



## Quality of Work Life (QWL): A Shufti

\*Shaheeda Banu.S

\*Asst.Prof. MBA Dept ,RYMEC, BELLARY.

### ABSTRACT

*The Quality of Work Life (QWL) in an organization is essential to the smooth running and the success of its employees. The Work – Life balance must be maintained effectively to ensure that all employees are running at their peak potential and free from stress and strain.*

*The Quality of Work Life can affect such things as: an employee's timings, his or her work output, his or her available leaves, etc.*

*An organization's HR department assumes responsibility for the effective running of the Quality of Work Life for their employees. Quality of Work Life helps employees to feel secure and like they're being thought of and cared for by the organization in which they work. Is QWL important? Yes, it certainly is! Hence, the main objective of penning down this article is to help better understanding of QWL, its importance, components, measures to improve, etc.*

**Keywords : Job enlargement, Job enrichment, Job satisfaction, Quality of work life, Stress.**

### Introduction:

The term refers to the favourableness or unfavourableness of a total job environment for people. QWL programs are another way in which organisations recognise their responsibility to develop jobs and working conditions that are excellent for people as well as for economic health of the organisation. The elements in a typical QWL program include – open communications, equitable reward systems, a concern for employee job security and satisfying careers and participation in decision making. Many early QWL efforts focus on job enrichment. In addition to improving the work system, QWL programs usually emphasise development of employee skills, the reduction of occupational stress and the development of more co-operative labour-management relations.

Vigorous Domestic and International competition drive organisations to be more productive. Proactive managers and human resource departments respond to this challenge by finding new ways to improve productivity. Some strategies rely heavily upon new capital investment and technology. Others seek changes in employee relations practices.

Human resource departments are involved with efforts to improve productivity through changes in employee relations. QWL means having good supervision, good working conditions, good pay and benefits and an interesting, challenging and rewarding job. High QWL is sought through an employee relations philosophy that encourages the use of QWL efforts, which are systematic attempts by an organisation to give workers greater opportunities to affect their jobs and their contributions to the organisation's overall effectiveness. That is, a proactive human resource department finds ways to empower employees so that they draw on their "brains and wits," usually by getting the employees more involved in the decision-making process.

Quality of work life can be defined as the environment at the work place provided to the people on the job. QWL programs is the another dimension in which employers has the responsibility to provide congenial environment i.e excellent working conditions where people can perform excellent work also their health as well as economic health of the organization is also met. The quality of personal life is always reflected in professional life and vice versa. Now a day to retain the employees

in the organization providing healthy QWL is the key factor. In earlier times QWL means only job enrichment. In addition to improving the work system, QWL programs usually emphasize on development of employee skills, the reduction of occupational stress and the development of more co-operative labor-management relations.

### Components of QWL:

The components of Quality of Work Life may vary from organization to organization, individual to individual but some of the basic components are –

1. Free communications – open communication in the organization with the co-workers is the vital factor that ensures good quality of work life. It leads to more of informal communication between co-workers and subordinates during the rest hours of the organization.
2. Reward system – reward is related to monetary or non monetary rewards eg- incentives, movie tickets, family health insurance, sponsoring the education of children etc.any kind of reward given to the employee promotes good quality of work life.
3. Employee job security - job security is the one vital element to get maximum productivity from the employee, the employee should feel secured regarding the job.
4. Career growth – the organization should provide career growth to the employee i.e promotion, authority with responsibility, hike in the salary to retain the talented employee.
5. Workers participation in decision making of the organization – employees should be encouraged to take participate actively in the decision making body of the organization so that should feel that we are also of some value to the employers. They will be more loyal, committed towards the organization.
6. Opportunities - organizations should provide some basic opportunities to their employees eg. Research, training sessions based on increase of skills and knowledge. These kinds of organizations are required than the vice versa.
7. Stress level – stress level should not be in proportion to the work life. Higher the stress level poor is the quality of work life, lower is the stress level higher is the quality of work life.

**Measures to improve the quality of work life are**

1. Flexibility on job – flexibility on job means flexible working hours, no fixed working hours, different time intervals etc. By this flexibility in the job can be introduced.
2. Job enrichment – job enrichment focuses on designing the job in such a way that becomes more interesting and challenging so that it satisfies the higher level needs.
3. Secured job – security of job should be provided to the employee to make him feel committed and loyal to the organization.
4. Grievance handling - the disciplinary procedure, grievance procedures, promotions, and transfer matters should be handled with of justice, fair and equity
5. Participative Management - Employees should be allowed to participate in management participative schemes which may be of several types. The most sophisticated among them is quality circle.

**A Rationale:**

Job specialisation and simplification were popular in the early part of this century. Employees were assigned narrow jobs and supported by a rigid hierarchy in the expectation that efficiency would improve. The idea was to lower cost by using unskilled workers who could be easily trained to do a small, repetitive part of each job.

Many difficulties developed from that classical job design, however. There was excessive division of labour. Workers became socially isolated from their co-workers because their highly specialised jobs weakened their community of interest in the whole product. De-skilled workers lost pride in their work and became bored with their jobs. Higher-order (social and growth) needs were left unsatisfied. The result was higher turnover and absenteeism, declines in quality and alienated workers. Conflict often arose as workers sought to improve their conditions and organisations failed to respond appropriately. The real cause was that in many instances the job itself simply was not satisfying.

**Forces for Change**

A factor contributing to the problem was that the workers themselves were changing. They became educated, more affluent (partly because of the effectiveness of classical job design), and more independent. They began reaching for higher-order needs, something more than merely earning their bread. Employers now had two reasons for re-designing jobs and organisations for a better QWL:

- Classical design originally gave inadequate attention to human needs.
- The needs and aspirations of workers themselves were changing.

**Humanised Work Through QWL**

One option was to re-design jobs to have the attributes desired by people, and re-design organisations to have the environment desired by the people. This approach seeks to improve QWL. There is a need to give workers more of a challenge, more of a whole task, more opportunity to use their ideas. Close attention to QWL provides a more humanised work environment. It attempts to serve the higher-order needs of workers as well as their more basic needs. It seeks to employ the higher skills of workers and to provide an environment that encourages them to improve their skills. The idea is that human resources should be developed and not simply used. Further, the work should not have excessively negative conditions. It should not put workers under undue stress. It should not damage or degrade their humanness. It should not be threatening or unduly dangerous. Finally, it should contribute to, or at least leave unimpaired, workers' abilities to perform in other life roles, such as citizen, spouse and parent. That is, work should contribute to general social advancement.

**Job Enlargement vs. Job Enrichment**

The modern interest in quality of work life was stimulated

through efforts to change the scope of people's jobs in attempting to motivate them. Job scope has two dimensions – breadth and depth. Job breadth is the number of different tasks an individual is directly responsible for. It ranges from very narrow (one task performed repetitively) to wide (several tasks). Employees with narrow job breadth were sometimes given a wider variety of duties in order to reduce their monotony; this process is called job enlargement. In order to perform these additional duties, employees spend less time on each duty. Another approach to changing job breadth is job rotation, which involves periodic assignment of an employee to completely different sets of job activities. Job rotation is an effective way to develop multiple skills in employees, which benefits the organisation while creating greater job interest and career options for the employee.

Job enrichment takes a different approach by adding additional motivators to a job to make it more rewarding. It was developed by Frederick Herzberg on the basis of his studies indicating that the most effective way to motivate workers was by focusing on higher-order needs. Job enrichment seeks to add depth to a job by giving workers more control, responsibility and discretion over how their job is performed. The difference between enlargement and enrichment is illustrated in the figure on the next page.

**Measurement**

There are few recognised measures of quality of working life, and of those that exist few have evidence of validity and reliability, that is, there is a very limited literature based on peer reviewed evaluations of available assessments. A recent statistical analysis of a new measure, the Work-Related Quality of Life scale (WRQoL), indicates that this assessment device should prove to be a useful instrument, although further evaluation would be useful. The WR QoWL measure uses six core factors to explain most of the variation in an individual's quality of working life: Job and Career Satisfaction; Working Conditions; General Well-Being; Home-Work Interface; Stress at Work and Control at Work.

The Job & Career Satisfaction (JCS) scale of the Work-Related Quality of Life scale (WR QoL) is said to reflect an employee's feelings about, or evaluation of, their satisfaction or contentment with their job and career and the training they receive to do it. Within the WRQoL measure, JCS is reflected by questions asking how satisfied people feel about their work. It has been proposed that this Positive Job Satisfaction factor is influenced by various issues including clarity of goals and role ambiguity, appraisal, recognition and reward, personal development career benefits and enhancement and training needs.

The General well-being (GWB) scale of the Work-Related Quality of Life scale (WRQoL), aims to assess the extent to which an individual feels good or content in themselves, in a way which may be independent of their work situation. It is suggested that general well-being both influences, and is influenced by work. Mental health problems, predominantly depression and anxiety disorders, are common, and may have a major impact on the general well-being of the population. The WRQoL GWB factor assesses issues of mood, depression and anxiety, life satisfaction, general quality of life, optimism and happiness.

The WRQoL Stress at Work sub-scale (SAW) reflects the extent to which an individual perceives they have excessive pressures, and feel stressed at work. The WRQoL SAW factor is assessed through items dealing with demand and perception of stress and actual demand overload. Whilst it is possible to be pressured at work and not be stressed at work, in general, high stress is associated with high pressure.

The Control at Work (CAW) subscale of the WRQoL scale addresses how much employees feel they can control their work through the freedom to express their opinions and being involved in decisions at work. Perceived control at work

as measured by the Work-Related Quality of Life scale (WRQoL) is recognized as a central concept in the understanding of relationships between stressful experiences, behaviour and health. Control at work, within the theoretical model underpinning the WRQoL, is influenced by issues of communication at work, decision making and decision control.

The WRQoL Home-Work Interface scale (HWI) measures the extent to which an employer is perceived to support the family and home life of employees. This factor explores the interrelationship between home and work life domains. Issues that appear to influence employee HWI include adequate facilities at work, flexible working hours and the understanding of managers.

The Working Conditions scale of the WRQoL assesses the extent to which the employee is satisfied with the fundamental resources, working conditions and security necessary to do their job effectively. Physical working conditions influence employee health and safety and thus employee Quality of working life. This scale also taps into satisfaction with the resources provided to help people do their jobs.

### Applications

Regular assessment of Quality of Working Life can potentially provide organisations with important information about the welfare of their employees, such as job satisfaction, general well-being, work-related stress and the home-work interface. Studies in the UK University sector have shown a valid measure of Quality of Working Life exists and can be used as a basis for effective interventions.

Worrall and Cooper (2006) recently reported that a low level of well-being at work is estimated to cost about 5-10% of Gross National Product per annum, yet Quality of Working Life as a theoretical construct remains relatively unexplored and unexplained within the organisational psychology research literature.

A large chunk of most peoples' lives will be spent at work. Most people recognise the importance of sleeping well, and

actively try to enjoy the leisure time that they can snatch. But all too often, people tend to see work as something they just have to put up with, or even something they don't even expect to enjoy.

Some of the factors used to measure quality of working life pick up on things that don't actually make people feel good, but which seem to make people feel bad about work if those things are absent. For example, noise – if the place where someone works is too noisy, they might get frequent headaches, or find they cannot concentrate, and so feel dissatisfied. But when it is quiet enough they don't feel pleased or happy - they just don't feel bad. This can apply to a range of factors that affect someone's working conditions.

Other things seem to be more likely to make people feel good about work and themselves once the basics are OK at work. Challenging work (not too little, not too much) can make them feel good. Similarly, opportunities for career progression and using their abilities can contribute to someone's quality of working life.

A recent publication of the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) emphasises the core role of assessment and understanding of the way working environments pose risks for psychological wellbeing through lack of control and excessive demand. The emphasis placed by NICE on assessment and monitoring wellbeing springs from the fact that these processes are the key first step in identifying areas for improving quality of working life and addressing risks at work.

### Conclusion:

Quality of Working Life is not a concept, that deals with one area but it has been observed as incorporating a hierarchy of concepts that not only include work-based factors such as job satisfaction, satisfaction with pay and relationships with work colleagues, but also factors that broadly focuses on life satisfaction and general feelings of well-being. To retain a good talent in the organization it is important for the organization that he should have low stress level and high quality of work life.

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