



QUALITY OF WORK LIFE - AN OUTLINE

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ABSTRACT

Quality of work-life (QWL) depicts the harmony and balance between an individual's professional and personal life. Quality of work-life of employees is of prime concern for any contemporary organisation as it is crucial to retain dedicated and talented human resource, its most valuable asset. With mounting enrolments in higher education, India is poised to reap the benefits of a large pool of skilled human resource as it continues its march towards becoming a full-fledged knowledge economy. This paper tries to deliver an exposition of the various aspects of quality of work-life of employees in general. Considering the significance of QWL in boosting productivity and the growing presence of women in the workplace, it is felt that human resource managers should pay attention to more gender-specific QWL measures.

KEYWORDS: Human Resource, Quality of work-life, Knowledge economy, Productivity.

INTRODUCTION

The modern era is an epoch of knowledge employees and the present society is being transformed to be a knowledge society. The intellectual pursuits have surpassed physical efforts. Many employees work for sixty hours and above a week and hit upon balancing work and personal life. The age of Scientific Management emphasised on standardisation, specialisation, efficiency etc., with scanty focus on human values. The contribution of management scholars like Abraham Maslow, Frederick Herzberg, Mc Gregor towards the quality of work-life is worth mentioning. But now a sweeping transformation transpired which coerces the organisations to contemplate on human values and redesigning jobs. The organisations are intended to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation and quality of work-life of employees. It is the Human Resource Department and Human Resource Manager who carry out the screening, recruitment, selection

and placement of the new entrants. They get in touch with employees very often in matters related to pay, compensation, fringe benefits, welfare measures, grievance redressal etc. Human Capital is an important component of the economic growth of the nation. A well-educated and trained employee contributes to the productivity of the organisation. It is worth investing in higher education as it paves a way to national development through the diffusion of specialized knowledge and skill.

ENROLMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Higher education in India is the world's third-largest in terms of students. It is a sign of empowerment and abets the knowledge, skill and attitude of people. It is a symbol of the strategic development of the society.

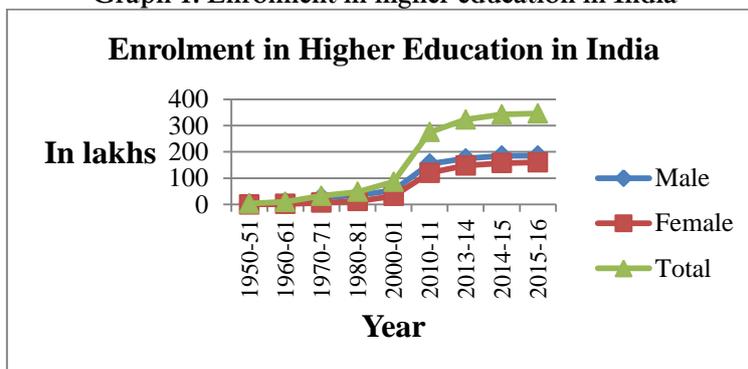
Graph 1 depicts a steady growth in enrolment in higher education in India. It is evident that in 1950-



51, the number of males enrolled in higher education was 4 lakhs and the number of female enrolment was nil. In 1960-61, it is doubled to 8 lakhs in case of men and women enrolment soared to 2 lakhs. After four decades in 2010-11, male enrolment in higher education mounted to 155 lakhs and female

enrolment to 120 lakhs. In 2015-16, male enrolment escalated to 186 lakhs and female enrolment to 160 lakhs. The enrolment of women in higher education displays a progressive trend when compared to males.

Graph 1: Enrolment in higher education in India



Source: ESAG 2018, Ministry of HRD, Government of India, National Institute of Educational Planning & Administration, New Delhi.

It is clear that females exhibit an interest in enrolling in higher education and they come out in flying colours. Education of women contributes positively to the betterment of the family, society and thereby the nation. Even though women show a progression in higher education, their career development appears to be often constrained by the low quality of work-life parameters.

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

Quality of work-life is the catchphrase in the contemporary period. It was initially conjured up in the 1960s in various parts of the world. It set off to gain impetus in India in the 1980s. Employees are referred to as Human Resource, Human Capital, Human Asset, Human Wealth, Knowledge Workers etc. The organisation has to maintain and protect its employees. The basic idea of enhancing the quality of work-life is to treat a human resource as a human being.

Work constitutes an imperative aspect of our lives. Quality refers to the yardstick or degree of excellence in comparison with others. Work-life elucidates the relation between work and life. The quality of work-life conveys the degree of satisfaction gained from work and personal life. A person who derives satisfaction from both work and personal lives surpasses in his/her endeavours. An employee expends his/her quality time at the workplace and the experience he obtains each day mirrors at home and vice versa. The significance of quality of work-life is explicit from various factors such as employer-employee relationship, increase in productivity, attracting and retaining talented and dedicated employees, reduction in absenteeism, turnover and training cost, job satisfaction, sense of

belongingness of the employees and reputation of the organisation.

THE MAGNITUDE OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

An organisation which values the work-life of the employees garners the benefits of productivity, employee loyalty and goodwill.

1. Rapport with Stakeholders

Organisations which intend to focus on the quality of work-life of employees improve the relationship and acquire interest among the employees and clients. It provides an opportunity for open discussion on policy measures and thereby develops a rapport. Open and clear communication is necessary to build a worthy relationship between the organisation and stakeholders.

2. Boosts Productivity

Measures which aim at balancing the work and lives of employees boost productivity. Recognition, consideration and support by the superiors relieve the stress of the employees. A secure physical working environment is crucial with ergonomically designed furniture to motivate an employee. An employee needs to be motivated to be productive and thereby contribute to the growth of the organisation.

3. Attracts New Talents

Job seekers and new entrants prefer flexible hours to protracted working hours. Flexible working hours helps an employee to concentrate on the job better. In addition to flexible working hours, compressed week, work from home options is also a need of



the hour as both job and family are indispensable to an employee.

4. **Retains the Exceptional**

The outstanding talents can be retained by facilitating them with good quality of work life. It is achieved through a safe and secure work environment, adoption of welfare measures, training and career advancement etc. There should not be any compromise on the working environment, welfare measures, free and fair promotion, training programmes etc. A contented and motivated employee will remain loyal and sincere to the organisation.

5. **Diminish Absenteeism**

Employees well treated and maintained by the organisation have an attachment to it. The bond can be created between employer and employees and between employees. Employees desire to be in the organisation than abstaining from duty. An employee with good quality of work-life never resorts to unplanned leave. He refrains from his job in case of necessity. He goes an extra mile to serve the organisation.

6. **Reduces Training Cost**

The satisfied employees are an asset to the organisation. Costs of training the new entrants are condensed by retaining the existing efficient employees. Such costs could be spent on the existing employees for their career advancement. Employees are to be considered as assets of the organisation, any monetary and non-monetary benefits offered to the employees are to maintain them. They take the initiative to improve their knowledge, skill and ability.

7. **Sense of Involvement**

The employees with good quality of work-life display a sense of competence. They have a high degree of job involvement. Their skills match the requirements of the job. They view their job as a constituent factor to satisfy the need for achievement, affiliation and satisfaction. A sense of belongingness is developed among the employees who are involved in the decision-making process.

8. **Reduces Turnover**

Contented employees remain loyal to the organisation. Under no circumstances they look for green pastures. Motivation, guidance and support provided by the superiors to the employees generate a sense of belongingness on the part of employees. The needs of the employees are to be

matched with the facilities offered by the organisation.

9. **Employee Satisfaction**

The employees whose interests are protected by employers tend to exhibit a high degree of satisfaction. This contributes to a sense of belongingness and productivity. A satisfied employee never ventures out in search of another job. Work-life balance reduces the stress and fatigue of the employees.

10. **The Reputation of the Organisation**

Along with the investment decisions, it is high time, the organisations pay attention to the quality of work-life of employees. An organisation with employees displaying a high quality of work-life magnifies the goodwill of the organisation. Employees with a high degree of satisfaction are an advertisement for the organisation and the goodwill of the organisation rises spontaneously.

The above-mentioned factors depict the importance of quality of work-life to the field of human resource management and justify the numerous studies conducted in the area world over.

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES IN QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

Review of related studies in quality of work-life gives an idea and reference to previous studies conducted in the field. A considerable quantity of research literature exists in quality of work life, majority of which are organisation specific.

In a study on quality of work-life of women employees in private sector banks in the Coimbatore region, **Naganandini. S, Subburethina Bharathi. P, Victor Seelan. D (2017)** found that less than 50% of the women employees who belong to the entry-level cadre have satisfactory work-life quality. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between income and experience of the women employees in private sector banks.

In an attempt to find out the factors that facilitate and constrict women in managing twin roles, **Sidhu Kaur Amandeep and Saluja Rajni (2017)** established that satisfaction derived from personal life, work environment, job-related knowledge and support from colleagues, cordial relationship with co-workers, appreciation on the job, awareness of government policies, valuable time with family and friends contributed to a high quality of work-life among working women.

Venkataraman Surendran and Anbazhagan Surekha (2018) conducted a cross-sectional analytical study in a tertiary care hospital in Puducherry. The objective of the study was to assess



the quality of work-life among staff nurses. Bivariate analysis showed higher the age, female gender, absence of dependent individuals at home, higher income, more work experience, working in out-patient departments and no nightshifts were the significant factors contributing to a higher quality of work-life.

In a study, **Rahiman, M. H. U., Kodikal, R., 2018**, reiterates that good quality of work-life magnifies the organisational performance. Factors like pay, privileges, infrastructure, expectation and attitude of employees about work environment showed a highly significant relationship with the quality of work life. The study emphasised the need for employee involvement, participation in decision making, low job stress and motivation to maintain a high quality of work life.

In an attempt to review previous studies on the work-life balance of women employees **Vasumathi, A. (2018)** reviewed the significance, theories, determinants, facilitators, coping strategies, performance and consequences of work-life balance. The researcher has reviewed many studies concerning working women's stress and difficulties when it comes to sustaining a balance between work and family responsibilities. Women face different issues such as sexual and mental harassments at the workplace, safety issues while travelling especially after office hours.

To find out the impact of the quality of work-life on organisational performance, **Joao Leitao, Dina Pereira and Angela Goncalves, 2019**, proved that quality of work life is positively influenced by various factors such as listening to employees' problems by the superiors, good job environment, support for professional growth and appreciation by the superiors and respecting the employees both as professionals and as an individual.

In a specific study on the textile sector, **Vanishree Bloor, T S Nanjundeswaraswamy, Swamy D R, 2019**, expressed that various factors such as job security, work environment, relation and co-operation, training and development, compensation and facilities provided to the employees in the organisation are essential to retain the talented employees and maintain an adequate quality of work-life of employees.

It is apparent from the previous studies that various factors such as safe and secure job environment, adequate pay, welfare measures, flexible working conditions, appreciation by superiors, participation in decision making, job security and job satisfaction are some of the important components leading to the enhancement of quality of work life.

CONSTITUENTS OF EFFECTIVE QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

1. Job Environment

The job environment should be safe, secure and free from any risks arising out of natural and man-made disasters. There should be reasonable hours of work, ergonomically working conditions, clear sanitation, infirmary and safest job atmosphere possible. The job environment can be improved by the support of management and colleagues, positive attitude and co-operation among the employees. A peaceful and sound mind, gained only from a supportive job environment enhances the commitment of employees. Flexible and compressed week work schedule helps the employees to perform better.

2. Perquisites and Welfare Measures

Employees must be provided with adequate and fair compensation. It has to be par with organisations of similar nature. Rewards should be in association with job performance and increase in responsibility. Salary is a prime concern and motivating factor for many employees. Fringe benefits offered by the organisation make the employees more valued. Grievance procedures lend a helping hand to the employees to represent the problems and get it redressed. Adequate transportation, canteen, medical facilities add to the welfare of the employees. The provision of welfare measures helps to motivate and retain the employees on the job.

3. Life Space

Flexible working conditions, recreation facilities, vacations help the employees to take an edge off the stress from the job. This invigorates the employees to perform with a clear mind set. The employees under no circumstances are encouraged to carry work home which perturbs the family atmosphere. Free and open communication between employer and employee improves the industrial relation among them. Adequate life space enables the employee to maintain a balance between personal and professional life. A stress-free environment is necessary for the employee to be productive on the job.

4. Job Autonomy and Trust of Superiors

A superior/supervisor need not necessarily intervene in the work of employees. They ought to receive enough freedom and responsibility to perform the tasks in their



way. Freedom of decision making augments the responsibility of the employees. Employees feel reliable and esteemed through additional responsibility, appreciation before others and acknowledgement of their quality of work. Employees tend to be more mechanical due to the monotonous and routine jobs. Sufficient autonomy given to the employees helps to expose their latent talents on the job.

5. **Involvement in Decision Making**

Owing importance to be given to the opinion of employees in professional matters. They may perhaps be involved in the routine decision making process and support to be extended to indispensable suggestions which facilitate them to feel treasured in the organisation. Employees can be motivated to offer innovative and creative ideas and suggestions to the managers and supervisors. Constructive suggestions ought to be rewarded. This motivates the employees to contribute to the growth of the organisation.

6. **Career Advancement**

The job has to be enriched with effective training and development programmes. Opportunity for growth both personally and professionally is to be extended by the organisation. Promotional policies need to be fair. It should be based on seniority, experience and merit. Employees are to be persuaded for skills enhancement, innovation, learning and self-development. An organisation which helps in the career advancement of the employees are generating motivated employees which lead to productivity and further adds to the reputation of the organisation.

7. **Job Security and Satisfaction**

Each employee longs for the security and stability of their jobs. The policymakers need to initiate steps to enrich and redesign the job for the employees to remain contented. The latent talents and abilities of the employees need to be exercised and recognise the employees. Jobs should offer enough scope to realise the goals and aspirations of the employees. A strong employee association is necessary to protect the interests of the employees. A sense of accomplishment makes the employee secure and satisfied which further reflects on the job.

There is no complete agreement among the researchers regarding the components of effective quality of work-life; nevertheless, the above

mentioned factors are the most commonly identified constituents of quality of work-life.

RISKS OF POOR QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

It is obvious that an organisation which fails to recognise the significance of quality of work-life of employees runs the risks of diminishing human capital. The direct outcomes of such a policy could be:

1. **Low Productivity**

Low productivity is the outcome of poor performance due to inefficiency or any other valid reasons. It poses a threat in the individual and organisational performance. It brings down the morale of the employees. Employees deem to be devalued and expose their lackadaisical attitude in their work. It generates conflict in the minds of the employees.

2. **Job Stress**

Job stress transpires when a person is incapable to retort effectively to the requirements of the job and personal life. Long working hours without an adequate break take a toll on employees' health. It is reflected in the employees' attitude towards the job. A stressed employee has a poor work-life balance. It leads to accidents at the workplace due to absent-mindedness of the employees. It reduces the competence of a person to think lucidly and work productively. Anxiety and depression are after-effects of stress.

3. **Absenteeism and Turnover**

Absenteeism is the absence of a person on the job without any valid reason. It has a direct impact on individual productivity and thus the total output. Turnover refers to the number of employees leaving an organisation permanently for any reason and replaced by a new set of employees. The management has to spend an additional cost to train new employees as per the requirements of the organisation.

4. **Disloyalty**

Disloyalty is a state of being unfaithful to oneself and the organisation. An employee with a poor quality of work-life might find reckless reasons to refrain from duty. It disturbs the entire team in the organisation and thus leads to low productivity. A disloyal employee tends to exhibit unethical behaviour in the organisation.



CONCLUSION

Quality of work-life is an important determinant of productivity upholding the balance between the work and the family unit. It is the value of affiliation between employees and job environment and embodies the apprehension for human components of work and relates to job satisfaction and organisational development. An enormous social cost is to be borne if family life suffers. India's march towards the knowledge economy requires highly qualified human resources which is viable through higher education. The country can boast of gender equality in terms of enrolment in higher education. Even though the number of women pursuing career is on the rise, the percentage of women employees enduring their jobs is nominal. This poses a challenge for modern Human Resource Managers and it calls for more gender-specific research on the concept of quality of work-life. Employees with good quality of work-life contribute positively to the organisational goals and vice versa. Assured quality of work-life in any organisation tends to attract young and dynamic talents and retain the existing experienced and successful brains. Enhancement of quality of work life is not a single day affair; it has to be achieved coherently.

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