employee turnover in an organization. Maintaining an ideal quality of work life in an organization is a two-way responsibility on the part of both employer and employee. It is a common belief that a good quality of work life creates a loyal & devoted workforce which forms the backbone of an organization’s
productivity. Now what do we mean by Quality of Work Life? According to J. Lloyd Suttle, “Quality of work life is the degree to which members of a work organization are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experiences in the organization.” For any organization recruitment and retention of an effective workforce is a major challenge and to cope up with this challenge, Quality of Work Life is one of the effective tool.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Quality of Working Life 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, G.S. Sandhya Nair, 2013). President Merten created the “Quality of Work Life” task force in November 1999 to address and make recommendations regarding the quality of work life for all George Mason University employees. The task force emphasized “three things that most struck us in our foray into work life at George Mason”: The level of job satisfaction among Mason employees is reasonably high, the bulk of George Mason employees describe themselves as overworked. Across all employment categories employees express a deep desire for recognition, whether informally from supervisors or more concretely through awards programs. The term “quality of work life” (QWL) was first introduced in 1972 during an international labour relations conference. Quality of Work Life (QWL) received more attention after United Auto Workers and General Motors initiated a Quality of Work Life (QWL) program for work reforms. Hackman and Oldham (1976) emphasized psychological growth needs as relevant to the consideration of Quality of working life. 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.

Iacovides, Fountoulakis and Kaprins (2003) studied that higher job demand leads to higher strain in work environments; hence, it affects workers’ health and well-being. Industrial safety and health is one of the crucial contemporary factors that influence QWL of employees. Lokanadha Reddy, M., Mohan Reddy, P. (2010) emphasized that the term ‘quality of work life (QWL) has different meanings of different peoples, some consider it industrial democracy or codetermination with increased employee participation in the decision making process. For others, particularly managers and administrators, the term denotes improvement in the psychological aspects of work to improve productivity. According to Harrison “QWL is the degree to which work in an organization contributes to material and psychological wellbeing of its members.” According to J. Richard and J. Loy, “QWL is the degree to which members of a work organisation are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experiences in the organisation”. While the task force set in 1979 by the American Society for Training and Development defined QWL as a process of work organisation which enables its members at all levels of to actively participate in shaping the organisation’s environments, methods and outcomes.

Mohammad Baitul Islam (2012) studied six factors (work load, family life, transportation, compensation policy and benefits, working environment, working condition and career growth) have significant influence on quality of work life in private limited companies of Bangladesh. B. L. Sairam Subramaniam & R. Saravanan (2012) considered factors personal anticipatory, motivational insights, job freedom, work place conditions, branch operations and working conditions influencing on quality of work life of bank employees. The study concluded that the employees are facing poor work life quality in the work place.

T S Nanjundeswaraswamy, Dr. Swamy D R (2012) summarized that Quality of Work Life may be is viewed as a wide ranging concept, which includes satisfaction towards work, participative management and improve work environment.

G.S. Sandhya Nair has established the relationship between the Quality of Work Life (QWL) and its effect on Organisational Citizenship Behaviour through a survey among College Teachers in and around Thrissur Dist on eight dimensions of QWL like Adequate and fair compensation, Safe and healthy work environment, Growth and safety, Constitutionalism, Social Integration, Social relevance, Total life space and Development of Human capabilities. The Organisational Citizenship Behaviour of a teacher is predicted based on two dimensions namely the conscientiousness (job dedication) and Altruism (helping co-workers). The findings suggested that the perceived level of overall Quality of Work Life among college teachers differ based on their gender i.e. Female Teachers have a better QWL compared to Male and there is a significant relationship between the Quality of Work Life and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour based on Altruism and there is a significant relationship between the Quality of Work Life and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour based on Conscientiousness.

V.Varatharaj, S.Vasantha, R.Varadharajan (2012) determined the various factors that influence quality of work life and its impact on job attitude and job satisfaction of employees in the service sector. The factor analysis revealed that four important factors are extracted from 10 factors such as Work related factors, Work related social factors Work related economic factors and Work life balance which influence quality of work life.

Chandranshu Sinha (2012) undertook a study to explore the factors of quality of working-life experiences in organizations. The three emerging factors were “relationship-sustenance orientation”, “futuristic and professional orientation” and “self-deterministic and systemic orientation”. The results indicated that these factors have substantial roles to play in satiating the needs of the employees and how at middle managerial level different aspects are valued and employed for developing a unique and inimitable quality of working life within their socio-technical systems for eliciting favorable job-related responses.

Rochita Ganguly (Mukherjee) (2010) conducted a study on quality of work life and job satisfaction of a group of clerical employees working in university. The findings indicated that the selected group of university employees perceived different aspects of their quality of work life as either uncongenial (viz, Autonomy, top management support and worker’s control mainly) or they have had a certain amount of dilemma to comment on a few other aspects (such as personal growth opportunities and work complexity mainly) bearing the potential involving a slight trend of negative opinion.

**Quality of Work Life in Manufacturing Industries**

P. Aranganathan, R. Sivarethimamohan (2012) attempted to measure the level of perceived quality of work life among the employees of private manufacturing companies in the state of Tamilnadu, India. The work related factors are combined in nine categories: Adequate & Fair, Compensation, Safe & Healthy Working Condition, Opportunity for Development, and Opportunity for Growth & Security, Social Integration, Constitutionalism, Work & Total Life Space, Social Relevance & Working Life, Quality of Work Life Feelings and Overall Quality of Work Life. The present study revealed that quality of work life has significant relationship with work related factors.

Indumathy R., Kamalraj. S (2012) has attempted a study to look into the Quality of Work Life among Workers with special reference to textile industry in Tirupur District. The findings projected that the major factors that influence and decide the Quality of Work Life are attitude, environment, opportunities, nature of job, people, stress level, It has also been established from the analysis that the workers are most satisfied with work environment and safety measures in the company. Workers are not much satisfied with the relation and cooperation with co-workers and job security and they are least satisfied with Salary.
Mu. Subrahmanian, Anjani. N (2010) reviewed the meaning of QWL, analyses constructs of QWL based on models and past research from the perspective of Textile and Engineering employees in Coimbatore District of Tamil Nadu. The Constructs of QWL taken under consideration are Job satisfaction, Compensation, Human Relation, Working Condition, Grievance, Competency development, Stress and well-being. Ongoing through the various findings regarding the Quality of Work Life of both engineering and textile industries of Coimbatore, the general impression one would get is that the Quality of Work Life in engineering industry by and large, is better than textile industry.

Enni Ramesh, Dr. T. Rajasekhar, Samatha.J (2013) has made an attempt to look into the quality of work life of the employees in electronic based manufacturing sector. It has been observed from the analysis that there is no gender difference between the working employees with regard to quality of work life in the electronic based manufacturing sector, the employees those who have above 30 years age have more quality of work life than the employees those who have below 30 years age in the electronic based manufacturing sector and there is a significance difference between the employees those who have more than 5 years job tenure and the employees those who have below 5 years job tenure with regard to quality of work life in the electronic based manufacturing sector.

Masoud Birjandi, Hamid Birjandi, Manoochehr Ataei (2013) advocated the study to determine the relationship between the quality of work life (fair and sufficient payment, secure and sanitary working environment, supplying growth opportunity and continuous security, law observance in organization, social attachment of working life, general atmosphere of work life, social union and integrity in work and development of human capabilities) and organizational commitment of employees of Darab cement company. The research results projected that there exist a positive and significant relationship between components of quality of work life and employees organizational commitment.

Quality of Work Life in Retail Industries

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2012 report states that the employment of young men in the retail sector increased by 7.7% between 2001 and 2010, well above their increase in the overall economy during this period. However, the employment of young women in the retail sector increased by just 4.9% in the retail sector between 2001 and 2010 compared with an increase of 10.3% in the overall economy in the same period. It would seem that the retail sector is gaining in attractiveness as an entry point to employment for young men but not for young women, although as stated previously, it offers more opportunities for women to re-enter the labour market.

Ankita Agarwal (2012) stated that during the festive seasons the sales are expected to be the maximum. The retailers get blinded by the sales figures and customers get carried away by the heavy discounts and big savings. But the cost for all this is paid by employees who neither get a share of profits nor quality time to spend with family during festivals. The current work profile of the employees in retail sector has spoiled the work-life balance of employees. Though the workforce in retail stores is recruited on a shift-basis, the abrupt shift timings and the obligation to work on festivals and holidays hardly leave them with any time to spend with family. The situation gets worse when both spouses are working or when the employee is a single parent or has the responsibility of some elderly at home.

G. Vijayakrishna (2013) assessed empirically on various factors contributing to quality of work life in the retail sector. Big bazaar and 6 retail outlets at TSR complex at Visakhapatnam were selected. The factors considered are working conditions, Atmosphere, Illumination, Work schedule, Rest pauses. In this study it was found that in selected retail organizations concern authorities are formulate optimum combination of process, social and other approaches that will maximize performance while creating high quality of work-life climate for employees in the retail organizations. viz: Big bazaar, various retail outlets.
Suresh Kandulapati, Dr. G. Manchala (2011) focused on measuring the level of job satisfaction, managing stress, and relationship with peers/colleagues, distribution of work and work life balance which influence the degree of employee engagement in Retailing Industry in Hyderabad. The findings of the paper summarised that there is significant difference between the degree of employee engagement by gender and retail formats in Hyderabad, the degree of retail employee engagement is 71.86% in Hyderabad, the Level of job satisfaction is very high (i.e. 83%) in retailing industry in Hyderabad, in retailing 61% of the employees are not able to balance work life and family life in Hyderabad.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To measure Quality of Work Life in Retail and Manufacturing Industries.
2. To compare Quality of Work Life in Retail and Manufacturing Industries.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To support the above discussion Quality of Work Life has been compared in Manufacturing and Retail Industries in Burdwan and Durgapur regions in West Bengal on the basis of 14 factors i.e. Optimum Utilisation of Potential, Work load, Superior Support, Promotions, Safety, Training, Career Growth, Working Environment, Job Security, Salary, Role Clarity, Employee Participation, Job Autonomy, Infrastructure Support.

METHODOLOGY

A sample of 50 employees comprising of 25 of Retail and 25 of Manufacturing industries in Burdwan and Durgapur regions in West Bengal. The scaling technique used in the questionnaire is based on Likert 5-point scale. The Cronbach’s alpha of the questionnaire was found to be 0.917.

HYPOTHESIS

H0: There is no significant difference of Quality of Work Life between Retail and Manufacturing Industries.

HA: There is significant difference of Quality of Work Life between Retail and Manufacturing Industries.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test i.e. U test is used to test whether there exists any significant difference of Quality of Work Life in Retail and Manufacturing industries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population 1-Retail</th>
<th>Population 2-Manufacturing</th>
<th>Pop. 1 &amp; Pop. 2 Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size -n1 : 25</td>
<td>Sample Size -n2 : 25</td>
<td>Sum of ranks: 1275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of ranks - R1 : 693.5</td>
<td>Sum of ranks - R2 : 581.5</td>
<td>Mean of ranks: 25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean of ranks: 27.74</td>
<td>Mean of ranks: 23.26</td>
<td>Standard Deviation: 51.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U-value:U1: 256.5</td>
<td>U-value:U2:368.5</td>
<td>Upper limit of the acceptance region: 397.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower limit of the acceptance region: 227.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the value of n1 and n2 both are greater than 8, so the sampling distribution of U approximates closely with normal curve. As the alternative hypothesis states that the means of the two populations are not equal, a two-tailed test is appropriate. Accordingly the limits of acceptance region, keeping in view 0.05 level of significance, can be worked under. As the z value for 0.45 of the area under the normal curve is 1.64, the following limits of acceptance region are worked under.

Upper limit of the acceptance region= Mean + 1.64* Standard deviation=397.01
Lower limit of the acceptance region= Mean – 1.64* Standard deviation=227.99
As the observed value of U1 and U2 lies in the acceptance region, thus the null hypothesis is accepted that there is no significant difference of mean between the two populations.

Thus it is established from the feedback of the employees of Retail and Manufacturing Industries that there is no significant difference of Quality of Work Life of Retail and Manufacturing Industries situated in Durgapur and Burdwan regions.

**Findings:** The data analysis accepted the null hypothesis i.e. there is no significant difference of Quality of Work Life between Retail and Manufacturing Industries and rejected the alternative hypothesis based on the 14 factors. Employees of both the type of industries shared that they experience same type of quality of work life.

### 5 Pillars of “TRACK” Model of QWL

During the study several models of Quality of Work Life has been discussed. In this article a Model “TRACK” of Quality of Work Life has been discussed by the author which stands on FIVE Pillars demanding both the employer as well as employees commitment to improve the quality of life of the organization and an environment in which this commitment can flourish.

![Diagram of TRACK Model]

Transparency - A workplace environment largely depends on the transparency between employees and employer. The employer should be transparent with the company’s policies, procedures & strategies. On the other hand, employees should also be transparent with their personal data and workplace behaviours.

Relationship - The pillar of a “friendly relationship” between employer and the employee lays the foundation of an organization. Any misunderstanding between their relationship will not only change the company’s work culture but also spoils the organisation’s reputation in the market.

Autonomy – Today’s organization should provide minimum degree of freedom to their employees. This leads to empowerment i.e. enabling or authorizing an individual to think, behave, take action, control work & make decisions in autonomous ways. Each and every individual should be provided freedom to participate in organization’s decision making process.

Commitment - Autonomy leads to commitment. When an organization provides autonomy to their employees, then only they can develop a committed workforce. Employees will become loyal & devoted to their work. And once a committed & devoted workforce is created, the organization will not only become highly productive but also will earn a good brand image in the market.
Knowledge-based organization can only provide a good quality of work life to their employees. A Knowledge-based organization focuses basically on three areas i.e. knowledge acquisition, knowledge sharing & development & knowledge retention.

CONCLUSION

Most of the companies have realized the importance of quality of work life on employees’ productivity and creativity and to build a long term relationship with employees. To improve Quality of work life in both the manufacturing and retail industries the participation of everyone is required i.e. the employers, workers, professional organisations, government and managers. Organisations should encourage quality circles, management by objectives, suggestion system and other forms of employees’ participation in management to improve QWL in the industry circles. The 14 dimensions of Quality of Work Life and the five pillars of “TRACK” Model discussed in this study are also expected to motivate the HR departments to redesign their jobs with more humanistic approach that will lead the present-day workforce towards a knowledge- and skill-based workforce.

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