# ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN QUALITY OF WORK- LIFE ..AN EMPLOYEES' PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

*The Quality of Work Life (QWL) plays a crucial role in increasing the work-life balance of employees and bringing organizational effectiveness. It refers to the level of satisfaction, motivation, commitment and involvement of an individual's experience with respect to their work. Standardizing the quality of employees' work rises from maintaining the quality of work - life perfectly. The key objective of QWL is to enhance the qualitative productivity of employee by creating good working environment, employee engagement, encouraging employee in decision making, etc., and thereby increasing the organizational economies in long run. With the increasing competition among industries it became a tough task to retain employees and utilize their talents and thus identified that creating a QWL can make employee more engaged in his work and increase productivity and profitability of the organization. This paper discusses the concepts and strategies of quality of work-life in an organization and its impact on employee engagement in production and bringing the work life balance.*

**Key words:** Quality of Work Life (QWL), Job satisfaction, working conditions, Work place.

**Introduction**

Quality of Work Life (QWL) is a process by which an organization responds to employee needs for developing mechanism that allow them to share fully in making decisions that designs their life at work place. It denotes all the organizational inputs which aim at the employee's satisfaction and enhancing organizational effectiveness. The basic purpose is to develop jobs and working conditions that are excellent for employees as well as economic health of an organization. It refers to the level of satisfaction, motivation, commitment and involvement of an individual's experience with respect to their line at the work. The quality of work life is the degree of excellence brought about work and working conditions that contribute to the overall satisfaction and performance primarily at individual level and finally at organization level. For every successful organization employees are the key persons. Every organization can become successful not only with technology, though technology plays a major role, skilled workforce also required for the usage of the technology. So every organization must have strong and skilled work force. Since 1960 Quality of Work Life concept is gaining more and more importance everywhere, including at every work place. Initially Quality of Work Life was focusing on the effects of employment on the general well being and the health of the workers. But now its focus has been changed. Every organization needs to give good environment to their workers including all financial and non-financial incentives so that they can retain their employees for the longer period and for the achievement of the organization goals. At the end it can be said that a happy and healthy employee will give better turnover, make good decisions and positively contribute to the organization goal. Thus QWL means having good supervision, good working conditions, good pay and benefits and interesting, challenging and rewarding job.

The concepts of Quality of Work Life (QWL) and work-life balance are not new. In its initial development in the mid 1970s, QWL was regarded in terms of people's reaction to work, particularly individual outcomes related to job satisfaction and mental health. QWL focused primarily on the personal consequences of the work experience and how to improve work and satisfy personal needs.

QWL is also regarded in terms of techniques and approaches used for improving work such as job enrichment, self-managed teams, and labor-management committees (Davis & Cherns, 1975, Davis, 1977)[1]. The expansion of QWL beyond the initial development include features of the workplace that can affect employee productivity and satisfaction such as reward systems, work flows, management styles, and physical work environment (Cummings & Worley, 2005)[2].

Work life balance concept was much emphasized by the management's consideration in the 1980s, because there were an increasing number of female employees with dependent children having more workforces. The different factors caused to the importance in work-life balance problems are global conflict, changed attention in personal lives or family morals of workforce. Some of them included are work or family difference, work or life balance from employer point of view, family friendly benefits, work life programmes, work life schemes and work family background. Challenging and multi-faced stress between work and home responsibilities have implicit improved importance for workers in new days, demographic and workplace changes, such as a greater numbers of women in the workforce, revolution in family structures, a growing unwillingness to accept the longer hours culture, and technological development.

Duxbury and Higgins (2003)[3] said that, work-life conflict is not only a moral issue but also productivity and economic issue. A workplace and social issue needs to be addressed as such. The evidences for QWL suggest that it is not only a concern for the individual but also a consideration for the organization and society at large.

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Quality of work life is the quality of relationship between employees and the total working environment (Chelte, 1983)[4]. QWL is necessary for this competitive environment for maintaining qualified and skilled employees. High QWL would helps to fulfil employees' needs, there by fulfil the organizational goals effectively and efficiently. Quality of work life is a dynamic multi dimensional construct that includes concepts such as job security, reward systems, training and career advancement opportunities and participation in decision making (Saraji and Dargahi, 2006)[5].

In the current scenario every organization expects their employees to perform at their peak potential. Though monetary aspects play an important role in motivating employees, organization around the world have come to understand that there are many other aspects that contribute to better employee performance. It is very important for an organization to create a very conducive working environment for employees. This study is needed to ensure that all employees are performing to their peak potential, free from stress and strain, and to ensure all their needs are fully satisfied.
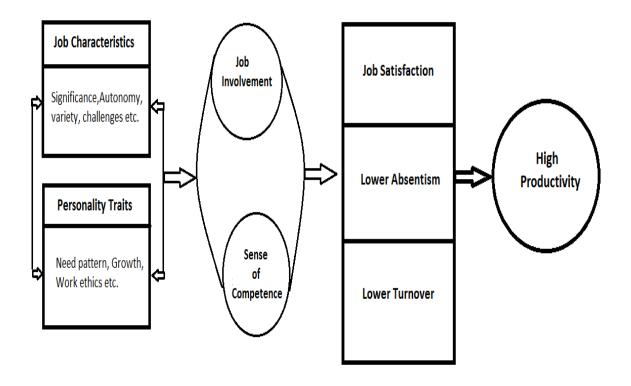
**Definition**

Quality is "as fitness for purpose". The concept of quality is not apply to all goods and services created by human beings, but also for workplace where the employees were employed.

Quality of work life refers to the favorableness or un-favorableness of a total job environment of the people. The basic purpose is to develop jobs and working conditions that are excellent for people as well as for the economic health of the organization. Quality of work life provides a more humanized work environment. It attempts to serve the higher order needs of workers as well as their basic needs. It seeks to employ the higher skills of workers and to provide an environment that encourages improving their skills.

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Q - Quest for excellence

U – Understanding

A – Action

L – Leadership

I -  Involvement of the people

T - Team spirit

Y - Yardstick to measure progress

The above said are very essential elements to improve the work life of employees in any organization.

**A Conceptual Model for Quality of Work Life:-**



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**Objectives of Quality of Work Life**:

- ➢ To increase in individual productivity, accountability and commitment
- ➢ For better teamwork and communication
- ➢ For improving the morale of employees
- ➢ To reduce organizational stress
- ➢ To improve relationships both on and off the job
- ➢ To improve the safety working conditions
- ➢ To provide adequate Human Resource Development Programs
- ➢ To improve employee satisfaction
- ➢ To strengthen workplace learning
- ➢ To better manage on-going change and transition
- ➢ To participate in management at all levels in shaping the organization

**Objectives of the paper:**

i) To present the factors influencing Quality of Work Life

ii) To present the measurement techniques of Quality of Work Life

iii) To present the issues involved in Quality of Work Life

iv) To present the challenges being faced by the employees in the organisation

v) To suggest suitable measures to overcome the challenges being faced by the employees in the organization.

**1. Factors influencing Quality of Work Life**:

**a) Job satisfaction**:

Job satisfaction is favorable or unfavorable with which employees view their work. As with motivation, it is affected by the environment. Job satisfaction is influenced by job design. Jobs that are rich in positive behavioral elements - such as autonomy, variety, task identity,

task significance and feedback contribute to employee's satisfaction. Likewise, orientation is also important because the employee's acceptance by the work group contributes to satisfaction. In short, each element of the environmental system, can add to, or detract from job satisfaction.

**b) Pay**:

Quality of work life is basically built around the concept of equitable pay. In future employees may want to participate in the profit of the organization.

**c) People:**

Almost everyone has to deal with three sets of people in the work place. Those are namely boss, peers in the same level and subordinates. Apart from this, some professions need interaction with people like media persons, public, customers, physically disabled people, mentally challenged, children, foreign delegates, politicians, public figures and celebrities. These situations demand high level of prudence, cool temper, tactfulness, humor, kindness, diplomacy and sensitiveness.

**d) Health conditions of employees:**

Organisation should realize that their true wealth lies in their employees and provide healthy environment for employees should be their primary objective.

**e) Personal and career growth opportunities:**

An organization should provide employees with opportunity for personal/professional development and growth and to prepare them to accept the responsibilities at higher level.

**f) Participative management style and recognition**:

Organization structure helps the organization to facilitate employee participation. A Participative management style improves the quality of work life. Workers feel that they have control over their work process and they also offer the innovative ideas to improve them. Recognition also helps in motivating employees to perform better. Recognition can be in form of rewarding employees for their best performance.

**g) Autonomous Work Teams:**

An autonomous work team is one which can plan, regulate and control its own work environment. The management only specifies the goals that too in collaboration with the team. The team organizes the contents and structure of its job, evaluates its own performance, establishes its speed and chooses its production method. It makes its own internal distribution of

tasks and decides its own membership. Autonomous team approach increases satisfaction and reduces turnover and absenteeism.

### h) Motivation:

Motivation is a complex subject. It involves the unique feelings, thoughts and past experiences of each of us as we share a variety of relationships within and outside organizations. To expect single motivational approach work in every situation is probably unrealistic. In fact, even theorists and researches take different points of view about motivation. Nevertheless, motivation can be defined as a person's drive to take an action because that person wants to do so. People act because they feel that they have to.

## 2. MEASUREMENT OF QUALITY OF WORK -LIFE AT WORKPLACE:

There are few recognized measures of quality of work life, and the Work-Related Quality of Life scale (WRQoL) is one among them. This assessment device should prove to be a useful measure. The WRQoL measure uses six core factors to explain the variation in an individuals quality of working life: Job and Career Satisfaction; Working Conditions; General Well-Being; Home-Work Interface; Stress at Work and Control at Work.

**a) Job & Career Satisfaction (JCS) scale** of the Work-Related Quality of Life scale (WRQoL) reflects an employee's feelings about, or evaluation of, their satisfaction or contentment with their job and career and the training they receive to do it. Within the WRQoL measure, JCS is reflected by questions asking how satisfied people feel about their work. It has been proposed that this Positive Job Satisfaction factor is influenced by various issues including clarity of goals and role ambiguity, appraisal, recognition and reward, personal development career benefits and enhancement and training needs.

**b) General well-being (GWB) scale** aims at assessing the extent to which an individual feels good or content in them, in a way which may be independent of their work situation. It is suggested that general well-being shall influence, and to be influenced by work. Mental health problems, predominantly depression and anxiety disorders, are common, and may have a major impact on the general well-being of the population. The WRQoL GWB factor assesses issues of mood, depression and anxiety, life satisfaction, general quality of life, optimism and happiness.

**c) Stress at Work sub-scale (SAW)** reflects the extent to which an individual perceives they have excessive pressures, and feel stressed at work. The SAW factor assess through items dealing with demand and perception of stress and actual demand overload. Whilst it is possible to be pressured at work and not be stressed at work, in general, high stress is associated with high pressure.

**d) Control at Work (CAW) subscale** addresses how much employees feel they can control their work through the freedom to express their opinions and being involved in decisions at work. Perceived control at work as measured by the Work-Related Quality of Life scale (WRQoL) is recognized as a central concept in the understanding of relationships between stressful experiences, behavior and health. Control at work, within the theoretical model underpinning the WRQoL, is influenced by issues of communication at work, decision making and decision control.

**e) Home-Work Interface scale (HWI)** measures the extent to which an employer is perceived to support the family and home life of employees. This factor explores the interrelationship between home and work life domains. Issues that appear to influence employee HWI include adequate facilities at work, flexible working hours and the understanding of managers.

**f) Working Conditions scale** assesses the extent to which the employee is satisfied with the fundamental resources, working conditions and security necessary to do their job effectively. Physical working conditions influence employee health and safety and thus employee Quality of working life. This scale also taps into satisfaction with the resources provided to help people do their jobs.

## 3. ISSUES IN QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

Trade unions claim that they are responsible for the improvement in various facilities to workers whereas management takes credit for improved salaries, benefits and facilities. However, Personal/HR manager has (identified) specific issues in QWL besides normal wages, Salaries; fringe benefits etc. and take lead in providing them so as to maintain higher order QWL. Klott, Mundick and Schuster suggested major issues. They are:

**a) Pay and Stability of Employment**: Good pay still dominates the most of the other factors in employee satisfaction. Various alternative means for providing wages should be developed in view of increase in cost of living index, increase in rates of income tax and profession tax. Stability to a greater extent can be provided by enhancing the facilities for human resource development.

**b) Occupational Stress**: Stress is a condition of strain on one's personal emotions, thought process and physical condition. Stress is determined by the nature of work, working conditions, working hours, and pause in the work schedule, worker's abilities and their matching with the job requirements. Stress is caused due to irritability, hyper-excitation or depression, unstable behavior, fatigue, stuttering, trembling, psychosomatic pains, heavy smoking and drug abuse. Stress adversely affects employee's productivity. The Personnel or HR Manager, in order to minimize the stress, has to identify, prevent and tackle the problem. He may arrange the treatment of the problem with the health unit of the company.

**c) Alternative Work Schedules**: Alternative work schedules including work at home, flexible working hours, staggered hours, reduced work week, part-time employment which may be introduced for the convenience and comfort of the workers as the work schedule which offers the individual the leisure time, flexible hours of work is preferred.

**d) Recognition**: Recognizing the employee as a human being rather than as a laborer increases the QWL. Participative management, awarding the rewarding system, congratulating the employees for their achievement, job enrichment, offering prestigious designations to the jobs, providing furnished and decent work places, offering memberships to clubs or association, providing vehicles, offering vacation trips are some of the means to recognize the employees.

**e) Congenial Worker Supervisor Relation**: Harmonious supervisor-worker elations give the worker a sense of social association, belongingness, achievement of work results etc. This in turn leads to better QWL.

**f) Adequacy of Resources**: Resources should match with stated objectives otherwise, employees will not be able to attain the objectives. This results in employee dissatisfaction and lower QWL.

**g) Seniority and Merit in Promotions**: Seniority is generally taken as the basis for promotion in case of operating employees. Merit is considered as the basis for advancement for managerial people whereas seniority cum-merit is preferred for promotion of ministerial employees. The promotional policies and activities should be fair and just in order to ensure higher QWL.

**h) Organizational health programmes:** Organizational health programmes aim at educating employees about health problems, means of maintaining and improving health etc. These programmes cover drinking and smoking cessation, hypertension control, other forms of cardiovascular of these reductions, family planning. Effective implementation of these programmes results in reduction in absenteeism, hospitalization, disability, excessive job turnover and premature death. This programme should also cover relaxation, physical exercise, diet control etc.

**i) Participative management and control of work**: Trade Unions and workers believe that worker's participation in management and decision- making improves QWL. Workers also feel that they have control over their work, use their skills and make a real contribution to the job if they are allowed to participate in decision-making process.

**j) Grievance procedure:** Workers have a sense of fair treatment when the company gives them the opportunity to ventilate their grievances and represent their case succinctly rather than setting the problems arbitrarily.

**k) Employment on permanent basis**: Employment of workers on casual, temporary probationary basis gives them a sense of insecurity. On the other hand, employment on permanent basis gives them security and leads to higher order QWL.

## 4. CHALLENGES FACED IN QUALITY OF WORKLIFE:

In today's world, the structure, content, and process of work have changed.
Now work is:

- ➢ More cognitively complex
- ➢ More team-based and collaborative
- ➢ More dependent on social skills
- ➢ More dependent on technological competence

- More time pressured
- More mobile and less dependent on geography.

In today's world, working for an organization is likely to be very different due to competitive pressures and technological breakthroughs. Organizations today are:
- leaner and more agile
- More focused on identifying value from the customer perspective
- More tuned to dynamic competitive requirements and strategy
- less hierarchical in structure and decision authority

- less likely to provide lifelong careers and job security
- Continually reorganizing to maintain or gain competitive advantage.

Some of the challenges faced by the employees in QWL as follows:

**a) Unrealistic demands**

The demands that work and life throw at us can easily mount up to incredible levels. Unreasonable demands at work, arrangements that are eating into personal time, such as weekend meetings, and technology overload are mentioned as adding a lot of pressure. Demands of personal life are adding pressure to work, as time is required to accommodate family or friends, and are eating into work-time. Think of family members with intensive schedules, impacting on yours (the mum that needs to ferry the athlete to extra training sessions or matches, or the partner that decides to do an evening course), or when expectations are set by others (like a monthly visit to parents). Meeting too many demands is a threat for the healthy balance.

**b) Lack of control**

Lack of control is creating pressure, as it leaves you 'hanging in there, with a dark cloud above your head'. It is difficult to deal with uncontrollable workload, or the insecurity of the situation of the company you work in. In personal circumstances aspects as illness, exams, kid's issues can feel as if all control is gone and is very stressful.

**c) Unsupportive relationships**

Unsupportive relationships at work, aversive behaviour or not getting credits, are creating a difficult and unproductive work environment, making people feel isolated. An unsupportive relationship at home, where no one helps each other or considers other people's pressures creates frustration and unhappiness.

**d) Unhelpful attitude**

Resilience in challenging circumstances determines how well someone is coping and finding a way forward. If the energy levels are low and undermined, due to all the difference challenges, it can be really hard to find that resilience.

**e) High stress levels**

All the above challenges can appear in anybody's life and will add to stress levels. Not being able to handle stress will kill any chance of a healthy work-life balance.

Not all of the above challenges will appear in someone's life at the same time, but if a few challenges present themselves at the same time, it will be very difficult to create a healthy work-life balance.

**5. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT IN QUALITY OF WORK LIFE**

The strategies for improvement in quality of work life include self managed work teams, job redesign and enrichment, effective leadership and supervisory behaviour, career development, alternative work schedules, job security, administrative and organizational justice and participative management.

**a) Self-managed work teams**: These are also called autonomous work groups or integrated work teams. These work teams are formed 10 to 20 employees who plan, co-ordinate and control the activities of the team-with the help of a team leader, who is one among them. Each team has authority to make decisions and regulate the activities. Group as a whole is accountable for the success or failure. Salaries are fixed both on the basis of individual and group achievement.

**b) Job redesign and enrichment**: Narrow jobs can be combined into larger units of accomplishment. Jobs are redesigned with a view to enriching them to satisfy higher order human needs.

**c) Effective leadership and supervisory behaviour**: For effective leadership and supervisory behaviour "9-9"style "of managerial grid is suitable."

**d) Career development**: Provision for career planning, communicating and counseling the employees about the career opportunities, career path, education and development and for second careers should be made.

**e) Alternative work schedule**: Provision for flexible working hours, part time employments, job sharing and reduced work week should be made.

**f) Job security**: This tops the employee's list of priorities. It should be adequately taken care of.

**g) Administrative or organizational justice:** The principles of natural justice, should be taken care of in conducting disciplinary procedure and grievance procedures, similarly fair play and equality should guide decisions relating to promotions, transfers, demotions, work assignment, leave etc.

**h) Participative management**: Employees should be allowed to participate in management. Participative management may be of several types. The most sophisticated among them is quality circle. Implementation of these strategies ensures higher level of quality of work life.

**CONCLUSION**

The above discussion helps to conclude that the identification of the measures of quality of work life. Evidently there are objective (physical and structural design) factors that provide work place setting and intervening policy factors that affect work processes of employees. As regards the outcome factors will impact on psychology of employees (positive attitudes, commitment, and satisfaction). This paper suggested some of the measures like self managed work teams, career development, participative management, leadership, job security etc., to overcome the challenges of work life balance being faced by the employees in the organization. Finally it is very true to say that high degree of Quality of Work Life leads to job satisfaction which ultimately results in effective and efficient performance by employees.

As for as India concerned it is a lengthy time taken process to achieve these goal. We know that the longest journey is performed when the first step is taken. We hope that India would emerge as a champion in the development of Human resources.

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