

Effects of Quality of Work Life on Job Performance: Theoretical Perspectives and Literature Review

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Abstract: The concept of quality of work life exhibits positive emotional reactions and attitudes an individual has towards their job. It has been conceptualized as a general attitude toward the job. Job performance is often viewed as the degree to which employees execute their job tasks, responsibilities and assignments adequately. Motivation is the willingness to work at a certain level of effort and drives employees to action. Motivation emerges out of needs, values, goals, intentions and expectations. The study utilizes desk research to review literature on quality of work life that informs organization performance and motivation. The importance of considering these factors is demonstrated in the strong relationship between employee's well-being at work and performance of such organizations.

Keywords: Job performance, motivation, quality of work life

INTRODUCTION

Although studies on the Quality of work Life (QWL) have been conducted since the early 20th century, there is no consensus about the real meaning of this term. There is, however, an agreement among researchers in this specific field that refers to it as a subjective and dynamic construct. Over the last years, QWL has been understood as the dynamic and comprehensive management of physical, technological, social and psychological factors that affect culture and renew the organizational environment. Sometimes, it is considered regarding the effect it has on the worker's wellbeing as well as on the productivity of the company. Furthermore, it is sometimes associated with the intimate characteristic of the technologies introduced into the companies and their impact and to the economic elements like salary, incentives, bonuses, or even to the factors connected to one's physical and mental health, safety and, in general, to the workers' wellbeing (Rainey, 2003).

Another aspect that has been prioritized is the group of categories needed to assess QWL and how they relate to each other. Hackman and Oldham (1976) propose eight conceptual categories for assessing QWL. These were: adequate and fair compensation, safety and health conditions at work, immediate opportunity to use and develop one's capacity, further opportunity for

continuous development and safety, social integration in the working organization, constitutionalism in the work organization, the total space of life and the social relevance of the worker's life (Mueller and McCloskey, 1990; Kalliath and Morris, 2002; Gill and Feinstein, 1994).

Some studies suggest the importance of measuring professional satisfaction and identifies the association of satisfaction at work with a better quality of life, work-related stress and smaller prevalence of Burnout Syndrome symptoms associated with work roles as good pointers of employees QWL (Kalliath and Morris, 2002). Regarding QWL measurements, several instruments have been created and used and many of them bring professional satisfaction as the main definition of QWL. Some instruments are classified as general and are used to measure the professional satisfaction of workers from different areas, such as the Job Satisfaction Survey. The study set out to review existing literature on the QWL and how it informs organization performance. It also examined how motivation affects organization performance.

The role of QWL in organizational performance: Typically, QWL is conceptualized as a general attitude toward an object, the job. Some theorists view (QWL) as being the positive emotional reactions and attitudes an individual has towards their job (Rainey, 2003).

Others have viewed it as a bi-dimensional construct consisting of “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” satisfaction dimensions (Cimete *et al.*, 2003). Alternatively, QWL is seen as “satisfaction or lack of satisfaction” and “dissatisfaction or lack of dissatisfaction” dimensions (Flanagan and Flanagan, 2002). QWL is a global concept comprising of various facets such as employee satisfaction with pay, supervisor and co-workers (Rainey, 2003). However there has been debate as to whether QWL is composed of facets of satisfaction with various aspects of an individual’s job (Carnoy, 2000). Brock-Utne (2000) notes that the most important determinants of QWL are whether an employee finds his job interesting, has good relationships with managers and colleagues, has a high income, is allowed to work independently and has clearly defined career advancement opportunities.

Some studies have examined the causes and consequences of QWL and its interrelationships with other important job related variables. For example, in their meta-analytic construct validity result, Murrells *et al.* (2005) assert that job characteristics, role states, group and organization characteristics and leader relations are generally considered to be antecedents of high quality of work life, while citizenship behaviors, withdrawal cognitions, withdrawal behaviors and job performance are generally considered to be consequences of job satisfaction.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study utilizes desk research to review literature on the quality of work life and how it informs organization performance and motivation in the workplace. The study predominately comprised of reviewing journal articles which also included particular book chapters. Rather than following literature review convention by addressing the most prominent issue first, topics have been presented in a way that appeared logical to the authors. The study begins with examining the concept of QWL, investigates the role of QWL in organizational performance and finally assesses the effects of QWL on job performance. This in turn is followed by how the various aspects of motivation may be evaluated and a description of contextual factors/issues that may potentially interfere with the QWL such as job satisfaction, individual attributes and stress effects.

DISCUSSION

Effects of QWL on job performance:

Job satisfaction: One of the most known theories of job satisfaction (which is an important factor of QWL) was developed by Frederick Herzberg (Brewer, 2005). Herzberg’s findings led to the conclusion that the nature of the job and work environment is the primary

determinants of employee quality of work life. According to Herzberg, satisfaction in the workplace is “intrinsic” to the job with which an employee is directly involved (Brewer, 2005). The stimulus for employee satisfaction is ultimately derived from both the job content and the context in which it occurs.

Locke (1976) summarizes the existing researches on the causal factors in job satisfaction and enumerates among the most important values or conditions conducive to achieve a high QWL. This includes the following: Mentally challenging work with which the individual can cope successfully; personal interest in the work itself; (work which is not too physically tiring); rewards for performance which are just, informative and in line with their individual’s personal aspirations; working conditions which are compatible with the individuals physical needs and which facilitates the accomplishment of his work goals; high self-esteem on the part of the employee; agents in the work place who help the employee to attain job values such as interesting work activities, pay and promotions, whose basic values are similar to his own and which minimize role conflict and ambiguity (Severinsson and Kamaker, 1999).

Individual attributes: Individual characteristics refer to variables that describe characteristics of the employees who perform the jobs, which include the following: adequate and fair compensation; safety and health conditions at work; opportunity to use and develop one’s capacity; further opportunity for continuous development and safety; social integration in the working organization; constitutionalism/policy in the work organization; the work and total space of life and the social relevance of workers’ life. Age, tenure in employment, gender, education and income were identified to correlate with the level of QWL among employees (Carmeli and Freund, 2004; Wright, 2002; Goris, 2003).

Correlation results indicate that a significant relationship exists between salary and gender, education and experience (Okpara, 2005). The extent to which these variables influence QWL has produced mixed results. Age has been identified as a strong predictor of QWL, with older workers generally enjoying higher quality of work life than younger workers (Stamps and Piedmonte, 1986). Behavioral research has shown that older employees tend to develop a better fit between personal needs and their jobs than younger employees, which helps to justify their remaining in the organization (Imparato, 1972).

In general, the longer an individual remains at their current job, the more likely they will be dissatisfied with their job. Dalaney (1996) illustrates that length of service was negatively associated with QWL levels in a study conducted among Iowa civil servants, in the U.S.A. Stamps and Piedmonte (1986) confirm that

length of employment has a significant and negative impact upon QWL. Differences in job satisfaction levels based on race and gender are typically believed to affect QWL however; research findings have so far proved inconsistent (Spector, 1997). Higher grades of pay among senior management staff, combined with perceptions of inequality concerning promotions are expected to adversely affect quality of work life of employees.

Employees with higher education levels tend to be more aware of the available alternatives for changing jobs and are typically less likely to develop strong affections towards their current jobs and employing organizations (Mowday *et al.*, 1982). The more educated employees often have higher expectations that jobs or organizations may not be able to meet, making them less likely to be satisfied with their jobs. Several private sector studies have found that better paid workers tend to have a higher QWL (Okpara, 2005). However, the correlation between pay and QWL has proven to be surprisingly small. The level of pay tends to correlate more strongly with pay satisfaction than with overall QWL (Spector, 1997).

Four factors have been observed to be as important to QWL: pay satisfaction, skill utilization, job flexibility and job meaningfulness. Okpara (2005) contends that among job attributes, meaningful work, the opportunity to accomplish something worthwhile and making good use of employee skills were critical to the satisfaction of United States federal workers. Pay satisfaction is a key predictor of high QWL among the variables in this category (Okpara, 2005). Job flexibility refers to the degree that employees are allowed to make decisions about how to accomplish job tasks. Freedom to structure work tasks, prioritization of tasks and time management all contribute to a more flexible job which should lead to higher levels of QWL. Skill utilization is another important factor which refers to the degree to which a job allows the individual to utilize their skills and their abilities. This factor has been shown to be a strong predictor of QWL, since individuals prefer jobs that make good use of their skills and abilities (Carmeli and Freund, 2004; Goris, 2003).

Job meaningfulness is by far the most important predictor of high QWL among the variables in this category. Hackman and Oldham (1976) identify task significance as a key factor contributing to the meaningfulness of work which is highly correlated with job satisfaction. Overall, the concept refers to the extent that an individual perceives their work as significant and important and the degree to which an individual perceives their job as affecting other peoples' lives.

Constitutionalism/ policy in the work organization:

Organizational characteristics refer to variables that describe characteristics of the organization in which the jobs are performed. Job satisfaction is determined by

factors that describe how well an individual is treated, whether their opinions are valued and the relationship between individuals and their work units and organizations, also cooperative and supportive relationships with co-workers and supervisors contribute to higher levels of QWL (Carmeli and Freund, 2004; Goris, 2003).

Organizational performance and QWL contextual

factors: Meta-analyses studies have generally found the relationship between QWL and performance is weak (Judge *et al.*, 2001). Of particular importance is the possibility that QWL is more strongly related to individual and organizational job performance. Brewer (2005) indicates that "meaningfulness of work" exerted the strongest influence on QWL, followed by "recommend government employment." This result may be reflected by the fact that the sample was comprised of public employees. Surprisingly, "satisfaction with supervisor" was proposed to exert more influence on QWL than "pay satisfaction." Brewer (2005) illustrates that higher levels of education had a negative impact on QWL and women seemed to be associated with lower levels of QWL than men. In judging the relative importance of each factor that affected organizational performance, Brewer (2005) reveals that "satisfaction with supervisor" had the strongest influence on organizational performance, followed by "cooperation and teamwork." Satisfaction with supervisor was the most influential factor, compared with job satisfaction and pay satisfaction.

The relationship between QWL and organizational performance is still controversial, although these results provide some clarification (Jowi, 2003). Brewer (2005) notes that "QWL" alone had a positive, significant and considerable effect on organizational performance. "Commitment to stay" showed the weakest positive influence on organizational performance. Unlike the job satisfaction model, "meaningfulness of work" and "recommend government employment" did not have considerable effects. Among the demographic variables, age and work experience had negative and significant effects on organizational performance. On the relationship between commitment to stay and organizational performance, highly committed employees may perform better than less committed ones (Mowday *et al.*, 1974). Larson and Fukami (1984) indicate that higher levels of organizational commitment are linked to higher levels of job performance. Especially, affective commitment correlated positively with the performance of lower level managers in a large food service company (Meyer *et al.*, 1989). Therefore, we assume that federal employees' commitment to stay is positively related with organizational performance.

Motivational aspect of management to performance:

Unmotivated employees are likely to spend little or no effort in their jobs, avoid the workplace as much as

possible, produce low quality work and exit the organization if given the opportunity. On the other hand, employees who feel motivated to work are likely to be persistent, creative and productive, turning out high quality work that they willingly undertake. Motivation can be defined as something inside people that drives them to action. Motivation is the willingness to work at a certain level of effort. Motivation emerges out of needs, values, goals, intentions and expectations.

When employees have high autonomy, receive feedback about their performance and have an important, identifiable piece of work to do, which requires skill variety, they may experience feelings of happiness and therefore intrinsic motivation to keep performing well (Porter and Smith, 1970). Motivator-hygiene theory divides motivating factors into 2 categories: motivator factors, which deal roughly with the work itself and Hygiene factors, which to some extent is concerned with the surrounding contextual factors (Rainey, 2003).

Motivator factors include responsible work, independence in doing the work and satisfaction arising from the completion of challenging tasks. Motivators like achievement, recognition, responsibility and advancement increase satisfaction from work and motivate people towards greater effort and performance. Hygiene factors such as salary, fringe benefits and working conditions can prevent dissatisfaction, but they do not motivate the worker. Hygiene factors operate primarily as demotivators if they are not sufficient. Workers are most satisfied and most productive when their jobs are rich in the motivator factor. When the work is interesting, motivation can be accomplished by job enrichment (Rainey, 2003).

Stress effects: In every organization, members usually have various role expectations within their own offices. In the process of performing their roles, there arise role stressors such as conflict or ambiguity that impede their optimal outputs. This may result due to lack of clear information about job responsibilities and expectations. These may have serious consequences on their performance and job satisfaction leading to tension, anxiety, dissatisfaction, absenteeism and lowered levels of commitment, performance, involvement and autonomy.

Role stress and effect on job performance: Job performance is often viewed as the degree to which employees execute their job tasks, responsibilities and assignments adequately (Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Dubinsky, 1992). Jackson and Schuler (1985) establish a negative relationship between role stress and job performance in their meta-analysis and explain this relationship drawing from cognitive and motivational research. According to a cognitive perspective, role

stress results in lower job performance and QWL since role stress includes lack of information and information overload (Tubre and Collins, 2000). From a motivational perspective, role-stress weakens effort-to-performance. Oliver and Brief (1977) assert that empirical support for performance as an antecedent to role ambiguity is discussed as performance feedback. Porter and Smith (1970) identify evidence that performance was both an antecedent and a consequence to role conflict, role ambiguity and overload, giving further cause for modeling a feedback relationship between performance and role stress. That is, performance as an antecedent is negatively related to role stress.

Role stressors and their effect on QWL: According to role theory, when an individual perceives role conflict, they will experience strain, become dissatisfied and perform less effectively (Murells *et al.*, 2005). Conflict can appear as a result of a clash between public roles and private ideals. This conflict often leads to poor organizational performance (Brewer, 2005). Studies have also consistently associated role conflicts and ambiguity with lower levels of QWL, as well as a high propensity to leave the organization. However, Carnoy (2000) states that role conflict and ambiguity are independent sources of stress; either or both of them may be present in any given role.

Relationships among job performance, QWL and role stress: Job performance enhancement includes QWL, which has been empirically supported in other studies (Abagi, 1999; Nyaigotti-Chacha, 2002). The relationship between job performance and QWL has been positive but modest in empirical studies. However, correlations between QWL and job performance have been unexpectedly high and strong for professional jobs with little supervision, low and weak for manual supervised jobs (Spector, 1997).

QWL influences work motivation in general and other workplace behaviors such as turnover and absenteeism. Hackman and Oldham (1976) emphasize that satisfied employees are more likely to experience high internal work motivation and to have lower absenteeism and turnover rates than their disappointed counterparts. Spector (1977) notes that people who dislike their jobs are more likely to search for alternative employment, making poor QWL and the leading cause of turnover. Despite its tenuous relationship with job performance, QWL remains a complex and important concept for scholars and managers to understand. Abagi (1999) concludes that performance has a significant positive influence on job satisfaction and QWL. Role stress is negatively related to organizational commitment especially when performance is low (Bauer, 2002). When performance is low, ambiguities and overloads on the employees role

is likely to lead to decreased job satisfaction. On the other hand, when performance is high, conflicts, ambiguities and overloads on a role are less likely to influence the QWL.

Organizational social relevance to workers life:

Although strongly related to QWL, organizational social relevance is a distinct concept that relates to an employee's desire to remain with an organization out of a sense of loyalty, emotional attachment and financial need (Meyer *et al.*, 1989). This leads to organizational commitment which can be defined as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization (Porter and Smith, 1970). Employees' commitment can be characterized by at least 3 related factors: a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; a willingness to exert a considerable effort on behalf of the organization and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (Mowday *et al.*, 1982). Porter and Lawler (1983) identify 2 subscales: value commitment, (a commitment to support organizational goals) and commitment to stay (a desire to retain organizational membership). QWL is positively correlated with organizational commitment, job involvement, motivation, organizational citizenship behavior, life satisfaction, mental health and job performance. It is negatively related to turnover, absenteeism and perceived stress (Judge *et al.*, 2001; Spector, 1997).

CONCLUSION

The study set out to review existing literature on the QWL and how it informs organization performance. It also examined how motivation affects organization performance since motivation is the willingness to work at a certain level of effort and emerges out of needs, values, goals, intentions and expectations. QWL was conceptualized as a general attitude towards a job. Others have viewed it as a bi-dimensional construct consisting of "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" satisfaction dimensions (Cimete *et al.*, 2003). Alternatively, QWL was seen as "satisfaction or lack of satisfaction" and "dissatisfaction or lack of dissatisfaction" dimensions (Flanagan and Flanagan, 2002). It is evident that QWL is one of the most important workplace issues of the modern times. The literature indicates strong relationship between employees' well-being at work and performance of such organizations. The summaries of QWL variables captured are applicable to almost all organizations. The importance of considering QWL, organization performance and motivation is demonstrated in the strong relationship between employee's well-being at work and performance of such organizations.

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