A Conceptual Study on Quality of Work Life of Employees Working in A Private Construction Companies

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ABSTRACT *There has been much concern today about the decent wages, convenient working hours, conducive working conditions, etc... The pressure of increasingly demanding work culture in our country is perhaps the biggest and most pressing challenge to the mental health of the construction employees. The effect of increased working hours is having an important cause on the lifestyle of huge number of employees involved in construction field. QWL programs are another way in which organizations recognize their responsibility to develop jobs and working conditions that are excellent for people as well as for economic health of the organization. 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 emphasize development of employee skills, the reduction of occupational stress and the development of more cooperative labor management relations. Stressful job conditions and work-life imbalance are more complex puzzle. The need for employers to address work load and work schedules is root cause of work life imbalances. The tangible benefits of providing environment that supports work-life balance need to be more effectively and widely communicated. According to a survey done by Human Solutions, workers who report they have a good balance between work and personal/family life experience less stress than workers who lack this balance. The term "quality of work life" has appeared in Research journals and press in USJ only in 1970s. There is no generally acceptable definition about this term. However, some attempts were made to describe the term environment for people. J.Richard and J.Lay 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 and stress go hand in hand. What seems to matter in this regard is the importance workers place on balance in their lives and the effectiveness of work place policies and practices in supporting them to achieve their goals.D.S.COHAN defines quality of working life as" a process of joint decision making, collaboration and building mutual respect between management and employee". This study quantifies the effects of quality of work life on employees. It aims to gain an insight into current working life policies and practices, as well as work-life balance issues of employees.*

This paper aim is to gain an insight into current work life policies and practices. It includes everything that an organization provides to his/her employee in and away from the office based on his performance. By providing a better QWL to the employees, the study is to provide better carrier opportunity for the employees. The employers needs to frame polices that would minimize the work load of employee without affecting the productivity of the organization, for achieving successful work-life balance.

INTRODUCTION

Work is a key factor from which many people derive satisfaction in life; equally they serve as a big source of stress in life. Many organizations continues to change themselves with their working environment, due to globalization of the world economy and economic rationalization, that drives to job restructuring, greater workload and job insecurity. Quality of work life improvements are activity which takes place at every level of an organization, which seeks greater organizational effectiveness through the enhancement of human dignity and growth and a process through which the took- holders 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 simultaneously 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. Work life balance has always remained a reason for quality of working life and its relation to the quality of life. Today work life balance is in debate because in affluent societies the excessive demands of work are perceived to present a distinctive issue that needs to be addressed. Achieving a balance between home life and work life is becoming increasingly a priority for many people. Work-life balance has been defined as 'satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum conflict. As such, it

is sometimes characterized by 'the absence of unacceptable levels of conflict between work and non-work demands'. Thus when demand from work and non work is not mutual there arises a conflict. For this reason, a lack of balance between work and non-work is commonly conceptualized as work/family conflict or work/non-work conflict. Such conflicts can occur in both cases where, work roles interfere with non work roles and vice versa. Factors contribute to the quality of work life are Adequacy and fair compensation, adequacy to the extent to which the income from full time works meets the needs of the socially determined standard of living, 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 diseases and special measures for protection of women and children, Security and growth opportunity, including factors like security of employment and opportunity for advancement and self-improvement, Opportunity to use and develop creativity, such as work autonomy, nature of supervision, use of multiple skills, worker's role in total work process and his or her Appreciation of the outcome of his or her own effort and self –regulation, respect for the individuals' personal rights, such as the application of the principles of natural justice and equity, acceptance of the right of free speech and the right to personal privacy in respect of the workers off –the-job behavior, and a sensible integration of work and family life, includ-

ing transfers, schedule of hours of work, travels requirements. QWL deals with the relationship between every employee and his or her work organization. This concept represents the expected exchange of values that encourage the individuals to work for the organization and motivates the organization to employ that person, i.e. (Contribution and inducement) through which high quality work life has been increased.

INDUCEMENTS   =   CONTRIBUTIONS

(Organization to employees)   (Employee to organization)

INDUSTRY PROFILE

Construction industry in India is one of the rapidly growing sectors and contributes significantly to the Nation's economy. The Indian Construction sector is growing at a rate of 9.2% as against the world average of 5.5%. The sector is likely to record higher growth in the coming years. India has construction capabilities in the areas of buildings, infrastructure development and highways projects. The growth of construction industry provides impetus to other manufacturing sectors like cement, iron and steel, power, chemicals, etc.,

Nature of the industry: Houses, apartments, factories, offices, schools, roads, and bridges are only some of the products of the construction industry. This industry's activities include the building of new structures as well as additions and modifications to existing ones.The industry also include maintenance, repair, and improvements on these structures. Specialty trade contractors usually do the work of only one trade, such as painting, carpentry, or electrical work, or of two or more closely related trades, such as plumbing and heating. Beyond fitting their work to that of the other trades, specialty trade contractors have no responsibility for the structure as a whole. They obtain orders for their work from general contractors, architects, or property owners. Repair work is almost always done on direct order from owners, occupants, architects, or rental agents.

Working conditions: Most employees in this industry work full time, and many work over 40 hours a week. Construction workers may sometimes work evenings, weekends, and holidays to finish a job or take care of an emergency.

Construction workers, who work outdoors, often must contend with the weather. Rain or wind may halt construction work, causing workers to go home or not report to work.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

K.Aswathappa, Year of publication 1997, pages 311–331, QWL is defined as a "whole parcel of terms and conditions of which really belong to the Quality of Working Life umbrella". They include industrial effectiveness, human resource development, Organizational effectiveness, Work restructure, Job enrichment, Socio-technical systems, Working humanization, Group-work concepts, Labour management, Co-operation, Working together, Workers involvement, Workers participation and Co-operative work structures.

Jang, S. J., Park, R. and Zippy, Volume 20, Issue 2, pages 135–143, April 2011, International Journal of Social Welfare, The present study examined associations between the availability and various Quality of work–life programs, employees' authority to arrange their own work hours, job satisfaction, and mental health and various dimensions affecting QWL initiatives. The study is unique in its use of multilevel analysis in examining employees job-related out comes in the work place. The results add to the evidence regarding the positive relationship between the availability of scheduling control the stress and quality policies.

Hackman and Oldham, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Jul., 1988), pp. 454-470, drew attention to what they described as psychological growth needs as relevant growth to the consideration of Quality of Working. Several such needs were identified; Skill variety, Task significance, Task identity, Autonomy and Feedback. They suggested that such needs have to addresses if employees are to experience high quality of working life.

Baba and Jamal, Vol. 21, Issue 4, pages 455–472, April 2000, listed what they described as typical indicators of Quality of Working Life, including: job satisfaction, job involvement, work role ambiguity, work role conflict, work role overload, job stress, organizational commitment and turn-over intentions.

Sirgy et al suggested that the key factors in quality of working life are: Need satisfaction based on job requirements, Need satisfaction based on work requirements, Need satisfaction based on supervisory behavior, Need satisfaction based on Ancillary programmes, organizational commitment. They defined quality of work life as satisfaction of these key needs through resources, activities, and outcomes stemming from participation in the work place.

Allen, et al., 2000: Importantly, satisfactory work-life balance and low work-life conflict were also linked to non-work outcomes, such as life, family, marital and leisure satisfaction and family performance.

Aderman, et al., 1983: In order to reduce perceived job threat stressors on work-life issues and employee wellbeing, person-centred stress management techniques could be recommended. Examples are providing relaxation/mindfulness meditation classes, exercise promotion and providing facilities such as gymnasiums, promotion of healthy eating and providing good food choices, and counseling

OBJECTIVES
1. To highlight the special issues in QWL
2. To determine the factor contributing to the QWL.
3. To suggest steps in improving the effort of QWL.
4. To enlight the strategies for improvement of QWL.

SPECIFIC ISSUES IN QWL:
1) Pay and Stability of Employment
2) Occupational stress
3) Organizational Health programs
4) Alternative Work Schedules
5) Participative management and Control of work
6) Congenial Worker-Supervisor relations
7) Grievance Procedure
8) Adequacy of Resources
9) Employment on permanent

THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO THE QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

The followings are suggested:
1. Adequacy and fair compensation, adequacy to the extent to which the income from full time works 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 diseases 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, worker's role in total work process and his or her Appreciation of the outcome of his or her own effort and self –regulation.
5. Respect for the individuals' personal rights, such as the application of the principles of natural justice and equity, acceptance of the right of free speech and the right to personal privacy in respect of the workers off –the-job behavior.

6. A sensible integration of work and family life, including transfers, schedule of hours of work, travels requirements.

QWL EFFORTS FOLLOWS:

- Quality circles: These are small groups of employees who met regularly to find, analyze and solve quality and other work related problems of a particular department / section/ area.
- Socio technical systems: These are interventions in the work situation that redesign the work, the work groups and the relationship between workers and the technologies they use to perform their jobs.
- Co- determination: In this method, representatives of workers meet management in a formal way to discuss and vote on important decisions that affect the lives of workers. Self managed work teams: These are employee groups (also called autonomous workgroups) with a high degree of decision making, responsibility and behavioral control for completing their work. The team is usually given the responsibility for producing an entire product or service.
- Suggestion programs: It is a formal method for generating evaluating and implementing employees 'ideas.
- Open door policies: Where open door policies exist employees are free to walk into any manager's office with their problems and seek solutions to such problems. Adequacy and fair compensation, adequacy to the extent to which the income from full time works meets the needs of the socially determined standard of living.

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 diseases and special measures for protection of women and children.

Opportunity to use and develop creativity, such as work autonomy, nature of supervision, use of multiple skills, worker's role in total work process and his or her Appreciation of the outcome of his or her own effort and self –regulation.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT OF QWL:

The Strategies for improvements in QWL include self-managed work teams, redesign and enrichment, effective leadership and Supervisory behavior, career development, Alternative work Schedules, job security, administrative organizational and participating management decision making.

CONCLUSION

QWL in any organization has been increasing over the last few decades and has important implications for performances. Despite its importance, there has been a lack of proper practices and policies followed in the management of private construction companies. As lack in QWL affects the outcome of productivity. Hence, monitoring and managing job is extremely important. Even with the availability of employee assistance programs in organization such as stress management and flexible work arrangements, the complex nature of stress still seems to influence the health and work-life balance negatively. So it is the responsibility of the employer and employee to contribute to the better work life balance for fruitful productivity and to lead a quality work /life practises.

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