

Quality of Work Life in Indian Industries – A Case Study

Harish.K¹, Subashini K²

Technical Assistant (Engineering Services), Bharath Electronics Limited, Bangalore, Karnataka, India¹

CEO & Faculty, Martins Academy, Bangalore, Karnataka, India²

ABSTRACT: The concept of quality of life is gaining increasing attention by all organization all over the world. Quality of life encompasses the sum total of healthy experiences that individuals experience in various facets of life. A sizable component of the quality of life is the quality of life experienced by organisation members at the work place. The quality of work life, therefore important and worthy of deep study since individuals do not compartmentalize their lives but carry even their satisfaction of otherwise experienced at work where they spend the major part of their time. Thus the quality of life at work spills over to the quality of life experience in the family.

KEYWORDS: Quality Work Life Cycle, layoffs, oppressive supervision, bureaucratic controls, low wages, monotony, fatigue time pressure, participative management, fair compensation, fair wages, social integration, career development, career path, job security, economic transition, absenteeism, appraisal of resources, work design etc.,

I. INTRODUCTION

QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE

Employees at the grass root level experience a sense of frustration because of low level of wages, poor working conditions, unfavourable terms of employment, inhuman treatment by their superiors and the like whereas managerial personnel feel frustrated because of alienation over their conditions of employment, interpersonal conflicts, role conflicts, job pressures, lack of freedom in work, absence of challenging work etc.

Certain values were attributed to work in the past. Years ago work was worship and people had sincerity and commitment to work. But today's employee will not believe in such values of work. He works for his salary, he works if the conditions of work are conducive and congenial and terms of employment are favourable to him. As such, the work norms have been changing from time to time.

Work norms in modern industrial society indicates that" (i) employee's role in industry is different from his role in the family (ii) superior knows the best and he has the right to impose on the subordinates (iii) rules are for employees and they have to follow them and (iv) employer has the right to layoff the worker due to marketing and technological factors.

Contemporary problems of managerial personnel: Due to these work norms, the managerial personnel at the middle and higher levels in the organization hierarchy face a variety of problems. They are dissatisfied with the strict economic functions of the job and with the social relationships in the organization consequent to the mechanization and automation of the industry. Further, disregard by others and less and less utilization of capabilities and skills also caused frustrated among the managerial personnel.

Employees also experience alienation which may result from poor design of socio-technical systems. Alienation is a feeling of powerlessness, lack of meaning, loneliness, boredom, lack of involvement and lack of attachment of job. The workers at the lower level are not happy with their work due to tight schedule of work, speed of machine, close watch and supervision and less social interaction. Even the ministerial staffs complain that they are unhappy with the job due to routine nature of work and fixation of schedules and standards. Thus, job discontent is due to the limited scope of the

International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(An ISO 3297: 2007 Certified Organization)

Vol. 3, Issue 10, October 2014

job, short cycles of operations, lack of opportunity to exercise discretion, initiative, existence of bureaucratic controls, oppressive supervision, low wages, poor working conditions etc.

Job discontent and job pressures have their substantial effect on employee's health in the form of reduction in general happiness, increases in smoking, drinking, putting on excess body weight etc., Frustration would further because heart disease, joint pains etc. Frustration might also be due to absence of recognition, tedious work, unsound relations with co-workers, poor working conditions, low self-esteem, occupational stress, work overload, monotony, fatigue time pressures, lack of stability, security etc., In view of the contemporary managerial problems, the present day employees are much concerned about high wages, better benefits, challenging job etc.

There has been much concern today about providing employees decent wages, convenient working hours, conducive working conditions etc. The term 'Quality of Work life' has appeared in Research Journals and the press in USA only in 1970s. There is no generally accepted definition about this term. However, some attempts were made to describe the term quality of work life [QWL]. It refers to the favourableness or unfavourableness of a job environment for people. QWL means different things to different people. **J Richard** and **J.Lloy** define QWL as "the degree to which members of a work organization are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experience in the organization".

Quality of work life improvements are defined as any activity which takes place at every level of an organization, which seeks greater organizational effectiveness through the enhancement of human dignity and growth...a process through which the stakeholders in the organization management, unions and employees-learn how to work together better...To determine for themselves what actions, changes and improvements are desirable and workable, in order to achieve the twin simultaneous goals of an approved quality of life at work for all members of the organization and greater effectiveness for both the company and the unions.

II.ISSUES IN QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE

Trade unions claim that they are responsible for the improvement in various facilities to workers, whereas management takes credit for improved salaries, benefits. However, P/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 11 major QWL issues. They are:

1. **Pay and stability of employment:** Good pay still dominates most of the other factors in employee satisfaction. Various alternative means for providing wages should be developed in view of increase in the cost of living index, increase in levels and rates of income tax and professional tax. Stability of employment is guaranteed to a certain extent in India. However, stability to a greater extent can be provided by enhancing the facilities for human resources development.
2. **Occupational stress:** Stress, in a condition of strain on one's emotions, thought process and physical condition. Stress is determined by the nature of work, working conditions, working hours, pause in the work schedule, worker's abilities and nature should match with the job requirements. Stress is caused due to irritability hyper excitation or depression, unstable behaviour, fatigue, stuttering, trembling, psychosomatic pains, heavy smoking and drug abuse. Stress adversely affects employee productivity. The P/HR manager, in order to minimize the stress, has to identify, prevent and tackle the problem. He may arrange for the treatment of the problem with the health unit of the company.
3. **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 etc. 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.
4. **Alternative work schedules:** Alternative work schedules including work at home, flexible working hours, staged hours, reduced work week, part time employment may be introduced for the convenience and comfort

International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(An ISO 3297: 2007 Certified Organization)

Vol. 3, Issue 10, October 2014

of the workers, as the work schedule which offers the individual the leisure time, flexible hours of work is preferred.

5. **Participative management and control of work:** Trade Unions and workers believe that workers' 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 creative and decision-making process.
6. **Recognition:** Recognizing the employee as a human being rather than as a labour increases the QWL. Participative management, awarding and rewarding systems, congratulating the employees for their achievement, job enrichment, offering prestigious designations to the jobs, providing well furnished and decent work places, offering memberships in clubs or associations, providing vehicles, offering vacation trips are some means to recognize the employees.
7. **Congenial worker supervisor relations:** Harmonious supervisor worker relations give the worker a sense of social association, belongingness, achievement of work results etc. This in turn, leads to better QWL.
8. **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.
9. **Adequacy of resources:** Resources should match with stated objectives: otherwise, employees will not be able to attain the objectives and this result in employee dissatisfaction and lower QWL.
10. **Seniority and merit in promotion:** 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.
11. **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.

III.QWL AND FRINGE BENERIFTS

P/HR manager has to build and maintain QWL by providing a wide range of fringe benefits as discussed earlier. These benefits results in improvement in productivity, reduction in absenteeism, turnover, sick leave alienation etc. These benefits or maintenance activities include medical and health benefits, safety measures, legal and financial services, consumer services, retirement benefits, conveyance, canteen facilities, recreational services, career counselling, employees information reports etc.

QWL AND PRODUCTIVITY

The general perception is that improvement in QWL costs much to the organization. But it is not so as improvement over the existing salary working conditions and benefits will not cost of QWL. Thus, increase in QWL results in increase in productivity. But continual increase in QWL eventually leads to reduction in productivity due to increase in cost of output. This is because the worker's output does not increase proportionately after a certain level, even though QWL increases. Improved QWL leads to improved performance. Performance means not only physical output but also the behaviour of the worker in helping colleagues in solving job related problems accepting orders with enthusiasm, promoting a positive team spirit and accepting temporary unfavourable work conditions without complaint.

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND PERSONNEL/HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT:

Quality of work life is broader than motivation though these two terms seem to be similar. All personnel related activities affect quality of work life, some examples are:

P/HR Activity	Effect on Quality of Work life
Job Analysis	Analysis the job in such a way that human needs like Freedom, challenging work, autonomy can be satisfied
Selection	Selecting the right man and placing him in the right position. This satisfies his needs for reward, interesting work etc,

International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(An ISO 3297: 2007 Certified Organization)

Vol. 3, Issue 10, October 2014

Job Enrichment	Satisfies higher order needs like pride, ego
Job Evaluation	Equitable wage

MEASURING QUALITY OF WORKLIFE:

Richard E. Walton explains quality of work life in terms of eight broad conditions of employment that constitute desirable quality of work life (QWL). He proposed the some criteria for measuring QWL. Those conditions/criteria include:

1. **Adequate and fair compensation:** There are different options about adequate compensation. The Committee on Fair Wages defined fair wage as "...The wage which is above the minimum wage but below the living age."
2. **Safe and healthy working conditions:** Most of the organizations provide safe and healthy working conditions due to humanitarian requirements and/or legal requirements. In fact, these conditions are a matter of enlightened self-interests.
3. **Opportunity to use and develop human capacities:** Contrary to the traditional assumptions, QWL is improved "...to the extent that the worker can exercise more control over his or her work, and the degree to which the job embraces an entire meaningful task but not a part of it. Further, QWL provides opportunities like autonomy in work and participation in planning in order to use human capabilities.
4. **Opportunity for career growth:** Opportunities for promotion are limited in case of all categories of employees either due to educational barriers or due to limited openings at the higher level. QWL provides future opportunity for continued growth and security by expanding one's capabilities, knowledge and qualifications.
5. **Social integration in the work force:** Social integration in the work force can be established by creating freedom from prejudice, supporting primary work groups, a sense of community and interpersonal openness, egalitarianism and upward mobility.
6. **Constitutional protection in the work organization:** QWL provides constitutional protection to the employees only to the level of desirability as it hampers workers satisfaction of doing the job beyond that level. It happens because the management's action is challenged in every action and bureaucratic procedures need to be followed at that level. Constitutional protection is provided to employees on such matters as privacy, free speech, equity and due process.
7. **Work and quality of life:** QWL provides for the balanced relationship among work, non-work and family aspects of life. In other words, family life and social life should not be strained by working hours including overtime work, work during inconvenient hours, business, travels, transfers, vacations etc.
8. **Social, relevance of work:** QWL is concerned about the establishment of social relevance to work in a socially beneficial manner. The workers' self-esteem would be high if his work is useful to the society.

Quality of work life suffers from barriers, like any other new scheme. Management, employees and unions fear the effect of unknown change. All these parties feel that the benefits of this concept are few, though they are convinced about its effect on personnel management as a whole and on the individual parties separately. Management should develop strategies to improve quality of work life in view of the barriers.

IV. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT IN QWL

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.

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **Effective leadership and supervisory behaviour:** For effective leadership and supervisory behaviour "9-9" style "of managerial grid is suitable."

International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(An ISO 3297: 2007 Certified Organization)

Vol. 3, Issue 10, October 2014

4. **Career development:** Provision for career planning, communicating and counselling the employees about the career opportunities, career path, education and development and for second careers should be made.
5. **Alternative work schedule:** Provision for flexible working hours, part time employments, job sharing and reduced work week should be made.
6. **Job security:** This tops the employee's list of priorities. It should be adequately taken care of.
7. **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.
8. **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.

Quality of Work Life-Indian Scenario

Indian people are in fact, hard working, industries, painstaking, knowing fully their duties and responsibilities and ambitions. They have a high morale and group orientation compared to other countries. Yet, these qualities mainly remain at home by a large section of employees. They do not carry these qualities to the work place. They cannot be blamed wholly for this shortcoming. The managers do not use these qualities in their organizations. A proper understanding of the work force will help the organizations achieve the desired goals. Further the employee productivity in India is considerably low compared to other Euro-Asian countries.

The basic reasons for this state of affairs are:

1. Indian is a country, still in a developing stage; undergoing tremendous economic transition what matters most in Human Resources is the availability of educated and skilled workers. Employees need to have of educated and skilled workers. Employees need to have the skills and Technological know-how to handle and operate sophisticated machinery which would, in turn, produce quality goods to compete with international market. This calls for appropriate equation and vocational training, India in this area. The educational system, which Indian provides is quite inadequate at the primary and secondary school levels, though it is quite impressive at higher level. Dropout rates are very high in such schools. The area still remains neglected.
2. In India the industrial workers have their roots in villages. Quite a large member of them have left their traditional occupation and have migrated to the cities in search of employment either permanent or temporary employment. Most of them still retain their attachment to the land and the periodic migration from town to the village is a common characteristic of our industrial labour. Only in recent years, a new class of industrial labour, without root in agriculture is emerging in our towns and cities.
3. Further, industrial labour is mostly uneducated. As a result they cannot understand the problems the industries confront and they also land up in problems, thanks to the weak trade unions and corrupt leaders whom they obediently follow.
4. Added industrial labour is not but is divided, sub divided on the basis of regions, religion, and language, cast and so on.
5. Moreover the Indian workers do not remain in the same job for a considerable amount of time. Though there is high turn-over, absenteeism, indiscipline etc are quite common. This state of affair is mainly due to the fact that they originally from rural areas where people are comparatively, free, lack of education or love for leisure.
6. Indian culture has not been able to utilize the collectivism of employees in work places as managers are not able to, or at times not reviling to, incorporate this cultural trains in their industries. This is because Indian employees remain highly dedicated to their in-groups consisting of their extended family, friends, clan and culture and treat the work place as one group.
7. In India social stratification is reflected within the organization which would naturally govern the growth. Managers and other senior officers generally come from high castes and the manual workers from lower ones. In the industrial sector, western style middle class working class division is super imposed on a highly divested caste system. As a result, there exists a fundamental, conflict interest the two classes of the industry, which in turn, contributed to a confrontational and hostile worker management relationship.

International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

(An ISO 3297: 2007 Certified Organization)

Vol. 3, Issue 10, October 2014

8. In the Indian scenario, failure to read to changes and complacent attitude on the part of the management costs the industries very badly. There are numerous examples, where yesterdays Hero's have become to days ZERO solely due to their failure to adapt to the changing realities. Many organizations have paid a heavy price for their failure to draw the right meanings from the signals. **Therefore what is required is the ability to read the writings on the wall.**

V. CONCLUSION

Quality of work life is not the sole responsibility of the management but enlarges on workers, Union Leaders, Government Officials and Behavioural Scientists. Hickman Life presents six strategies in this context for improving quality of work life. They are:

- Development of Careers and career paths.
- Work design
- Organization Reward System
- Design and Maintenance of Group and inter group relationship
- Managerial Practice and
- Internal and external strategies for change
-

Mary parker Follet USA strongly believed that Management and labour share a common Purpose as Members of the same organizations, however the distraction is 'Order givers and Order Takers' she believed leadership should not come from the power of formal authority, as was traditions, but from the Manager's greater knowledge and expertise. She believed that the participative model of Management could increase cohesiveness, the sense of belonging and creativity. The root cause of conflicts is "desire to dominate" The tendency to acquire more power to oneself and reluctance to delegate authority is two consequences of such behaviour pattern. She advocated 'behavioural approach' in Management.

With the advent of new technology areas and competition arising out of borderless world, suddenly the importance of human resources dawned as a stark reality not affordable to be ignored. Redefined HR role has to be a catalyst to making work place a happier place to work and for having an enthusiastic, passionate workforce full of positive energy. HR role then itself has encompassed in its ambit the Managers but also CEO. Unhappy people make everyone unhappy including those work they are responsible. Hence the number of unhappy people in any organization must be minimized though it may not be possible to eliminate.

We must understand that half of our daily life is spent at work places and work life has become an integral part of our total life. Making work place happier has to be not only mandatory part of HR role but it is to be carried out by the HR functionaries with the same passion, spirit, enthusiasm, commitment and energy.

So for India is concerned it has to go a long way to achieve the goal. We know that the longest journey is performed when the first step is taken. **For, today is confined but tomorrow can be defined by us.** We hope that India would, very soon, emerge as a champion in the development of Human resources.

Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides.

REFERENCES

1. Akhilesh K.B. Human Resource Management 2000: Indian Perspectives - New Delhi.
2. Armstrong, Mcchael The Human Resources Management Year Book 1992: London
3. Aswathappa.K Kuman Resources and Personnel Management, New Delhi: Tata McGraw Hill
4. Ceriello, Vincent R. Human Resources Management System: Strategies, tactics and Techniques: New York Lexington Books, 1991
5. Dwivedi R.S. Managing Human Resources: Personnel Management in Indian Enterprises, New Delhi-1997
6. Gohsh, Subrathesh, Styles of Management in India, Japan and socialist countries, New Delhi, Oxford 1990
7. Snape, E D Managing Managers: Strategies and Techniques for Human Resource Management-Oxford: 1994