

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE : RELATIONSHIP TO EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS

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The present article discusses the status of QWL of central government officers. Fifty officers from various central government departments participated in the study. The research utilised the framework suggested by Walton (1973) to access the critical factors which contributes to officer's effectiveness. Seven dimensions of QWL : adequate and fair compensation; safe and healthy environment; immediate opportunity to use and develop capacities; future opportunities for continued growth and security; social integration in the work dimensions; constitutionalism in the work organisation and work and total life space were used. Results show that QWL of officers was reported just above the satisfactory level. More effective officers perceived QWL more favourably than the less effective officers on all dimensions except social integration in the work organisation. Immediate opportunity to use and develop capacities emerged as a predictor of effectiveness. Implications of the study for future research are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Increased emphasis on globalisation, quality improvement and increased external regulation has brought about a faster change in the organisation environment than the subsequent organisation change. This makes imperative for the organisations to enhance and sustain the motivation level of the employees at all levels to meet the current challenge by providing high concern for human dimensions at work through good Quality of Work Life (QWL). It is widely recognised that the process of globalisation needs to accelerate the process of achieving better QWL in organisations. This necessitates examining the existing status of 'QWL' of employees in organisations to identify the critical factors which contribute to employees effectiveness.

This provided necessary research direction to undertake the present study. An attempt has been made to access the 'QWL' and its relationship to effectiveness of officers in central government.

REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Researches have demonstrated that the improvement in QWL has definite potential and scope in improving productivity (Macy & Harris (1976); Macy, (1980); Macy, Goodman (1980); Buchanan, Boddy (1982), Lawler, Ledford (1982) Levita, Werneke (1984); Straw, Hecasher (1984); Voos (1989); Hovolovic (1991); Dewvedi (1995). Research has established that good QWL leads to physically and psychologically healthier employees with positive feelings

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towards oneself and work, with higher commitment to organisation goals, decreased absenteeism, turnover and higher quality and quantity of outputs of goods and services. Hackman, & Suttle (1997) presented six strategies more often used in organisations for improving QWL, which include (a) career planning and development, (b) work designs, (c) organisational reward systems, (d) design and maintenance of groups and inter-group relationships, (e) managerial practices, and (f) internal and external strategies for change. Gupta & Khandelwal (1989) found a significant relationship between QWL and Role Efficacy.

QWL is a recent concept and has been defined in variety of ways with different perspectives ranging from content of job to working environment, gratification of basic human needs, values and the benefits to the society at large. It refers to, as the quality of relationship between employees and the total working environment (Davis, 1995). Harrison (1987) defined it as the degree to which work in an organisation contributes to material and psychological well-being of its members. It means degree of excellence of one's life that contributes to the person and benefits to the society at large (Dubey, Padma, et. al., 1988). Nadler (1983) defined it as a concern about impact of work on people as well as on organisational effectiveness and participation in organisational problem solving and decision making. Ketzell, et. al. (1975) described QWL as an individual's evaluation of the outcomes of the work relationship, such as : (1) positive feelings towards his job and future prospects; (2) motivation to stay on the job and high performance, (3) balanced working and private life to afford him a balance between the two in terms of personal values.

Walton (1973) defines QWL as a process

of creating conditions for satisfaction of employee needs and developing strategies to allow employees to participate in decision making in work related matters at work. He provides eight dimensions as characteristics of individual's work environment to evaluate QWL.

- (1) **Adequate and fair compensation :** Adequate pay packet to meet socially acceptable standards and comparable with pay received for other work.
- (2) **Safe and healthy environment :** Employees should have working conditions that provide physically and psychologically safe environment.
- (3) **Immediate opportunity to use and develop capacities :** The organisation must provide opportunities for developing human capacities by enriching the content of the job by providing autonomy, skill variety, involvement in planning and implementation, and information and feedback about work.
- (4) **Future opportunities for continued growth and security :** Work should provide opportunities for continuous learning, career development and economic security.
- (5) **Social integration in the work organisation :** Working environment should provide satisfaction of inter-personal needs.
- (6) **Constitutionalism in the work organisation :** Organisation should provide a right for free speech, equitable treatment in all matters and access to appeals.
- (7) **Work and total life space :** Work should be balanced, so that work schedules, career demands and travel

requirement do not take up leisure and family time on a regular basis.

- (8) **The social relevance of work life :**
The work organisation should be socially responsible in its products, waste disposal, employment practices, marketing strategies and so forth.

The present study utilised the conceptual framework suggested by Walton (1973) as discussed earlier. The first seven dimensions were used to access the QWL of central government officers. The last dimension was deleted as all officers perceived their work as socially relevant to society.

Hypothesis of the Study

'More effective' officers would perceive their QWL more favourably than the 'Less effective' officers.

Methodology

Research setting :

Research was carried out on the participants of twenty (20) Executive Development Programmes (EDPs) conducted by the author in her organisation in the area of behavioural sciences during 1994-97.

Sample

Five hundred (500) middle and senior middle level officers from Central, State governments, Public sector undertakings, Insurance companies and Nationalised banks participated in the study. Stratified sampling technique was used to minimise the effect of other variables such as nature of organisation and task, working conditions, etc. Of the total population the maximum number of officers (120) belonged to central and state governments. Final sample included sixty (60) officers from the central government.

Instrument

A questionnaire was constructed to access QWL of officers on seven-dimensions suggested by Walton (1973). The questionnaire contained eighteen (18) items. The number of questions which tapped each dimension were as follows :

- (1) Adequate and fair compensation (2 question)
- (2) Safe and healthy working conditions (2 questions)
- (3) Immediate opportunities to use and develop human capacities (5 questions)
- (4) Future opportunities for continued growth and security (2 questions)
- (5) Social integration in the work organisation (2 questions)
- (6) Constitutionalism in the work environment (3 questions); and
- (7) Work and total life space (2 questions).

Both closed and open ended questions were used to elicit information on each dimension. Each participant was asked to rate his response on a seven point rating scale ranging from low to high score on QWL on each dimension. The open ended question provided support to the answers given in the closed questions. The questions in each dimension were summed up to provide the composite score on each dimension.

The questionnaire was pretested on fifteen participants of the long term training programme. The test retest reliability was found to be .83. The validity was judged by three experts in the area of behavioural sciences.

Effectiveness Measures

Each participant was asked to rate himself on a seven-point rating scale ranging from 'Least Effective' to 7 'Most Effective'.

The officers were categorised as 'less effective' and 'More effective officers'. Twenty-five officers rated between 3 to 4 were categorised as 'less effective' and thirty-five officers rated between 5 to 7 were categorised as 'more effective' on effectiveness rating scale. However, in order to maintain the uniformity in two categories the data was analysed for 50 officers, twenty-five each from both the categories.

Data Collection

Data was collected during the training programmes. The researcher met individually with the participants and assured that all the information provided would be treated with strictest confidence. QWL questionnaire was administered to all the participants of the training programmes.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

It was hypothesised that 'More effective' officers would perceive the QWL in their organisations more favourably than the less effective officers. The general trend of data largely indicated the expected results. The mean scores of 'More effective' officers were found to be more than the mean scores of 'Less effective' officers on all dimensions except Social Integration in the work organisation of QWL as shown in Table-1. However, the status of QWL was rated just above satisfactory level on all the dimensions as the mean score rating ranged between one to five on seven point rating scale as indicated by the mean scores.

On the dimensions of 'Adequate and fair compensation' and 'Safety and healthy

working conditions', the mean scores between the 'More effective' and 'Less effective' officers ranged between 10.68 to 11.04 and 10.72 to 10.88 respectively. Also ratios were found to be insignificant. This indicated that all officers perceived their pay packet as just adequate and fair in comparison to others and also perceived their working environment as sufficiently physically and psychologically safe. These insignificant differences in the perceived QWL between two categories of officers can be attributed to existing uniformity in salary structure; job security and nature of job as all the officers belonged to secretariat and related officers performing table jobs.

The more interesting and revealing results were obtained with respect to the third dimension "Immediate opportunities to use and develop human capacities". The mean scores ranged between 15.28 to 22.6 between 'Less effective' and 'More effective' officers as shown in Table-1. t ratio with value 11.40 was found to be highly significant. The More effective officers perceived their work comparatively more interesting, providing opportunities to use skills/capacities with autonomy and motivation to perform their work than the 'Less effective' officers. The data from the open ended question revealed that lack of adequate level of recognition in work; some times inappropriate allocation of work assignments without matching the abilities and skills of an officer; resulting in lack of use of abilities, skills and knowledge; low level of autonomy and participation in decision making were perceived as contributing to low QWL inspite of good assignments. The same reasons were also reported by 'Less effective' officers. They even reported that some times they have to act like dummies in job situation, where, if permitted, they can contribute a lot and hence suffer from the feelings of powerlessness and helplessness.

The possible reasons for being just average on this dimension of QWL could be the existing bureaucratic culture which places more emphasis upon centralised decision making process, lack of more varied jobs to certain extent leaving not enough scope for officers to use their abilities.

The mean scores did not differ significantly on the dimension of 'Future opportunity for continued growth and security' (as shown in Table-1). This could be attributed to high security in jobs as well as defined career promotion system in government sector.

The more interesting results were obtained with respect to the 'social integration in the work organisation' dimension. Here the trend of results was reversed. The mean score of 9.68, though again 'just average' for 'Less effective' officers was significantly higher than the 'More effective' officers (mean score 8.08). 'Less effective' officers perceived QWL to provide better inter-personal relations in work environment than the 'More effective' officers. Here, the results contradicts earlier researchers which considered higher inter-personal relationship as an important dimension of QWL. These deviations in results can again be explained on the basis of the bureaucratic culture where keeping a psychological distance between officers and subordinates is perceived as a desirable behaviour for maintaining effectiveness.

The significant differences were obtained in two categories of officers on the dimension of 'Constitutionalism in the work organisation'. The 'More effective' officers perceived their work environment more favourably as the one which provided personal privacy, free speech and non-discriminating treatment than the 'Less effective' officers. The responses on the open ended question for 'Less effective' officers, however, revealed that freedom of

speech was most important factor which contributed to the difference in the two categories of officers.

The data on the 'work and total life space' dimension also revealed significant differences in the two categories of officers. More effective officers perceived their work schedules, career demands and family leisure as more balanced than the 'Less effective' officers. Though data from the open ended question revealed that all officers felt lot of pressure of work on themselves which comes in the way of discharging their family responsibilities and some times generate a disharmony at home.

Overall results indicated that our hypothesis was partially supported. It would not also be incorrect to say that hypothesis was fully supported. As the Less effective and More effective officers did not differ in their perception about QWL on the dimensions where the well defined organisation systems exist throughout the central government such as adequate & fair compensation; safe and healthy working environment and future opportunities to continued growth and security. On the other, dimensions which are largely influenced by officers style of behaviour, the More effective officers scored higher than the Less effective officers except on "Social Integration in the work" dimension.

Very interesting results were obtained with regards to various QWL dimensions and effectiveness dimension as shown in Table-2. Multiple regression analysis showed High Multiple R (.79) which indicated that all dimensions of QWL are positively correlated but "Immediate opportunities to use and develop human capacities" emerged as a predictor of effectiveness. This corroborated with the earlier researchers that Autonomy, Self expression, Self Esteem, Democracy

and Employee involvement and Job enrichment are dimensions which contributes to QWL leading to more efficiency and productivity [Walton (1973); Maccoby (1984); Chander, Singh (1993); Gani (1993) and many others referred earlier.

In general, the results lend considerable support to earlier researchers that good QWL is directly associated with efficiency and effectiveness.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study lend ample support to the premise that QWL influences employee effectiveness in organisations. The results show that QWL of officers in central government organisations is just above the satisfactory level. All officers reported that the central government provides pay-packets as 'just adequate'

comparable with work, physically and psychologically safe environment with future opportunities with continued career growth, through established career promotion system and job security.

However, the data on other dimensions of QWL reveals that 'More effective' officers reported their work environment as more interesting with opportunities to develop capacities/use skills, provide personal privacy, freedom of speech with more balanced work schedules, career demands and family lesiure that the 'Less effective' officers except on 'Social integration at work dimension'. where 'Less effective' officers had better inter-personal relations that the 'Mdre effective officers. In spite of having significant differences on various dimensions of QWL between 'More effective' and 'Less Effective' officers. 'The Immediate opportunity to use and develop capacities'

Table 1 : Showing Mean scores and t ratios of 'More effective' and 'Less Effective' officers

Sl. No.	Dimensions	Total Size	More effective		Less effective		t ratio
			Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
1.	Adequate & fair compensation	14	11.04	.94	10.68	.99	1.32
2.	Safe and healthy working environment	14	10.88	.83	10.72	1.02	.60
3.	Immediate opportunities to use and develop human capacities	35	22.6	1.66	15.28	2.75	11.41**
4.	Future opportunity for continued growth and security	14	11.0	1	11.28	.73	1.13
5.	Social integration in the work organisation	14	8.08	1.19	9.68	1.18	4.78**
6.	Constitutionalism in the work organisation	21	13.96	1.34	12.84	1.75	2.5*
7.	Work and total life space	14	9.12	.53	7.48	1.16	6.44*

** .01 level of significance

* .05 level of significance

Table 2 : Multiple Registration Analysis of QWL dimensions and Effectiveness Ratings for Total Sample

Multiple R .79

R square .62

Dimension	B	SE B	Beta	T
Immediate opportunities, to use and develop human capacities	.233	.026	.79	8.913 (Significant .01)

and skills emerged as a predictor of effectiveness. The content of the job in terms of providing opportunities to develop capacities, use skills; leadership style of officers in terms of providing greater autonomy, right allocation of jobs and participation in decision making were reported as the important determinants of QWL and officers effectiveness.

Implications of the above findings are that there is a need for the central government to examine the above factors in greater detail to bring about a desirable change in the leadership styles and management practices to further improve the work environment to bring up to the level of good QWL which has increasingly becoming a pre-requisite to meet the current challenges and to provide good Governance. The organisations need to be advised to initiate steps by providing, greater autonomy involvement in decision making with appropriate allocation of jobs to officers.

LIMITATIONS

The results are not conclusive enough to safely predict the status of QWL of central government officers as the research suffers from some limitations. One major limitation in the study can be attributed to small size. The study also did not take into account the

other moderating variables, such as specific characteristics of job situation, organisation structure etc. Moreover, there is lack of researchers in government sector to evaluate the findings. Therefore, the present study needs to be replicated using a larger and more representative sample to generalize the present findings. There is also a need to undertake researches to study the impact of other organisational variables on QWL and Employee's effectiveness.

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