

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE: A KEY TO IMPROVE ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE**Chanjyot Kaur****Assistant Professor,****Department of Business Management,****Govt. Mohindra College, Patiala.****Address: 8288/5, Factory Area, near Hira Automobiles, Patiala (147001).****ABSTRACT**

Work is an integral part of our everyday life. On an average we spend around twelve hours daily in the work place, that is one third of our entire life; it does influence the overall quality of our life. It should yield job satisfaction, give peace of mind, a fulfilment of having done a task, as it is expected, without any flaw and having spent the time fruitfully, constructively and purposefully. A happy and a healthy employee will give better turnover, make good decisions and positively contribute to the organizational goal. 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. An assured good quality of work life will not only attract young and new talent but also retain the existing experienced talent.

Quality of Work Life in an organization is essential for the smooth running and success of its employees. Quality of Work Life deals with various aspects of work environment, which facilitates the human resource development efficiently. Thus, Quality of Work Life helps in the development of human resources. An organization's HR department assumes responsibility for the effective running of the Quality of Work Life for their employees.

The research paper examines the various effects of Quality of Work Life and focuses on the subjective matter of QWL i.e. its key elements. It also suggests suitable measures for improving Quality of Work Life among workers in the organization.

Key words: *Integral part, quality of life, peace of mind, better turnover, good decisions.*

Introduction

Quality of Work Life is becoming an increasingly popular concept in recent times, the present era is an era of knowledge workers and the society in which we are living has come, to be known as knowledge society. The intellectual pursuits have taken precedence over the physical efforts.

Some knowledge workers work for more than 60 hours a week. As a result of this, their personal hobbies and interests clash with their work. Life is a bundle that contains all the strands together and hence the need to balance work life with other related issues.

One must have both love and work in one's life to make it healthy. Gone are the days when the priority of employees used to be for physical and material needs. With the increasing shift of the economy towards knowledge economy, the meaning and quality of work life has undergone a drastic change.

Meaning:

Quality of work life (QWL) refers to the favorableness or unfavorableness of a job environment for the people working in an organization. The period of scientific management which focused solely on specialization and efficiency, has undergone a revolutionary change.

The traditional management (like scientific management) gave inadequate attention to human values. In the present scenario, needs and aspirations of the employees are changing. Employers are now redesigning jobs for better QWL.

Definition:

The QWL as strategy of Human Resource Management has assumed increasing interest and importance. Many other terms have come to be used interchangeably with QWL such as 'humanizations of work' 'quality of working life, 'industrial democracy' and 'participative work'.

There are divergent views as to the exact meaning of QWL.

A few definitions given by eminent authors on QWL are given below:

1. "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*

2. "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." *By Nadler and Lawler*

3. "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." *By Luthans*

4. "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." *By Beinum*

From the definitions given above, it can be said that QWL is concerned with taking care of the higher-order needs of employees in addition to their basic needs. The overall climate of work place is adjusted in such a way that it produces more humanized jobs.

QWL is viewed as that umbrella under which employees feel fully satisfied with the working environment and extend their wholehearted cooperation and support to the management to improve productivity and work environment.

Why need Quality of Work Life?

In current scenario every organization wants more output in comparison of less input; it can only be possible when working employees find their working place comfortable as per the job requirements. So it's very important for an organization to make a Quality relationship between its employees and working environment. Now-a-days, there is no balance between the family and work life due to job pressure and conflicting interests and over-socialization that lead to too much of interest about the co-workers for satisfaction of their ego, creating problems in the minds of neighbours. The work-norms impose on workers too much of burden and control by their bosses. And the rules are for workers or employees. They have to follow, and the employer has right to layoff the worker due to marketing and technological factors. The Indian workers and their Unions are now on the defensive. They are now more interested in the question of how to retain their jobs than in the question of how to improve their Quality of Life in the work place. It is therefore not difficult to understand why the question of improving Quality of Work Life has lost its importance in our country. The Quality of Work Life movement which draws "attention to workers" need more meaningful and satisfying work and for participation in decisions that affect their work situation. And work is a major formation experience which can either

promote or limit a man's growth in ways which affect the whole man and which therefore shape his life outside the job as well as within it.

Effects of QWL

QWL affects job involvement, sense of competence, job satisfaction and job performance. A favourable QWL results into positive consequences of these factors. QWL affects are as follows:

1. **Job involvement:** Job involvement indicates the extent of people's identification with or ego investment in the job. Job involved people spend more time on job and turn out to have better performance. Challenging jobs, which have skill variety, influence employees to get involved in their jobs. Similarly, people with high need for achievement and high work ethic feel involved in jobs.
2. **Sense of competence:** It denotes the feeling of confidence that one has in one's own competence. Job design affects the sense of competence. As they engage themselves more and more in work activities, they acquire a great sense of competence and experience and higher level of job involvement. This job involvement further adds to a sense of competence. Thus, sense of competence and job involvement produce high job satisfaction and productivity.
3. **Job satisfaction:** It is a set of favourable or unfavourable feelings with which employees view their jobs more specifically the nature of jobs they do, the quality of supervision they receive, co-worker's pay and perks and promotional avenues. Job satisfaction affects job performance, employee turnover and absenteeism. High job satisfaction results into high work performance, less employee turnover and less absenteeism.
4. **Job performance and productivity:** Job involvement, job satisfaction and sense of competence affect job performance and productivity of employees. When the level of job performance and productivity factors - Job involvement, job satisfaction and sense of competence is high, it is found that there is a fit among the predisposition of employees and the types of jobs they are assigned to do.

Human Resource Department's Role

The role of human resource department in QWL efforts varies widely. In some organizations, top management appoints an executive to ensure that QWL and productivity efforts occur throughout the organization. In most cases, these executives have a small staff and must rely on the human resource department for help with employee training, communications, attitude survey feedback, and similar assistance. In other organizations, the department is responsible for initiating and directing the firm's

QWL and productivity efforts. Perhaps the most crucial role of the department is winning the support of key managers. Management support particularly top management support appears to be an almost universal prerequisite for successful QWL programs. By substantiating employee satisfaction and bottom-line benefits, which range from lower absenteeism and turnover to higher productivity and fewer accidents, the department can help convince doubting managers. The policies and practices of the department also influence motivation and satisfaction indirectly. Rigorous enforced safety and health programs, for example, can give employees and supervisors a greater sense of safety from accidents and industrial health hazards. The motivation and satisfaction of employees act as feedback on the organization's QWL and on the department's day-to-day activities.

Key Elements in QWL Programs

Although there may not be any universal phenomenon in improving the QWL because of involvement of a number of factors in it, some key elements adopted for the purpose are discussed below:

1. **Flexibility in work schedule:** Employees want flexibility in work schedule. There may be three aspects of flexibility: flexitime, a system of flexible working hours and compressed work week. To the extent, this flexibility is provided in the work system, it becomes more motivating to the employees.
2. **Autonomous work group:** Creation of autonomous work helps in creating positive feelings among employees. They may be given freedom to choose their own teams, there should be freedom of decision making regarding the choice of methods for work, distribution of tasks among group members and designing of work schedules.
3. **Job Enrichment:** Job enrichment attempts to design a job in such a way that it becomes more interesting and challenging so that the job holder makes meaning out of that. The degree of job enrichment determines the degree of QWL.
4. **Opportunity for growth:** An employee, particularly the achievement-oriented one, seeks growth through his work. If the work provides him opportunity for personal growth and to develop his personality, he will feel committed to the job and the organization.
5. **Participation:** Participation in decision making, particularly on the matters directly concerned with an individual's working, has an important bearing on his satisfaction and performance. Higher degree of participation increases the QWL and overall organizational climate.
6. **Communication:** To make QWL sound effective, two-way communication is necessary. Through the downward communication, employees would receive information about the various aspects

of the organization. Through upward communication, employees can share their views, grievances and suggestions for improving the work performance.

Measuring Quality of Work Life

The Richard Walton, an American Professor, played a major role in developing the concept of Quality of Work Life. The eight factors he proposed to measure Quality of Work Life has made the task easy worldwide.

1. Adequate and Fair compensation
2. Safe and healthy working conditions
3. Opportunity to develop human capacities
4. Opportunity for career growth
5. Social integration in the workforce
6. Constitutionalism
7. Work and Quality of Life
8. Social relevance criteria.

Barriers to QWL

1. Resistance to change both by management and employees.
2. There is a general perception that QWL implementation will cost much to the organization.
3. Continuous increase in QWL may result in less productivity, i.e., after a certain level the productivity will not increase in proportion to the increase in QWL.
4. Widespread unhappiness due to comparison with colleagues.
5. Regional prejudice.
6. Scepticism about the performance appraisal system and promotion criteria.

Measures to Improve QWL

1. **QWL through Employee Involvement (EI):** One of the most common methods used to create QWL is employee involvement. Employee involvement (EI) consists of a variety of systematic methods that empower employees to participate in the decisions that affect them and their relationship with the organization. Through (EI), employees feel a sense of responsibility, even ownership of decisions in which they participate. To be successful, however, EI must be more than just a systematic approach; it must become part of the organization's culture by being part of management's philosophy. Some companies have had this philosophy ingrained in their corporate structure for decades; Hewlett-Packard, IBM, General Motors, Ford, etc.

2. **Quality Circles:** Quality circles are small groups of employees who meet regularly with their common leader to identify and solve work-related problems. They are a highly specific form of team building, which are common in Japan and gained popularity in North America in the late 1970s and early 1980s. By the 1980s most medium and large-sized Japanese firms had quality control circles for hourly employees. This effort began as a quality improvement program but has since become a routine procedure for many Japanese managers and cornerstone of QWL efforts in many Japanese firms. Several characteristics make this approach unique. First, membership in the circle involuntary for both the leader (usually the supervisor) and the members (usually hourly workers). Secondly, the creation of quality circles is usually preceded by in-house training. For supervisors these sessions typically last for two or three days. Most of the time is devoted to discussions of small-group dynamics, leadership skills, and indoctrination in the QWL and quality circle philosophies. About a day is spent on the different approaches to problem-solving techniques. The workers also receive an explanation of the supervisor's role as the group's discussion leader and information on the quality circle concept. Thirdly, as is pointed out in the training, the group is permitted to select the problems it wants to tackle. Management may suggest problems of concern, but the group is empowered to decide which ones to select. Ideally, the selection process is not by democratic vote but is arrived at by consensus, whereby everyone agrees on the problem to be tackled. (If management has been pressing problems that need to be solved, these problems can be handled in the same way that they were resolved before the introduction of quality circles). When employees are allowed to select the problems they want to work on, they are likely to be more motivated to find solutions. And they are also more likely to be motivated to stay on as members of the circle and solve additional problems in the future.
3. **Socio-Technical Systems:** Another intervention to improve QWL is the use of socio-technical systems. Socio-technical systems are interventions in the work situation that restructure the work, the work groups, and the relationship between workers and the technologies they use to do their jobs. More than just enlarging or enriching a job, these approaches may result in more radical changes in the work environment.
4. **Autonomous Work Group:** A more common, still rare, approach to employee involvement is the use of autonomous work groups. These are teams of workers, without a formal company-appointed leader, who decide among themselves most decisions traditionally handled by supervisors. The key feature of these groups is a high degree of self-determination by

employees in the management of their day-to-day work. Typically this includes collective control over the pace of work, distribution of tasks, organization of breaks, and collective participation in the recruitment and training of new members. Direct supervision is often necessary. QWL is more likely to improve as workers demand jobs with more behavioural elements. These demands will probably emerge from an increasingly diverse and educated work force that expects more challenges and more autonomy in its jobs such as worker participation in decisions traditionally reserved for management.

Suggestions to Improve the QWL

In our country, recently many changes have introduced in the Government policies like privatization. The Government organizations are mismanaged incurring heavy loss on public money either due to corruption by bureaucrats' intervention of politicians and Trade Union leaders and their affiliated political parties with the motives of winning elections. The scope for transfer of technology has increased and inflow of investments from non-resident Indians allowed. The privatization created many avenues for many unemployed people by reducing severity of the problem. Hence, it is absolutely necessary to improvement in the Quality of Work Life of our country. Following are some suggestions that can help, to a large extent to improve Quality of working life in India:

The Employers should:

- Provide physical amenities at the work place, health and safety and welfare provision.
- Involve workers in decision-making on all matters.
- Initiate suitable forms of work design
- Formalize QWL experience for future use.
- Develop an appreciation of changing environment.

The Unions and Workers should:

- Educate and make workers aware of QWL.
- Identify areas of collaboration with management.
- Encourage workers to participate in QWL activities.

The Professional Organizations should:

- Organize workshops and seminars to bring about greater awareness of QWL.
- Initiate specific research projects in this field.
- Provide professional assistance to organizations to help generate internal competence.
- Develop state of art profiles on QWL.

The Government should:

- Legislate standards and norms in newer areas.
- Execute in policy to provide greater autonomy experiment with QWL.
- Execute actions to ensure implementation of legislated facilities.
- Encourage and adopt appropriate technology.
- Find projects on QWL.

Conclusion

Quality of Work Life plays a vital role in Human Resource Management. It creates awareness among workers in successful organization. Quality of Work Life can be improved through a variety of instrumentalities like education and training, employee communication, union participation, research projects, and appreciation of changing environment. A good human resources practice would encourage all employees to be more productive while enjoying work.

Therefore, Quality of Work Life is becoming an important human resources issue in all organizations. The Quality of Work Life intends to develop enhance and utilize human resource effectively, to improve quality of products, services, productivity and reduce cost of production per unit of output and to satisfy the worker's psychological needs for self-esteem, participation, recognition, etc., Improved Quality of Work Life leads to improved performance. Performance means not only physical output but also the behaviour of the worker in helping his colleagues in solving job related problems, team spirit and accepting temporary unfavourable work conditions without complaints. An assured good Quality of Work Life will not only attract young and new talent but also retain the existing experience talent.

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