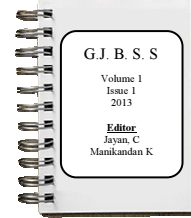




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Quality of Work Life: A Dynamic Multidimensional Construct at Work Place – Part I

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Abstract

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Quality of Work Life (QWL) has gained importance these days in every Organisation. Quality of Work Life is the degree to which members of a work organization are able to satisfy important personal need through their experiences in the organization. QWL has set into operation especially in terms of Employees perceptions of their physical and psychological well-being at work. It includes virtually every major issue that labor has fought for during the last two decades. The purpose of the present paper is to gain an insight into Quality of Work Life, its policies and practices in our present society and also attempted to describe a theoretical model of QWL in the Indian context.

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Work is an integral part of everyday life. Work is worship, work is hard working, and work is a challenge. For many, work is a necessary evil. On an average we spend around 10-12 hours daily in the work place. This should yield to a fulfillment of having done a task fruitfully, constructively and purposefully. At the end of the day it should give satisfaction and an eagerness to look forward to the next day. Organisation success is based on the highly motivated and committed team of Employees in the work place. Thus an attempt to integrate employee's needs and well-being with an intention of improved productivity, greater work involvement, and higher levels of Job Satisfaction is Quality of Work Life.

Quality of Work Life is philosophical which holds on a set of principles that people are the most important resource in the Organisation as they are trustworthy, responsible and capable of making contributions and that they should be treated with dignity and respect. Quality of Work Life is an umbrella term which includes many concepts. QWL means the sum total of values, both materials and non-materials, attained by the worker throughout his life. Robbins (1998), defined QWL as "a process by which an Organisation responds to Employees needs by developing mechanisms to allow them to share fully in making the decisions that design their QWL lives at work". The intangibility, variability, and perish ability of the service process together with the volatility of customer expectations are some of the prominent dimensions that inhibit the delineation of the phenomenon of QWL.

Interestingly, managers, commentators and social scientists have either avoided the task or have been unable to develop a contemporary service QWL criteria during the past three decades since the illumination of the enigma by Seashore (1975), who advanced a conceptualization of QWL should consider the ongoing changes of workers' aspirations as a result of their interactions with the wider socio cultural environment during their life courses. Further advice was given by Davis (1983), who has defined QWL as 'the quality of the relationship between Employees and the total working environment, with human dimensions



added to the usual technical and economic considerations'. Across time definitions of QWL have changed and have been used at different times to refer to different variables (Nadler & Lawler, 1983) and may also mean different things to different people in different roles (Sashkin & Burke, 1987). It is observed that the method of defining QWL is varied; encompassing several different perspectives (Loscocco & Roschelle, 1991). As with a result QWL has been defined as the workplace strategies, operations and environment that promote and maintain employee satisfaction aimed at improving working conditions for Employees and organizational effectiveness (Lau & Bruce, 1998).

QWL is the degree to which members of a work Organisation are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experience in an Organisation (Saha, 2006). Quality of Work Life can be viewed through several ways: *QWL as a goal*: aims to improve organisational effectiveness through the creation of more challenging, satisfying, and effective jobs and work environments. *QWL as a process*: It calls for efforts to realise this goal through the active involvement of people throughout the Organisation.

Being a dynamic multidimensional construct QWL currently includes concepts like job security, reward system, training and career advancement opportunities and participation in decision making. It is a comprehensive, department-wide program designated to improve employee's satisfaction by strengthening work-place learning and helping Employees to better manage change and transition.

Quality of Work Life is viewed as an alternative to the control approach of managing people. The QWL approach considers people as an "asset" to the Organisation rather than as "cost". This approach allows people to participate in managing their work and make decisions. It motivates people by satisfying not only their economic needs but also their social and psychological ones. Also in order to satisfy the new generation workforce, organisations need to concentrate on job designs and Organisation of work.

The expression "Quality of Work Life" evolved in the late 19th Century. The first study of its kind was done in Hawthorne Western Electric's plant by famous Sociologist, Elton Mayo in the year 1933. These leads to the paradigm shift that money was not only the motivator, where as other environmental factors also play a significant role in influencing the Employees productivity. Irving Bluestone, employee of General Motors, used the expression "QWL" for the first time in late 1960s, to evaluate employee satisfaction. QWL as a discipline began in the U.S. in September 1972 when the phrase was coined at the International Conference on the "Democratization of Work" Conference held at Colombia University's Arden House, New York. In August 1973, the International Council for the Quality of Working Life was created, to promote research. In spite of the various studies projecting the contribution of QWL there is still a lack of both a universally accepted definition and a clear cut understanding of the QWL concept and what it entails (Krueger, Brazil, Lohfeld, & Edward, 2002).

THEORETICAL MODELS OF QWL

Early work on QWL was strongly rooted in psychology with a focus on the individual. The historical context for this has been identified as the breakdown of the illusion of industrial consensus identified as occurring from the 1960s onwards (Thompson, 1983). The term 'Quality of Working Life' thus saw its birth at an International Conference in New York in 1972 that sought to share knowledge and initiate a Coherent Theory and practice on how to create the conditions for a 'Humane Working Life' (Ryan, 1995). This Conference set up a task force to develop a model based on four dimensions of integrity: integrity of body, social growth and development, integrity of self and integrity of life roles.



Quality of Working Life as a theoretical construct remains relatively less explored within the organisational psychology research literature. Initially, QWL was conceptualised in the literature on the basis of three levels of actors (employee, company and community, Seashore 1975). Several authors subsequently noted that workers consider their job as a tool for personal growth and social support (Kerce & Booth-Kewley 1993). Therefore, QWL is now viewed as an integral part of people's overall QOL. Martel and Dupuis (2006), list four theoretical models for linking QOL and QWL:

- *The Transfer Model*: Job Satisfaction affects other areas of life. Consequently certain spheres of work life are positively correlated with other spheres outside work (Georges & Brief, 1990).
- *The Compensation Model*: When a person is not satisfied at work, they will try to correct this situation through stimulating activities outside work. A negative relationship is expected between QOL and QWL (Rousseau, 1978; Staines, 1980).
- *The Segmentation Model*: Life at work and life outside work are not related (Georges & Brief, 1990).
- *The Accommodation Model*: Voluntarily reducing one's investment in one sphere of activity in order to more adequately respond to the demands of another (Lambert, 1990).

None of the above models are universally accepted (Loscocco & Roschelle, 1991). However, they all emphasise the subjective perceptions of individuals as the link between the two areas. The models are criticised because of their lack of precision. This criticism and the confusion created by the use of QWL components to mitigate the weakness of current definitions have limited the amount of research on the topic.

Will-to-yoga (Chakraborty, 1987) is a paradigm based on a relevant to religious follower also has concentrated on Managers which suits the Indian ethos and is also based on Indian psycho-philosophy. Will-to- yoga is the basic desire in man to establish a link between his consciousness (atman) and the supreme consciousness (braham). This spiritual model of man should guide effort to improve QWL. But by the 21st Century, experts in organisational settings started to concentrate and develop models for better understanding of QWL which surely has an impact on Employees and organisational growth.

Conceptual Model

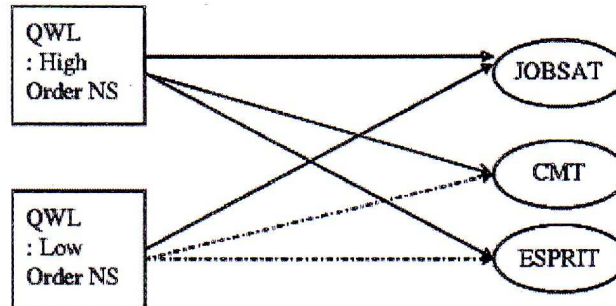
Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel, and Lee (2001), designed to test the predictive validity of QWL measure by testing its productiveness of three major employee behavioural responses, namely, Job Satisfaction, organisational commitment and esprit de corps. QWL differs from Job Satisfaction; in fact, Job Satisfaction is constructed by Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel, & Lee (2001) as one of many outcomes of QWL. QWL is likely to contribute significantly and positively to Job Satisfaction (Bretz & Judge, 1994). Organizational commitment is comprised of three dimensions: (a) a strong belief and acceptance of the organisational goals and values, (b) a readiness to exert effort on the behalf of the organisational goals and values, (c) a strong desire to maintain as a member of the Organisation.

Model indicates that higher-order need satisfaction is likely to be better predictor of Organizational commitment than lower-order need satisfaction.

Esprit de corps reflects the extent to which a team spirit prevails in the Organisation (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). Esprit de corps is influenced by competent leader, open communication, mutual trust, and positive public image. Esprit de corps has positive influence on Organizational commitment, propensity to leave and various Citizenship Behaviour (Boyt, Lusch, & Mejza, 2005)



The Conceptual Model

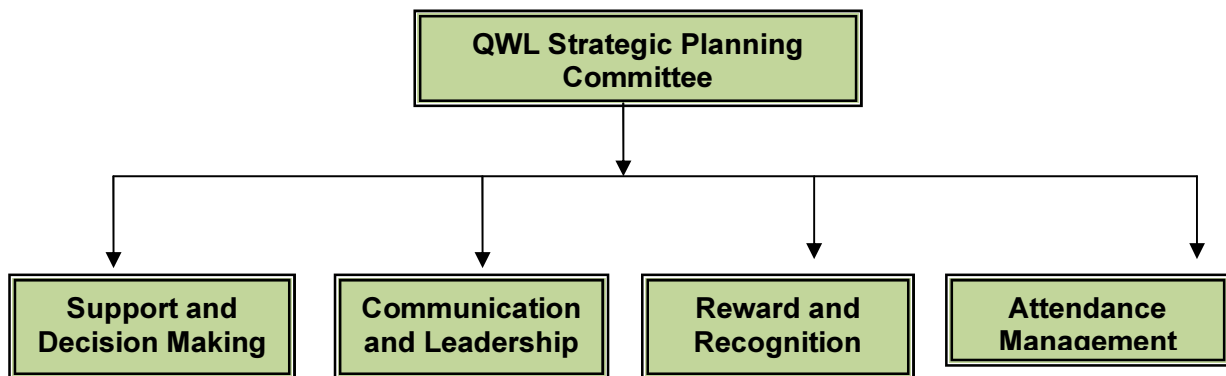


The model posits that QWL has a positive influence on Job Satisfaction, organisational commitment, and esprit de corps. The model posits that lower and higher order need satisfaction have a positive influence on Job Satisfaction, organisational commitment, and esprit de corps. But the effects should vary as the function of the outcome. Model posits that while lower-order needs satisfaction may have effect on all the three behavioural responses higher-order need satisfaction should exert on the influence of organisational commitment and esprit de corps.

A Structural Approach Model to improve QWL

The initial goal of this approach was the collaborative effort to define what an Organisation looks like with a high QWL (Daraghi & Seragi, 2007) .This model was proposed mainly for health-care professionals.

New Structural Approach Model to improve QWL



The QWL Strategic Planning Committee recommends 15 Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS) Hospitals as new approach model to suggest the ways which are impressive on the Employees to improve QWL as given below:

Communication: It investigates the ways not only to enhance Employees skills on the quality assurance system, but to keep the system updated and organized, ensuring edified and easily available.

Reward and recognition: It will significantly improve one initiative includes the development of a "star performer" program to allow all Employees to recognize each other. Any employee that



receives a star performer note is visited by TUMS Hospital Senior Management and presented with a "QWL Star" to recognize how important each of them is to the organization.

Attendance Management: It suggests turning the pre-existing attendance management policy from one that appears to punish Employees for absenteeism, to one that rewarded Employees for working to reduce their absenteeism. This may be achieved by developing a reward system for Employees who worked for a three-month period without taking on unscheduled day off. Each quarter, a draw is held for prizes. To create further incentives, approval is received to create a grand prize for Employees not to take day off and do additional work. There will be very positive feedback from Employees and resulting in are reduction in absenteeism.

Leadership: It investigates leadership and literature attempting firstly to gain a better understanding of leadership techniques, to find how these techniques are practical at each TUMS Hospitals. The development of a leadership education program to educate the management on the concept of leadership was highly necessary.

Support and Decision Making: It investigates employee's participation in decision making. This provides good opportunities for Employees to be satisfied with their job. QWL in Health Care Services Organizations accreditation ions a major step forward. Many concurrent initiatives across Canada address Employees QWL needs and concerns from different angles. There is also significant progress in this direction in the United States where the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organization (JCAHO) has committed to improve the quality of health care work place.

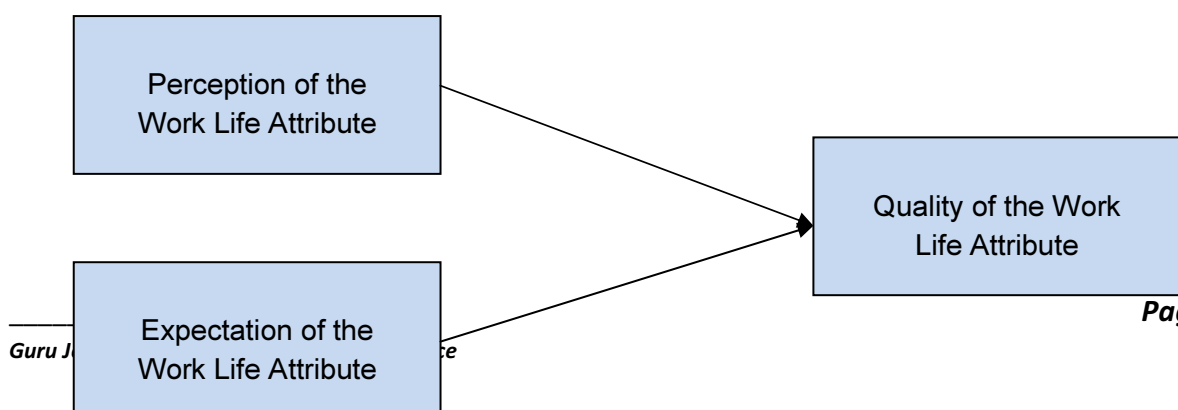
This approach proposes that an Organisation with a high QWL promotes and maintains a work environment that results in excellence in everything it does-by ensuring open communication, respect, recognition, trust, support, well-being and satisfaction of its members both in personality and profession.

WRKLFQUAL: A Quality of Work Model

Kandasamy and Sreekumar (2009), developed the *WRKLFQUAL: A Quality of Work Model*. This was based on the SERVQUAL Model, a valid and reliable tool used for measuring service quality. This theoretical model developed provides empirical foundation for evaluating employee's satisfaction/dissatisfaction with various life elements in the Organisation.

This model exemplifies the critical gap that may exist between the expectation and experienced perceptions of the Employees. It is acknowledged that a negative appraisal of the work environment may manifest itself in negative employee effects, which may be reflected in a lack of effort to service customers. In concurrence with the ascertained importance of an employee's role in the service exchange process, managers and researchers in the service industry have realised the significance of providing a good work life for their Employees. This model provides a foundational guide to utilise an individual's expectations and experienced perceptions of work life attributes to comprehend the QWL concerning Employees.

WRKLFQUAL: A 'Quality of Work Life' Model





Within the existing theories, QWL is simple - it involves giving workers the opportunity to make decisions about their jobs, the design of the workplaces, and what they need to make products or to deliver services most effectively. It requires managers to treat workers with dignity. Its focus is on Employees and management operating the business together.

QWL is still a field of interest, though the concept is quite old. As it is of a great significance to organisations as well as employees, it's still a growing concept. Insight drawn from various researches on QWL has helped the authors in making an attempt to describe QWL. *Quality of Work Life* being a multidimensional constructs, it aims to meet the needs and expectation of the employee and the organisations with sound work environment thereby, enhancing, promoting and maintaining the challenges of daily living. Though several models have been developed, the authors has made an attempt to explain the role of employees and organisation on QWL and several other variables contributing to QWL and its outcome.

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE MODEL

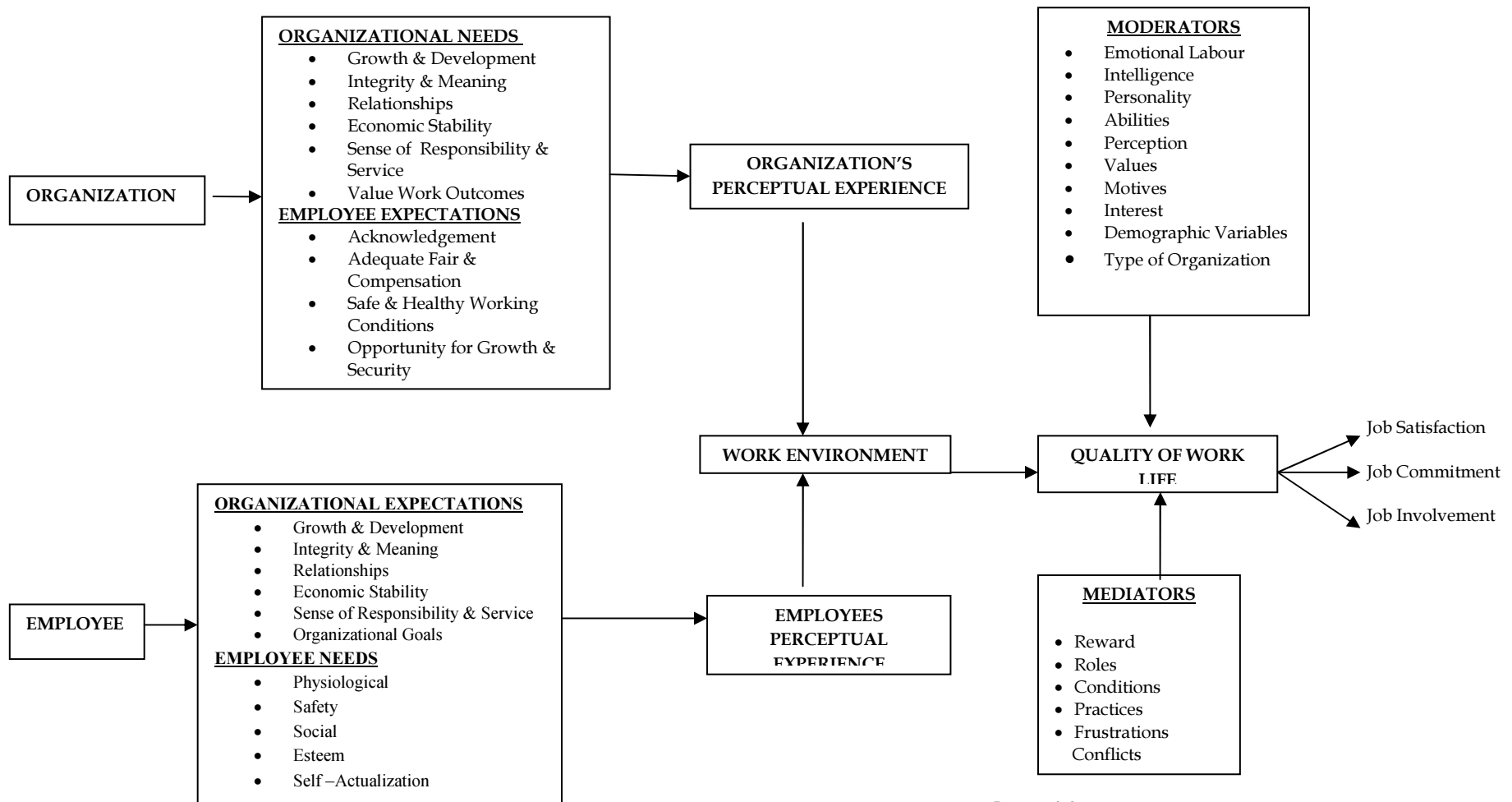
The characteristics, beliefs and attitudes of workers have changed dramatically over the past several decades, largely in response to social trends and organisational restructuring. The nature of work namely: how we work, where we work, and when we work- has also changed. Changes in workers and work, along with the economic implications of globalisation, has combined to spawn new forms of organisations, along with the rapid advances in technology that is nothing less than a new Industrial Revolution. In such situation every organisation and every employee have to make and strengthen their organisational goals for better personal, social and work outcomes.

The newly developed theoretically based QWL Model by the authors explains the fact that every organisation has their own organisational needs and is also to meet employee's expectations. Every employee has their own needs and is subjected to meet organisational expectations. Along with the needs and expectations, the actual or perceptual work experience with the working environment can lead to Quality of Work Life. These are not just factors leading to QWL. There are other variables (mediators and moderators) which predicts Quality of Work Life. With all these contributing factors, QWL can enhance job satisfaction, job commitment and job involvement (which are highly necessary in any working conditions) but, if these factors condense, it will affect the overall working condition be it an employee or an organisation.

Thus, requirements for having a high "Quality of Work Life" vary from person to person. Regardless of their standards, those with a high Quality of Work Life generally make enough to live comfortably, find their work to be interesting or engaging and achieve a level of personal satisfaction or fulfillment from the jobs that they do. In other words, employees who are generally happy with their work are said to have a high Quality of Work Life, and those who are unhappy or unfulfilled by their work are said to have a low Quality of Work Life.



QUALITY OF WORK LIFE MODEL





Conclusion

Employees are the force that is behind every successful Organisation. No Organisation can become successful with technology only because for the use of technology also, organisations need to have strong work force. Quality is no more a specialized word but has become a necessary and a must work for the best survival. In this era, Quality of human inputs is the greatest asset to any organization. Maintaining the quality of such human inputs rises from maintaining the Quality of Work Life perfectly. A perfect Quality of Work Life would help the organization. Rise in the Quality of Work Life would help Employees' well being thereby the well being of the whole organization. This is an attempt to capitalize the human assets of the organization (Bharathi, Umaselvi & Kumar, 2011).

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