

Understanding Quality of Work Life in Contemporary World

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Abstract—

The paper seeks to understand the meaning and importance of the concept quality of work life. Quality of work life has been emerging as an important concept when it comes to human resource maintenance. It is considered as an important strategy for high employee retention and high employee satisfaction. The paper attempts to explain in detail the relevance, its dimensions, its effects on other organizational behavioural aspects and strategies to provide an improvised quality of work life.

Keywords— Quality of work life, job career satisfaction, working conditions, control at work, homework interface, general wellbeing and stress at work.

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizations now a days are facing tremendous change in work patterns like increase in number of working females, dual couple earners and increased pressure at work place with intense competition to survive in this dynamic working environment. These situations have led to a very thin layer between an employee's personal life and work life. Thus, it becomes very important to balance both work life and personal life of an employee, leading to emergence of the concept of "Quality of work life".

Although QWL has gained importance in recent times but its roots are from very old times. The base of QWL concept is better the work life balance of an employee, better would be their satisfaction leading to an improvised and high performance.

QWL is a set of principles which shows that human resource is an important aspect of any organization, they are the backbone of every organization. The better and content workforce can lead to remarkable benefits in form of improved performance.

QWL refers to favourableness and un-favourableness of job environment for people.

II. DEFINITIONS

J. Richard and J. Loy define QWL as "the degree to which members of a work organization are able to satisfy important personnel needs through their experience in the organization."

"QWL is a process of work organizations which enable its members at all levels to actively; participate in shaping the organizations environment, methods and outcomes. This value based process is aimed towards meeting the twin goals of enhanced effectiveness of organizations and improved quality of life at work for employees." by *The American Society of Training and Development* (1979).

Robbins in the year 1989 defined QWL as "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".

According to *Nadler and Lawler* "QWL is a way of thinking about people, work and organizations, its distinctive elements are (i) a concern about the impact of work on people as well as on organizational effectiveness, and (ii) the idea of participation in organizational problem-solving and decision making."

According to *Luthans* "The overriding purpose of QWL is to change the climate at work so that the human-technological-organizational interface leads to a better quality of work life."

Benium defines "QWL is based on a general approach and an organization approach. The general approach includes all those factors affecting the physical, social, economic, psychological and cultural well-being of workers, while the organizational approach refers to the redesign and operation of organizations in accordance with the value of democratic society."

From the definitions given above, it can be concluded that QWL is concerned with taking care of the needs of employees. The working environment is employee friendly and more humanized in nature. QWL is a protection under which employees feel fully satisfied with the working culture and provide full co-operation and support to the management in achieving goals and improving productivity more efficiently and effectively.

III. DIMENSIONS

A. *www.qowl.com* a research organization focusing on various researches related to quality of work life, have used following dimensions for their research endeavours:

- 1) *Job-career satisfaction*: The extent to which you are content with your job and your prospects at work.
- 2) *Working conditions*: The extent to which you are satisfied with the conditions in which you work.
- 3) *Control at work*: How far you feel you are involved in decisions that affect you at work.

- 4) *Home-work interface*: How much you think the organization understands and tries to help you with pressures outside of work.
- 5) *General well-being*: How much you feel psychologically and physically healthy.
- 6) *Stress at work*: The extent to which you see work pressures and demands as acceptable and not excessive or 'stressful'.

B. Harvard Professor Richard E. Walton (1975) proposed eight dimensions of QWL, on which many researchers have conducted their study. These are:

- 1) *Adequate and fair compensation*: Fair and equitable remuneration with appropriate package according to the efforts and contributions made. Salaries should be sufficient enough to fulfill the basic requirements of the employees.
- 2) *Safe and healthy working conditions*: Factory Act, 1948 provides number of provisions related to safety and health of workers, which ensures basic safety and health measures to protect employees. When employees work in any organization, it becomes a duty of the employer to provide employees with safe working environment.
- 3) *Immediate opportunity to use and develop human capabilities*: It becomes every employer's duty to use appropriately and provide ample opportunities for development of human capital.
- 4) *Future opportunity for continued growth and security*: Now a days big companies provide career planning programs for employees and help develop their career, thus giving opportunity for growth and skill development.
- 5) *Social Integration in work environment*: Recreational activities, picnics, family get together etc. for employees are some of the efforts by employers to enhance the social integration among employees and to develop sense of organizational commitment.
- 6) *Constitutionalism or "the rule of law" in work organizations*: Framing rules and regulations to protect the rights of employees keeping in mind benefits of both the parties i.e. employer and employees.
- 7) *Work and the total life space*: Employees need to be considered important part of the organization. Benefits like flexible work hours, leave rules, loan rules etc. should be framed out so that employees do not feel pressurized in balancing their work-personal life.
- 8) *Social Relevance of work life*: Every employee should be able to relate the work life to personal life i.e. showing commitment towards organization. Therefore when an employee is satisfied with his work, he will lead a great social life.

C. Klott, Mundick and Schuster (1985) suggested 11 major QWL issues, these are:

- 1) *Pay and stability of employment*: Good pay still dominates most of the other factors in employee satisfaction. Stability to a greater extent can be provided by enhancing the facilities for human resources development.
- 2) *Occupational stress*: Stress is determined by the nature of work, working conditions, working hours, pause in the work schedule, worker's abilities and nature should match with the job requirements. Stress adversely affects employee productivity. Human Resource management may arrange for the treatment of the problem with the health unit of the company. In order to minimize the stress, they have to identify, prevent and tackle the problem.
- 3) *Organizational health program*: Organizational health programs aim at educating employees about health problems, means of maintaining and improving health etc. Effective implementation of these programs results in reduction in absenteeism, hospitalization, disability, excessive job turnover and premature death.
- 4) *Alternative work schedules*: Alternative work schedules including work at home, flexible working hours, staged hours, reduced work week, part time employment may be introduced for the convenience and comfort of the workers, as the work schedule which offers the individual the leisure time, flexible hours of work is preferred.
- 5) *Participative management and control of work*: Trade Unions and workers believe that workers participation in management and decision-making improves QWL. Workers also feel that they have control over their work, use their skills and make a real contribution to the job if they are allowed to participate in creative and decision-making process.
- 6) *Recognition*: Recognizing the employee as a human being rather than as a labour increases the QWL. Participative management, awarding and rewarding systems, congratulating the employees for their achievement, job enrichment, offering prestigious designations to the jobs, providing well-furnished and decent work places, offering memberships in clubs or associations, providing vehicles, offering vacation trips are some means to recognize the employees.
- 7) *Congenial worker-supervisor relations*: Harmonious supervisor worker relations give the worker a sense of social association, belongingness, achievement of work results etc. This in turn, leads to better QWL.
- 8) *Grievance procedure*: Workers have a sense of fair treatment when the company gives them the opportunity to ventilate their grievances and represent their case succinctly rather than setting the problems arbitrarily.
- 9) *Adequacy of resources*: Resources should match with stated objectives: otherwise, employees will not be able to attain the objectives and this result in employee dissatisfaction and lower QWL.
- 10) *Seniority and merit in promotion*: Seniority is generally taken as the basis for promotion in case of operating employees; merit is considered as the basis for advancement for managerial people, whereas seniority-cum-merit is preferred for promotion of ministerial employees. The promotional policies and activities should be fair and just in order to ensure higher QWL.

11) *Employment on permanent basis:* Employment of workers on casual, temporary probationary basis gives them a sense of insecurity. On the other hand, employment on permanent basis gives them security and leads to higher order QWL.

D. The International Labour Office Lists the following areas as concerns of QWL:

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

E. Nadler and Lawler list the types of QWL activities as:

1. Participative problem-solving
2. Work restructuring
3. Innovative reward systems
4. Improving the work environment.

F. Davis and Newstrom could perceive a wide range of QWL activities as

1. Open communications
2. Equitable reward systems
3. A concern for employee-job security
4. Participation in job designs
5. Employee skill development
6. The reduction of occupational stress
7. The development of more co-operative labour management relations.

IV. FACTORS

Diverse workforce: There are many factors that has led to increased awareness for the concept of QWL and its importance has increased in today's organisational setup. These factors are:

A. Globalization:

Growing business across borders has led to mixed workforce having difference in culture and even in working styles. Now providing a satisfactory work life to them is a challenge and becomes important to maintain efficient work force.

B. Increased competition:

Increased competition has led to a dynamic working environment which brings along conflict in work life, stress at work and personal life of employees. Thus adopting best human resource practices becomes very important to win competition by retaining the best of talents.

C. Technological Changes:

Rapid technological changes are making existing technologies and human resource outdated thus emerging a need for human resource strategies for their development and growth with the changing environment. Such changes also brings along stress and competition for which coping strategies are required.

D. More women into workforce:

Percentage of women workforce is increasing day by day and they are showing a significant presence in working environment. This has led to many challenges for human resource officials as many policies and rules need to be formulated keeping in mind the women workforce requirements.

E. Diverse workforce:

Diversity in workforce that may be age, gender, culture, religion etc. has created a biggest challenge in managing the work force. Different people have difference in values and beliefs thus providing job satisfaction to all under one roof is a challenge.

V. IMPORTANCE

QWL is a concept, if implemented brings a satisfactory balance of personal and professional life of employees, thus making them the best performers leading to a prosperous business.

A. QWL and motivation:

Motivation is a driving force which can lead to high performance and efficiency where as its absence may crash down whole organization. QWL strategies give employees a motivation to work more efficiently and effectively because their

organization cares for them. Motivated employees will be directed and channelized towards attainment of goals (individual as well as organizational).

QWL and job satisfaction:

Providing good working conditions and benefits to employees, they feel satisfied and happy at their jobs. Employees have a sense of contentment and do not wish to change their jobs.

B. QWL and productivity:

Improved QWL leads to an improved performance which is higher output and better employee's behaviour, which in return provides higher productivity. Thus, investment cost on QWL strategies gives higher return in productivity.

C. QWL and turnover:

QWL and turnover have inverse relationship i.e. as QWL increase the turnover rate falls. Employees when satisfied with the benefits and working environment will not plan separation with the organization, thus leading to a high retention rate.

D. QWL and Organizational Commitment:

QWL and organizational commitment have a positive relation as improved QWL lead to high psychological attachment towards the organization. Employees have a high emotional attachment towards the organization and do not wish to lose the organization.

E. QWL and quality of life:

Working life is one aspect of individual's total life. If employees have improved QWL, this will definitely have a positive impact on their quality of life as a whole. Acts of indiscipline only prevails if there is dissatisfaction, stress and frustration. Therefore, good QWL will lead to an improved Quality of life.

VI. MEASURES

There are many practices which can be implemented to enhance QWL, the measures to improve QWL are:

A. Flexible working hours:

Flexible working is a way of working that suits an employee's needs. A flextime policy allows staff to determine when they will work, while a flex place policy allows staff to determine where they will work. Other than professional issues employees may feel stresses because of some personal issues, which may be resolved by compressed working hours, staggered working hours, job sharing, working from home, part time, flextime, annualized hours etc.

B. Fair and appropriate remuneration:

Remuneration is amount paid in exchange for the work or services performed and is one of the most important factors for employee satisfaction. It should be appropriate according to market rate and cost of living, also fair and equitable within organization.

C. Career breaks/Sabbaticals:

A career break is a period of time out from employment. They can be paid and unpaid in form of academic, professional development, raising children, recovering from accidents/illness etc.

D. Important legislations to improve the work life of employees:

Legislations like Factory act, Workmen compensation act, PF act, ESI act etc. ensure employee welfare, health, safety and economic security of employees which improve quality of life of employees. Some other examples are, crotch facilities, canteen, transportation, first aid box etc. It brings about the desired level of employee satisfaction, motivation and productivity.

E. Participative Management:

It is a practice where employees are given a chance to participate in organizational decision making. Employees develop a feeling that they are an integral part of organization and their views are valued.

F. Opportunities for personal development and career development:

Every organization should provide its employees with opportunity to develop their personality and capabilities which would help them in their career growth.

G. Adequate and comfortable facilities for the employees:

It is the primary duty of every organization to provide an adequate and contended working conditions and environment to their employees so that they feel secured and comfortable at their work place which will help them to give their best performance.

H. Rules and policies that are formulated for the wellbeing of the employees:

It is an organization who is the first and direct responsible party to provide employees with appropriate policies and procedures that enables them to work efficiently and lead a quality life personally and professionally.

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