Quality of Work Life in Context: The Essential Impetus towards Job Satisfaction and Organizational Performance

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Abstract: This article tries to examine what literature portrays about the concept of Quality of Work Life (QWL) in connection to job satisfaction and performance. Given the amount of time and energy people expend at the workplace, it is important for employees to be satisfied about their life at work. The human resource is of a paramount importance in determining the performance, development and sustainability of any given organization. It is the people who possess skills, abilities and aptitudes that offer competitive advantage to a firm. The Quality of Work Life has therefore become an important organizational consideration to ensure the wellness of its human resource. In recent years the Quality of Work Life has become an important tool in the struggle for best employees. Organizations are seeking the ways for increasing the QWL in order to retain the best employees and attract the most talented employees. This paper is therefore anchored on vast review of both theoretical as well as empirical literature to unearth the experiences and knowledge on the concept.

Keywords: Quality of Work Life, Job satisfaction, Work life, Quality of life, Human resource, Organizational performance.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years the Quality of Work Life has become an important tool in the struggle for best employees. Organizations are seeking the ways for increasing the QWL in order to retain the best employees and attract the most talented employees. Traditionally used transaction rewards are easily imitable and have lost their power, especially in knowledge-based economy. This is the main reason why many corporations attempt to find appropriate methods for increasing the QWL. The dynamics in the world economy has increasingly compelled organizations and firms to surge for variety of strategies and approaches in all business affairs for their survival and success. If organizations are concerned about developing their human resources and gaining a competitive advantage in the marketplace, it seems necessary that they attend to one of their most precious assets, namely, their human resources. One method for developing a unique and inimitable workplace is for organizations to create a special quality of work life within their socio-technical systems.

II. QUALITY OF WORK LIFE (QWL)

Literature reveals several attempts made by various people in different period of time and context illuminating this concept. However, no consensus so far about what should or should not be encompassed in the definition. One of the earliest uses of the term "QWL" is found in the work of Mayo (1960), but the subsequent 50 years or so has not led to a clear consensus as to how precisely the term should be defined. Many writers have proposed models of QWL, drawing upon various combinations of factors, based mostly on theorization, and more rarely on empirical research[1].

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[1] Simon Easton and Darren Van Laar, Quality of Working Life —What, How, and Why?" Journal of Psychology Research, October 2013, Vol. 3, No. 10, 596-605

The QWL construct is complex as it comprises of both physical and mental wellbeing of employees (Lawler, 1982). It is by nature that human being strives for the meaning of his existence. Keeping this view in mind, employees wish to see the work-life bringing the meaning to the life. In case this is not observed then psychological and mental flux persists. The definition by Hackman and Oldhams (1980) described QWL in relation to the interaction between work environment and personal needs and is the extent to which employees can enhance their personal lives through their work environment and experiences. "Quality of Work Life is ensured when members of an organization are able to satisfy their important personal needs through their experiences in the organization" argues Aswathappa (2010:457-58). According to Jayamma and Naik (2006:6), "there is no universally accepted definition of the term QWL; however, the attempts so far made to define it mostly refer to favourableness or unfavourableness of a job-environment for the people involved in it. If QWL needs improved, economic want and benefits, security, working conditions and workforce, management relations all these aspects that touch the employees should be dealt with humanely in work culture of an organization". Thus QWL is now defined in terms of employees' perception of their physical and mental well-being at work.

In his contribution, Aswathappa (2010:457-58) introduces a number of factors or dimensions through which the QWL concept can be conceived.

1. *Adequate and fair compensation:* adequacy to the extent to which the income from full-time work meets the needs of the socially determined standard of living

2. *Safety and healthy working conditions:* including reasonable hours of work and rest pauses, physical working conditions that ensure safety, minimize risk of illness and occupational disease and special measures for protection of women and children

3. *Security and growth opportunity:* including factors like security of employment and opportunity for advancement and self-improvement.

4. *Opportunity to use and develop creativity:* such as work autonomy, nature of supervision, use of multiple skills, workers' role in the total work process and his/her appreciation of the outcome of his/her own efforts and self-regulation.

5. *Respect for the individuals' personal rights:* such as application of the principles of natural justice and equity, acceptance of the right to free speech, and right to personal privacy in respect of the workers' off- the- job behavior.

6. *Work and family life:* including transfers, schedule of hours of work, travel requirements, overtime requirements and so forth.

He concluded that, it worth noting that the often the conditions that contribute to motivation (equitable salaries, financial incentives, and effective employee selection) will also contribute to QWL. Some of these activities (like job enrichment) might contribute indirectly to QWL by tapping the worker's higher-order needs, and motivating them. Still, other activities may contribute directly to QWL providing for a safer workplace, less discrimination on the job, and so forth.

Despite the fact there is no formal definition of QWL, yet industrial psychologists and management scholars agree that QWL has an influence on individual's drive towards job performance.   In general, the definitions of QWL focus on the good feeling perceived from the interaction between the individuals and their work environment.

III. JOB SATISFACTION

The employees need to see the importance and relevance of work. There is already predetermined essence of work with man and therefore once nothing is likely to be achieved from work, a person gets frustrated.

"......since the average man spends nearly a third or even more of his working hours on the job, if that job does not provide any challenge, or satisfy his desire for achieving "something" out of it, he may suffer real frustration. And this frustration may further lead to lower rate of output, inefficiency and increasing rate of absenteeism etc., which affect both himself and his employer negatively" argues Trehan, (2008:83).

QWL is said to differ from job satisfaction (Quinn & Shephard, 1974; Davis & Cherns, 1975; Hackman & Suttle, 1977; Kabanoff, 1980; Near et al., 1980; Staines, 1980; Champoux, 1981; Kahn, 1981; Lawler, 1982) however QWL is considered to lead to job satisfaction. QWL refers to the impact of the workplace on satisfaction in work life (job satisfaction), satisfaction in non-work life domains, and satisfaction with overall life (Sirgy et al., 2001). Some researchers (Danna & Griffin, 1999) view QWL as a hierarchy of concepts that include non-work domains such as life satisfaction (at the top of the hierarchy), job satisfaction (at the middle of the hierarchy) and more work-specific facets of job satisfaction including such things as pay, co-workers, and supervisor (lower in the hierarchy).

According to Seashore (1975), job satisfaction should be regarded as an attitude resulting from two concurrent, continuing evaluations in which the individual assesses his job and work environment as he perceives them; that is, whether they are likely to aid or undermine the realization of his basic values and the needs and life goals associated with it. Job satisfaction can change with time and, therefore, it is dynamic. Although it can be treated as a static attitudinal state at any given time of measurement, the fluctuation of satisfaction and dissatisfaction is emphasized as an expected condition to be considered in explaining the behaviour of individuals in relation to their jobs.

In his book *The Managerial Choice: To be Efficient and to be Human,* Herzberg (1976) described the distinction between satisfaction and dissatisfaction by developing a "Two-Factor Theory". The findings of his studies suggest that the factors involved in producing job satisfaction (and motivation) are separate and distinct from the factors that lead to job dissatisfaction. These two feelings are not opposites of each other. The opposite of job satisfaction is not job dissatisfaction but, rather, no job satisfaction; and, similarly, the opposite of job dissatisfaction is not job satisfaction, but no job dissatisfaction. Herzberg concluded that satisfaction and dissatisfaction were two completely different phenomena that develop from quite different sources.

Consequently, the increased employee job satisfaction will augment organizational performance such as increasing profitability, expanding market share, and reducing employee turnover, etc. The early work by Vroom (1964) reveals that job satisfaction positively affects job performance. Perfect QWL ensures employees' job satisfaction whereas the employees work harder and improve the organizational performance. Organizations and firms should work harder induce employees to seek satisfaction in order to improve performance.

IV. WORK LIFE

Work life as a complex phenomenon is affected mainly by the work place which a person has in the organization. Organizational work refers to human activities in the context of formal organizations performed with an intention of producing something of acknowledged social value (Kahn 1981). On the knowledge basis of interactional psychology, human beings must interact with their environment in order to survive (Terborg 1981). Human action is determined by person and environment (Levin 1951). Person and environment create the socio-technical system. On that assumption work life can be defined because work life is followed through personal-environment interaction. This personal – environment interaction in formal organization is, on the outside, expressed through characteristics or indicators. According to *Sojka, (2007),* Work life is a set of phenomena and attributes emerging in the interaction of a person and an environment in a formal organization. To a large extent, people define themselves and others in terms of their work (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Thus quality of work life in organizations is a major component of quality of life in general (Lawler, Nadler & Cammann, 1980).

Dr. Battu et al.,

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Rasow[2] explains the importance of work more in detail and relates it to success and failure of man in his society. According to him, work is the core of life, considering the deeper meaning of work to be individual and to life's values. Work means being a good provider, it means autonomy, it pays off in success and it establishes self-respect or self-worth. Within this framework, the person who openly confesses active job-dissatisfaction, is verily admitting failure as a man, a failure in fulfilling his moral role in society"

V. QUALITY OF LIFE

This is another term with standing debate as what constitutes the quality of life, who determines the quality aspect of life. The intricacies own its origins from the definition of "quality". It has been somehow explainable when talking of "service quality" since some dimensions is there for assessment as Nadiri and Hussain (2005) opine that in order to create customer loyalty "service quality" is of paramount at the bank end. In this connection, service quality reflects the customer's perception of elements of service such as interaction quality, physical environment quality, and outcome quality. These elements are in turn evaluated based on specific quality dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles.

The notion "Quality of life" has been increasingly used as a scientific concept in literature embracing a wide range of target groups and populations as a whole. Conceptualizations vary, but there is much common ground concerning the domain content embraced by the term. Commentators are also clear that account needs to be taken of both objective life conditions and a subjective personal appraisal on the fact that what is important to each person varies. A synthesis of these perspectives provides a model of quality of life which integrates objective and subjective indicators and individual values across a broad range of life domains (physical, material, social, productive emotional and civic well being).

Two approaches can be viewed. The first is a standard needs model where quality of life is the extent to which certain universal needs are met. The central assumption is that a standard set of life circumstances are required for optimal functioning: quality of life does not, therefore, depend on a subjective viewpoint but is an objective characteristic of the person concerned. A second view which is newer and increasingly accepted approach focuses on the psychological processes involved when individuals evaluate their quality of life. Here quality of life is a perception of life circumstances, dependant on the psychological makeup of the person concerned, rather than on their life circumstances alone. The central assumption is that the individual is the best source of judgments about quality of life, and that one cannot assume that different individuals will value the same life circumstances in the same way[3].

"[………] from this perspective, the words *quality of life* may be understood to encompass broader notions of well-being (including many aspects of life that are usually considered external to economics), in addition to the common understanding as "subjective quality of life"[4]. The above synthesis could therefore imply that considerable agreement exists that quality of life is multidimensional.

VI. HUMAN RESOURCE

Organizations of any form rely on various resources (machines, materials, finance, people, etc) for the successful business operations. The survival and growth of any firm is largely depending upon human resource. In Trehan's (2008:82) words, "the workers are the backbone of every organization. No amount of money, material and technology used can achieve goals without the active participation of workers". Casio and Nambudiri, (2010:6) concur by saying; "Organizations are managed and staffed

[2]*Rasow, J.M. Quality of Working Life and Productivity, The Double Pay Off , in Jayamma, V and Naik, C. N. K, – A paper Presented at Conference Held at American Institute Inc, Chicago, Illinois, April, 1977*

[3] John P. Brow, Hannah M. McGee & Ciaran A. O'Boyle (1997) Conceptual Approaches to the Assessment of Quality of Life, Psychology & Health, 12:6, 737-751

[4] Iulie Aslaksen , Ane Flaatten & Charlotte Koren (1999) Introduction: Quality of Life Indicators, Feminist Economics, 5:2, 79-82

by people. Without people, organizations cannot exist. In support of this idea, Levering (1988) argued that the profit of successful organizations is not to be achieved at the expense of its employees.

According to Caudron (1994), the only thing that will maintain today's source of competitive advantage is high quality personnel instead of merely capital, technology or long-lived products. In fact, employees are the soft assets and are the hidden value of a company (Abdeen, 2002). They will remain as untapped assets if organizations do not manage their human resources well. In today's commercial world, a productive workforce can increase productivity and efficiency, as well as being a vehicle essential for gaining and maintaining sustainable competitive advantages for business organizations on a global basis. Klaus (2011), in his concluding remarks, "……in this sense, the motivation and satisfaction of an organization's associates are necessary but not sufficient conditions for success. But without people the satisfaction of other stakeholders is mostly impossible".

The above phrases vividly suggest that, people are the most critical assets in any organization. It is the backbone of the organizational processes and success, thus effective human resource management is the most critical managerial function for the survival of organizations as Pfeffer, (1994) clearly said, "In today's competitive environment, a company's success increasingly depends on its ability to hire high-quality employees and to maximize their contributions to the firm. Among the items in a manager's toolkit, human resource management (HRM) is increasingly being viewed as a key to sustainable competitive advantage, surpassing product and process technology, protected and regulated markets, access to financial resources, and economies of scale". It is equally plausible to argue that effective deployment of HRM practices can help companies to reap higher levels of customer and employees satisfaction, as well as more favorable shareholder financial returns.

VII. ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Performance can simply conceived in output term .i.e. the achievement of quantified objectives. No commonly agreed definition of organizational performance that can be found in the management literature (Rojas, 2000) because performance has different meanings depending on the way success is defined by the organization (Winand et al., 2014). There are wide-ranging views of organizational performance. According to Duquette and Stowe, (1993), organizational performance refers to the measurement and assessment of the actual achieved goal level of the management of a business based on projected programmes.

In the views of Venkatraman & Ramanujam, (1986), the level of performance is on parameters or dimensions for measurements such as financial (profitability, return on investment, revenue growth rate, and earnings per share, etc) and non-financial indicators (productivity, market share, operational goal achievement rate, corporate image, customer satisfaction, employees' morale, and employees' flow rate, etc). Using both financial and non-financial performance data provided an opportunity for evaluating the ability of individual managers to accurately reflect their unit's performance.

"Organizational performance by management procedures through the encouragement of employees to work harder in order to achieve the business operating goals, including financial performance (e.g., total revenues, profits after tax, and return on investment) and non-financial performance (e.g., market share, corporate image, customer satisfaction, and employee satisfaction)."[5].

It is worth therefore to note that there is consensus in the literature that organizational performance is a multidimensional concept.

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[5] Yung-Ming Shiu & Tsu-Wei Yu, 2010, Internal marketing, Organizational culture, Job satisfaction, and Organizational performance in Non-life Insurance, The Service Industries Journal, 30(6), pp 793-809.

VIII. QWL, JOB SATISFACTION AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Job satisfaction is one of the central variables in work and is seen as an important indicator of working life quality (Cohen, Kinnevy & Dichter, 2007; Aryee, Fields & Luk ,1999) determining the extent to which the employee is satisfied or is enthusiastic about his job (Aryee et al, 1999).

Quality of Work Life is very significant in the context of commitment to work motivation and job performance. It is the degree to which members of work organization are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experiences in the organization. Managerial expectations are strongly linked with the organizational QWL and it is a means to facilitate the gratification of human needs and goal-achievement. Improvisation and change in QWL is thus sought, when the existing QWL frustrates human efforts towards self-actualization and achievement Jayamma and Naik (2006:16). In essence, QWL differs from job satisfaction in that job satisfaction is construed as one of many outcomes of QWL. QWL does m not only affect job satisfaction but also satisfaction in other life domains such as family life, leisure life, social life, financial life etc. Thus the focus of QWL is beyond job satisfaction. It involves the effect of the work place satisfaction with job, satisfaction in non-work life domains and satisfaction with overall life, personal happiness, and subjective well being.

"The quality of work life literature tends to regard the outcome of improved job conditions as an increase in general work satisfaction, low absenteeism, and commitment, which is generally defined in the psychological literature as a preference for remaining in the job and a sense of identification with the organization"[6]. Job satisfaction is a general attitude and, therefore, quality of work life can be described as work environment that is conducive to the forming of a positive attitude or emotional reaction towards the work environment[7]. There is some evidence showing that a happy employee is a productive employee. A happy employee is a dedicated and loyal employee. Furthermore, much research has shown that QWL may have a significant impact on employee behavioral responses such as organizational identification, job satisfaction, job involvement, job effort, job performance, intention to quit, organizational turnover, personal alienation.[8] It is worth noting also that there are consequences associated with low levels of QWL such as low productivity, absenteeism, low quality of product and services, high compensation claims, high rate of employee turnover, etc.

Markovits, et.al (2010)[9] examined the Link between Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment: Differences between Public and Private Sector Employees. A sample of 617 Greek employees (257 from the private sector and 360 from the public sector) completed standardized questionnaires. Guided with two hypotheses i.e. H1: The relationship between job satisfaction and affective commitment will be stronger for public sector than for private sector employees and H2: The relationship between job satisfaction and normative commitment will be stronger for public sector than for private sector employees; the Results confirmed that the hypothesized relationship differences: Extrinsic satisfaction and intrinsic satisfaction are more strongly related to affective commitment and normative commitment for public sector employees than for private sector ones.

Ganguly,(2010)[10] did a research on Quality of Work Life and Job Satisfaction of a group of University Employees. QWL Questionnaire consisting of 48 items in Bengali language (having 8 different dimensions – work complexity, autonomy, personal growth opportunities, top management support, workers control, concerned about organizational performance, general happiness and personal relation to job) and Job Satisfaction. The results indicate that the selected group of university employees

[6] Karen Seashore Louis,1998, Effects of Teacher Quality of Work Life in Secondary Schools on Commitment and Sense of Efficacy, Journal of School Effectiveness and School Improvement, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 1-27

[7] Oshagbemi, T. (1999), Overall Job Satisfaction: How Good are Single versus Multiple-item measures? *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 14(5),* 388-403.

[8] M. Joseph Sirgy, David Efraty, Phillip Siegel and Dong-Jin Lee, *Journal of Social Indicators Research, September 2001, Volume 55, Issue 3, pp 241-302*

[9] Yannis Markovits, Ann J. Davis , Doris Fay & Rolf van Dick (2010) The Link Between Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment: Differences Between Public and Private Sector Employees, International Public Management Journal, 13:2, 177-196.

[10] Rochita Gangul,2010, Quality of worklife and job satisfaction of a group of university employees, Asian Journal of Management Research ,2010 ISSN 2229 – 3795, pg209 -216

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. Consequently, consonance with the same trend their job satisfaction scores had also been observed to be not up to the level of the expectation. In addition, a set of three component dimensions- Autonomy, top management support and worker's control of the QWL had also been identified as very significant aspects where the satisfied and dissatisfied group of employees did differ. Lastly, the nature of correlation between the job satisfaction and QWL dimensions reveal that the Quality of Work life significantly contribute towards increasing satisfaction or dissatisfaction as experienced by the employees in their concerned job depending largely on the perceived positivity or negativity of the relevant dimensions respectively.

Quality of Work Life is very significant in the context of commitment to work motivation and job performance. It is the degree to which members of work organization are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experiences in the organization as Jayamma and Naik (2006:16) acknowledged that, managerial expectations are strongly linked with the organizational QWL and it is a means to facilitate the gratification of human needs and goal-achievement. The definition made in 1977, the Staff of the American Center for the Quality of Working Life can also be considered to be another landmark on the relationship between QWL, job satisfaction and organizational performance as:[11]

"QWL improvements are defined as any activity which takes place in at every level of an organization which seeks greater organizational effectiveness through the enhancement of human dignity and growth….. a process through which the stakeholders in the organization – management, unions and employees – learn how to work together better….to determine for themselves what actions, changes and improvements are desirable and workable in order to achieve the twin and simultaneous goals of an improved quality of life at work for all members of the organization and greater effectiveness for both the company and the unions".

Improvisation and change in QWL is thus sought, when the existing QWL frustrates human efforts towards self-actualization and achievement. The aim of QWL research is to evaluate job satisfaction of employees in order to make informed decisions concerning their welfare and work productivity. The QWL philosophy allows employees to participate in decisions concerning improvement of their work environment which will culminate in improving the operations of the organization.

IX. CONCLUSION

At this juncture it can be concluded that the synthesis of literature above indicate that there is great relationship between Quality of work life, job satisfaction and organizational performance. It can also be pointed out that, 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. Quality of work life encourages industrial democracy at work. Thus for the survival of firms, management has to facilitate to create perfect quality of work life which would help the organization. Rise in the quality of work life would induce employees' job satisfaction thereby the well-being/performance of the whole organization. When perfectly observed, QWL calls for desired job satisfaction as such it enhances upgrading organization's/firm's operational effectiveness and efficiency. Since organizations are there to survive, there is need for ensuring improving the parameters of QWL from time to time.

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