

# “Quality of Work Life”- Parameter Reflecting the Organizational Health and its Development

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**Abstract**—Quality of work life is defined as the overall quality of an individual's working life. It includes factors such as income, health, social relationships and other factors such as happiness and fulfillment. A good work life balance motivates an employee to perform well at his job and also spend quality time with the family. Therefore, organizations have started focusing on the overall development and happiness of the employees for motivating employees and reducing their stress levels. Organizations today have realized the importance of improving the Quality of work life as it reduces absenteeism and improves employee retention leading to organizational growth. It enhances employee productivity and also improves the quality of working lives ultimately benefitting the families. Factors such as workplace environment, peers and income influence how satisfied an individual is with their job. When an individual is satisfied with their job he is more likely to experience a higher quality of working life than an employee who is dissatisfied or even resentful of the work. Issues like employee retention, work life issues, training to facilitators, flexible working hours, growth opportunities and empowerment helps in improving the quality of work life. A good quality of work life reflects the organizational health and its wellbeing which attracts the efficient workforce leading to increase in productivity and improved employee morale.

**Keywords:** Work life balance, overall development, absenteeism, employee retention, flexible working hours, and empowerment.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The term Quality of work life coined by Louis Davis may be defined as the extent to which the environment at the work place stimulates or hinders the productivity of the employees. It can also be considered as the quality of an individual's working life. Quality of life includes factors such as income, health, social relationships, and other factors such as happiness and fulfillment. A good work life balance is also what motivates an employee the most to perform well at his job and also spend quality time with the family. Therefore, organizations have started focusing on the overall development and happiness of the employee for their motivation and reducing their stress levels without jeopardizing the economic health of the company.

## 2. MEANING & CONCEPT

Quality of Work Life started with a series of attitudinal surveys conducted at the University of Michigan between 1969 and 1973. These surveys sought to find ways to improve the quality of life of individuals at the work place by drawing the attention of managements of organizations to the quality of employment.

QWL refers to the quality of relationship between employees and the total working environment. Harrison states that it is the degree to which the working organization contributes to material and psychological well-being of its members.

Gilgeous, (1998) defines Quality of life as an individual's satisfaction with his or her life dimensions compared to his or her ideal life. Evaluation of the quality of life depends on individual's value system and on the cultural environment where he lives.

The American Society of Training and Development states that Quality of Work Life is a process of work organization which enables its members at all levels to actively participate in shaping the organization's environment, methods and outcomes. This helps in enhancing organizational effectiveness and improving the quality of life of employees.

Broadly speaking, Quality of Work Life involves four major aspects: (i) Safe work environment, (ii) Occupational health care, (iii) Suitable working time and (iv) Appropriate salary.

In recent years there has been an increasing concern for Quality of Work Life due to the following factors:

- i. Increase in the level of education and job aspirations of employees
- ii. Rise in workers associations
- iii. Importance of Human Resource Management
- iv. Increasing awareness in human behavior, etc.
- v. Widespread industrial unrest
- vi. Growing of knowledge in human behavior, etc.

Henry Fayol tried to improve quality of life through some of his principles like division of work, unity of command, direction, remuneration and *e-spirit de-corps*.

### 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

De (1975) in his book 'Contents and Discontents' stated that quality of work life is a major determinant of quality of life. Life has no meaning without work; quality of life refers to the life an individual lives outside or away from his work. Psychologists have tried to concern themselves with the quality of working lives of the people as a whole, and fitting the worker to the job and fitting the job to the worker. Benium (1947) in his study of Quality of Work life says that "the quality of the content of the relationship between man and his task". Viewpoints of different authors and researchers lead us to the conclusion that quality of working life is the degree of excellence brought about by work and working conditions which contribute to the overall satisfaction and performance, primarily at the individual level and ultimately at the organizational level.

### 4. IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

Due to the increase in the level of education and awareness of Human Resource Management, employees prefer organizations that strive towards improving the quality of work life. Organizations too have realized that by paying attention to the needs of the employees, organizations can benefit in terms of productivity, employee loyalty and company reputation.

**Some of the reasons for the importance of Quality of Work Life are as follows:**

#### i. Enhance stakeholder relations and credibility

A growing number of companies that focus on quality of work life improve their relationships with the stakeholders. They can communicate their views, policies, and performance on complex social issues; and develop interest among their key stakeholders like consumers, suppliers, employees etc.

#### ii. Increase productivity

Programmes which help employees balance their work and lives outside the work can improve productivity. A company's recognition and support — through its stated values and policies — of employees' commitments, interests and pressures, can relieve employees' external stress.

This allows them to focus on their jobs during the workday and helps to minimize absenteeism. The result can be both enhanced productivity and strengthened employee commitment and loyalty.

#### iii. Attraction and retention

Work-life strategies have become a means of attracting new skilled employees and keeping existing ones satisfied. Many job seekers prefer flexible working hours as the benefit they would look for in their job. They would rather have the opportunity to work flexible hours than receive an additional increment in annual pay.

#### iv. Reduces absenteeism

Companies that have family-friendly or flexible work practices have low absenteeism. Sick rates fall as pressures are managed better. Employees have better methods of dealing with work-life conflicts than taking unplanned leave. Workers (including the managers) who are healthy and not over-stressed are more efficient at work.

#### v. Improve the quality of working lives

Minimizing work-life role conflict helps prevent role overload and people have a more satisfying working life, fulfilling their potential both in paid work and outside it. Work life balance can minimize stress and fatigue at work, enabling people to have safer and healthier working lives. Workplace stress and fatigue can contribute to injuries at work and home.

#### vi. Matches people who would not otherwise work with jobs

Parents, people with disabilities and those nearing retirement may increase their work force participation if more flexible work arrangements are made. Employment has positive individual and social benefits beyond the financial rewards. Employers may also benefit from a wider pool of talent to draw from, particularly to their benefit when skill shortages exist.

#### vii. Benefiting families and communities

In a situation of conflict between work and family, one or other suffers. Overseas studies have found that family life can interfere with paid work. Quality of work life maintains balance between work and family. At the extreme, if family life suffers, this may have wider social costs.

#### viii. Job involvement

Companies with quality of work life have employees with high degree of job involvement. People put their best to the job and report good performance. They achieve a sense of competence and match their skills with requirements of the job. They view their jobs as satisfying the needs of achievement and recognition. This reduces absenteeism and turnover, thus, saves organizational costs of recruiting and training replacements.

**ix. Job satisfaction**

Job involvement leads to job commitment and job satisfaction. People whose interests are protected by their employers experience high degree of job satisfaction. This improves job output.

**x. Company reputation**

Many organizations, including Governments, NGOs, investors and the media, consider the quality of employee experience in the work place when evaluating a company. Socially responsible investors, including some institutional investors, pay specific attention to quality of work life when making investment decisions.

**5. CERTAIN FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE QUALITY OF WORK LIFE.**

- i. The level of satisfaction an individual experiences in his job helps him in experiencing a higher quality of working life compared to an employee who is dissatisfied or even resentful of the work. Level of satisfaction at work place can be improved by workplace environment, peers income and work duties and responsibilities.
- ii. Workplace stress can be a reason for poor quality of work life. Workplace stress can be caused due to various reasons including the duties an individual is supposed to perform, the peer group and the overall workload. Workplace stress leads to stress even outside the work place leading to poor quality of work life.
- iii. When an individual receives low wage especially in comparison to the difficulty in their job will have a low quality of working life.
- iv. Working hours too can influence the quality of working life. Employees who work for too many hours or too few hours or unusual working hours are said to have lower quality of work life. An individual who works for few hours does not get enough of money to maintain his standard of living whereas an individual who works for too many working hours does not get time to maintain his social relationships and unusual working hours too can lead to problems in attending to normal activities. Thus working hours have an impact in the quality of work life.
- v. Compensation which an employ receives should be fair and according to the job performed as it has an impact on the quality of work life.
- vi. The working conditions should be according to the terms laid down in the Factories Act as they influence the mind and body of the employee.

- vii. Fairness at work leads to satisfaction among employees. If employees feel that there exists partiality, they would not feel like working, leading to poor working life.
- viii. Personal characteristics also influence an employee’s perception and understanding of things and thus influence their quality of work life.

**6. ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD EMPHASIZE ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES WHICH CAN HELP IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF WORK LIFE.**

**i. Recognition of work life issues:**

Issues related to work life should be addressed by the Board and other important officials of the company like why people are not happy, do they need training, why employee morale is poor and numerous other issues. If these are addressed properly, they will be able to build, “People-Centered Organizations”.

**ii. Commitment to improvement:**

Quality of work life can be improved if the staff is committed to improvement in productivity and performance. This issue can be taken by the board through staff recognition and support programmes. Board should prepare quality of work life reports on periodic basis to boost the system. They can also introduce reward system which will be of help to them.

**iii. Quality of work life teams:**

Board members should form the combined team of managers and workers and all the issues and common themes must be identified. All issues must be addressed like loss of morale, lack of trust, increased intensity of work, reward, recognition etc. and commonly, managers and staff should arrive at solutions.

**iv. Training to facilitators:**

Both the leader and staff can assess the job requirement and decide jointly what type of training is required to improve the quality of work life.

**v. Conduct focus groups:**

Formation of focus groups can affect the quality of work life and discuss the questions in a positive way like:

- (a) What brought you here today?
- (b) What do you feel are the top three issues that affect your quality of work life?
- (c) What do you want the organization should do for you?
- (d) Do you want company to increase the salary, etc.

**vi. Analyze information from focus group:**

After the formation of focus groups and their discussion on different issues and collection of information, the information should be analyzed to give right direction to organisational activities.

**vii. Identify and implement improvement opportunities:**

It is important to identify and implement improvement opportunities like communication, recognition and non-monetary compensation. Improving support structure, constant review of reward and recognition system etc. would help in formulating communication strategies, focusing on linkages between managers and staff.

**viii. Flexible work hours:**

The diverse work force of today does not want to work for fixed hours or days. They want flexibility in their work schedule so that professional and personal life can be managed together.

**ix. Autonomy to work:**

Delegation is an essential element of organisation structure. People want freedom to work in their own way, in terms of forming teams and making decisions. If they are allowed to do so, it enhances the quality of work life. An organisation with high quality of work life is “an organisation that 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, personally and professionally”.

**x. Rewards & Recognition:**

Rewards and recognition include both material as well as psychological rewards. Once this is given to an employee, he is motivated to invest more time and energy in his job and make him perform better.

**xi. Growth Opportunities**

Need for growth is an inborn need of human beings. A company can help its employees grow in a number of ways such as providing greater responsibility, promotion, value-added jobs and learning culture enable employees to grow and develop. Once employees realize that growth of the company will result in their growth they would put in committed efforts.

**xii. Empowerment:**

Empowerment means giving people the power, authority, freedom and responsibility to carry out their jobs. This gives them a sense of control over their work and makes them feel worthy of doing things on their own. Empowerment leads to greater job satisfaction and sense of control, which can result in better commitment and loyalty. It helps employees achieve mastery over their job, have control over their work, perform successful roles in the organization, reduce stress at work through social recognition and assistance at work.

**7. CONCLUSION**

Quality of work life includes the overall quality of an individual's working life. An employee not only desires for money but wishes for an environment where his work would be acknowledged and recognized and can stay with dignity and pride. An improved quality of life helps an employee to give better output and develops loyalty in the employee. Because of the growth in the level of education and the level of awareness among people, organizations today are striving towards providing employees with better quality of work life because good employees when choosing organizations to work with look for organizations that help to promote quality of work life. Organizations strive to keep their workforce attracted to the organization. So, improving the quality of work life is one of the means to retain the manpower and head towards excellence.

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