

QWL at Work Place and Job Satisfaction

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Abstract— *It's All about Quality of Life and finding a happy balance between work, friends and family.*

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QWL basically is all about employee involvement, which consists of methods to motivate employees to participate in decision making. This helps in building good relationships. The project gives analysis is based on use of quality circles by companies like Motorola, Tata, IBM, etc. which helps in solving many quality and people related problems.

The study is descriptive in nature. The main intent/aim of doing this research is to understand what good quality work life means to employees and how it affects the companies. The information helps to understand how a company's HR Department try to improve their business by keeping good relations with employees. It helps to understand how good working conditions help employees to work more efficiently. 'Quality Work Life' emphasises on how an employee and employer should keep a proper balance between their work and family. It emphasises how people can keep balance by making their work timings flexible.

Keywords— *Quality work life (QWL), Decision Making, Tata, IBM*

1. Introduction

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.

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.

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.

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.

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. *Close attention to QWL provides a more humanised work environment.*

2. The Human Resource Department's Role

The role of human resource department in QWL efforts varies widely. In some organisations, top management appoints an executive to ensure that QWL and productivity efforts occur throughout the organisation. 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 organisations, 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. Sometimes documentation of QWL can result from studies of performance before and after a QWL effort. Without documentation of these results, top management might not have continued its strong support.

3. Quality Of Work Life As HR Strategy – an Analysis

Today's workforce consists of literate workers who expect more than just money from their work.

In the modern scenario, QWL as a strategy of Human Resource Management is being recognised as the ultimate key for development among all the work systems, not merely as a concession. This is integral to any organisation towards its wholesome growth. This is attempted on par with strategies of Customer Relation Management.

3.1 Strategy and Tactics

Over the years, since industrial revolution, much experimentation has gone into exploiting potential of human capital in work areas either explicitly or implicitly. Thanks to the revolution in advanced technology, the imperative need to look into QWL in a new perspective is felt and deliberated upon. Major companies are tirelessly implementing this paradigm in Human Resources Development (some call it People's Excellence).

Globalisation has lowered national boundaries, creating a knowledge-based economy that spins and spans the world. Major economies are converging technologically and economically, and are highly connected at present moment. The new global workplace demands certain prerequisites such as higher order of thinking skills like abstraction system thinking and experimental inquiry, problem-solving and team work. The needs are greater in the new systems, which are participative ventures involving workers managed by so-called fictional proprietors.

3.2 Men Counted

In simple terms, all the above requirements can be easily achieved by providing improved quality of work life to the workers available on rolls. Workers are often referred to as teams or groups in general parlance and whatever they do go to the credit of the teamwork.

The concept of teamwork has evolved from the organised toil that has its own social dimensions. Good teams can hardly be imported from outside. They usually occur as an indigenous incidence at the workplace and nurturing the same over time is the responsibility of

management. Here, it may also be discerned that the composition of available workers is no more a local phenomenon as in the past. Mobility is caused by migration beyond culture barriers and isolation, relocation and globalised deployment. This phenomenon has become universal and is causing great changes in the work environment at factories as well as offices. The new influx of skilled workers seeking greener pastures is even questioning the skills of new employers and thereby restructuring the new environs on par with those of best in the world, unwittingly though.

3.3 Money Matters

For good QWL, cash is not the only answer. Today, the workers are aware of the job requirements of job as also the fact that the performance of the same is measured against the basic goals and objectives of the organisation and more importantly, wages are paid according to the larger picture specific to the industry and the employer's place in the same.

The increased share of workers in wages and benefits through legislation as well as competitive interplay of superior managements in various fields of industry and business on extensive levels has reshaped the worker's idea of quality of work life. Moreover, other things being equal, the employers are increasingly vying with their rivals in providing better working conditions and emoluments. This may be owing to many reasons besides the concern for the human angle of workers, like the employer's tendency to climb on the bandwagon, to reap to the desired dividends or to woo better talent into their fold as skill base addition and other non-economic inputs like knowledge bases. Doubtlessly, the increased tendency of recruiting knowledge bases is giving the modern managements payoffs in myriad ways. Some of them are intended potentials for product innovations and cost cuttings. Talking of product, it may appear far-fetched to some that product is being assessed in the market for its quality and price by the environment created in the areas where workers and customers are dealt and transact, like ambience in facilities / amenities as also the company's pay scales. This goes to prove that QWL of manufacturer / service provider is synonymous with the quality of product.

3.4 Non economic – 'Job Security'

The changing workforce consists of literate workers who expect more than just money from their work life. Their idea of salvation lies in the respect they obtain in the work environment, like how they are individually dealt and communicated with by other members in the team as well as the employer, what kind of work he is entrusted with, etc. Some of these non-economic aspect are: Self respect, satisfaction, recognition, merit compensation in job allocation, incompatibility of work conditions affecting

health, bullying by older peers and boss, physical constraints like distance to work, lack of flexible working hours, work-life imbalances, invasion of privacy in case of certain cultural groups and gender discrimination and drug addiction. One or more of the problems like above can cast a 'job-insecurity' question, for no direct and visible fault of the employer. Yet, the employer has to identify the source of workers problems and try to mitigate the conditions and take supportive steps in the organisation so that the workers will be easily retained and motivated and earn ROI. The loss of man-hours to the national income due to the above factors is simply overwhelming.

Employer should instil in the worker the feeling of trust and confidence by creating appropriate channels and systems to alleviate the above shortcomings so that the workers use their best mental faculties on the achievement of goals and objectives of the employer.

To cite some examples, employers in certain software companies have provided infrastructure to train the children of workers in vocational activities including computer education, so that the workers need not engage their attention on this aspect. Employee care initiatives taken by certain companies include creation of Hobby clubs, Fun and Leisure Clubs for the physical and psychological well-being of workers and their families. After all, the workers are inexorably linked to the welfare of their families, as it is their primary concern.

Dual income workers, meaning both spouses working are the order of the day. The work life balance differs in this category and greater understanding and flexibility are required with respect to leave, compensation and working hours in the larger framework.

3.5 Teamwork

Teamwork is the new mantra of modern day people's excellence strategy. Today's teams are self-propelled ones. The modern manager has to strive at the group coherence for common cause of the project. The ideal team has wider discretion and sense of responsibility than before as how best to go about with its business. Here, each member can find a new sense of belonging to each other in the unit and concentrate on the group's new responsibility towards employer's goals. This will boost the cosiness and morale of members in the positive environment created by each other's trust. Positive energies, free of workplace anxiety, will garner better working results. Involvement in teamwork deters deserters and employer need not bother himself over the detention exercises and save money on motivation and campaigns.

3.6 Boss Factor

Gone are the days when employers controlled workers by suppressing the initiative and independence by berating their brilliance and skills, by designing and entrusting

arduous and monotonous jobs and offer mere sops in terms of wages and weekly off. Trust develops when managers pay some attention to the welfare of the workers and treat them well by being honest in their relations. The employer should keep in mind that every unpaid hour of overtime the worker spends on work is an hour less spent with the family.

New performance appraisals are put into vogue to assess a worker's contribution vis-à-vis on employer's objectives and to find out the training and updating needs and levels of motivation and commitment. As observed in some advanced companies, the workers themselves are drawing their benefits by filing appraisal forms and drawing simultaneously the appropriate benefits by the click of the mouse directly from their drawing rooms, courtesy e-HR systems. In addition, there are quite a number of channels for informal reviews. Feedback on worker's performance, if well interpreted and analysed, could go a long way in improving ethics at workplace.

3.7 Involvement and Communication

Multi-skilling and exposing workers to different lines of activity in the unit indirectly leads to the greater involvement and better job security of worker in the organisation. The employer too, can make use of the varied skills to any altered situations of restructuring and other market adaptations. Thus, the monotony of work life can be alleviated. The employer, armed with the depth of cross-trained human resources, need not go hunting for new talent and thus save on the unspent pay packets, which can be spent usefully on the amenities for workers. No doubt, rivals should be envying him for this edge.

The change should be apparent in mutual trust and confidence towards effective understanding of the needs of worker and employer. The new knowledge-based workers are mostly young in the fields of technology and management. They are more forthcoming in trusting the boss and older peers. Now, all modern managements are cognisant of the innate desire of workers to be accepted as part of the organisation for identity and other social reasons.

Effective dialogue is put into play between management and those who execute through well-organised communication channels paving the way for improved co-operation and participation on emotional level. The decision making level is nose diving to the floor level manager, where the poor guy has to think of a number of quick decisions on behalf of the organisation. Unless the team is behind and involved with commitment, the manager cannot implement the new tasks in production, distribution, people's excellence, customer relations, etc., thanks to the 'e' factor prefixed to the names of majority of departments. Logically, harmony plays its part in cost efficiency. Successful managers are those who listen to their workers.

3.8 Influences

Overwork is tolerated in emerging industries unlike government departments as part of the game and work culture. This is so, what with the soaring competition among the tightly contested players. The point is empowerment of workforce in the area of involvement.

All said and done, the workers are considered as the invisible branch ambassadors and internal customers in certain industries. It is evident that most of the managements are increasingly realising that quality alone stands to gain in the ultimate analysis. Restructuring the industrial relations in work area is the key for improving the quality of product and the price of the stock. Without creating supportive environment in restructured environment, higher quality of work cannot be extracted. It is already high time the older theories of industrial relations should be unlearned.

Researches indicate that balanced work-life can lead to greater employee productivity. With the progressive shift of the economy towards a knowledge economy, the meaning and Importance of tile quality of work life is also assuming a new significance. The article details the factor\$ that should be tuned to attain balance between work and life of an employee.

4. Benefits Of Improving Work-Life Balance

4.1 Aiding employee recruitment and retention

- More employees may stay on in a job, return after a break or take a job with one company over another if they can match their other needs better with those of their paid work.
- This results in savings for the employer – avoiding the cost of losing an experienced worker and recruiting someone new.
- Employers who support their staff in this way often gain the bonus of loyalty from those staff.
- The British Work-Life Balance Study 2000, including a representative survey of 2500 workplaces, found that 58 per cent of employers thought that work-life balance practices had improved staff motivation and commitment, and 52 per cent thought labour turnover and absenteeism were lower, and that they helped retain female employees. The Australian 2002 Benchmarking Study found that organisations implementing work-life strategies and evaluating them observed reduced turnover, absenteeism, and increased return from parental leave.

4.2 Reducing absenteeism

- Many companies that have introduced family-friendly or flexible working practices have seen benefits

through reductions in absenteeism. Sickness rates may fall as pressures are managed better, while employees may have better methods of dealing with work-life conflicts than taking unplanned leave.

- Workers (including their managers) who are healthy and not over-stressed may be more efficient.

4.3 Improving the quality of people's working lives

- Minimising work-life role conflict can help prevent role overload and help people have a more satisfying working life, fulfilling their potential both in paid work and outside it.
- Work life balance can minimise 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 at home.
- Self-employed people control their own work time to some extent. Most existing information on work-life balance is targeted at those in employment relationships. However, the self-employed too may benefit from maintaining healthy work habits and developing strategies to manage work-flows which enable them to balance work with other roles in their lives.

4.4 Matching people who wouldn't otherwise work with jobs

- Parents and carers, people with disabilities and those nearing retirement are among those who may increase their workforce participation if more flexible work arrangements are possible. Employment has positive individual and social benefits beyond the financial rewards.
- Employers may also benefit from a wider pool of talent to draw from – this is particularly to their benefit when skill shortages exist.
- The Baseline Study of Work-Life Balance Practices in Great Britain found that there was strong demand amongst lone parents, carers and disabled people for flexible working time arrangements.

4.5 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, and the reverse. At the extreme, if family life suffers this may have wider social costs.
- Involvement in community, cultural, sporting or other activities can be a benefit to community and civil society at large. For instance, voluntary participation in school boards of trustees can contribute to the quality of our children's education. While such

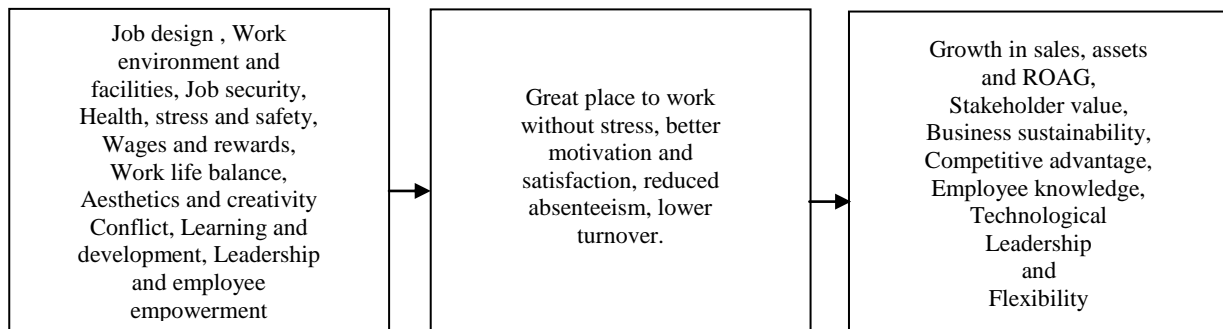


Fig. 1: QWL and Job satisfaction and performance

activities are not the responsibility of individual employers, they may choose to support them actively, since community activities can demonstrate good corporate citizenship, as well as helping develop workers' skills which can be applied to the workplace.

5. Conclusion

It is often said that the days of life-long employment and corporate career ladders are gone. Many people feel their jobs are less secure than in the past. But is that right? The international research reviewed by the Future of Work project doesn't always support these concerns:

- ❑ Some groups of workers have suffered a drop in job tenure, but long-term employment relationships appear to be more resilient than you'd expect.
- ❑ Non-standard employment (part-time, temporary, casual and self-employed work) is on the rise, and that trend is likely to continue.
- ❑ People's need for flexibility is one of the key drivers of part-time and self-employed work.
- ❑ However, some temporary and casual workers are more likely to suffer job insecurity, low pay and poor working conditions.

Thus, QWL is become the major concern for nowadays corporate. Figure -1 provides a diagrammatic view of the

linkages QWL has with satisfaction and performance based on the above discussion.

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