



ISSN: 0975-833X

RESEARCH ARTICLE

PERCEPTIONAL DIFFERENCES ON QUALITY OF WORK LIFE BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL WORKERS

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 16th August, 2015
Received in revised form
22nd September, 2015
Accepted 18th October, 2015
Published online 30th November, 2015

Key words:

Quality of Work Life,
Perceptual difference,
Urban workers, Rural workers,
Factors of QWL.

ABSTRACT

The term Quality of Work Life (QWL) was probably coined originally at first international conference of QWL at Arden House in 1972 (Davis and Cherns, 1975). From a business perspective, quality of work life (QWL) is important since there is evidence demonstrating that the nature of the work environment is related to satisfaction of employees and work related behaviors (Greenhaus *et al.*, 1987). As QWL is a multifaceted concept it differs from individual to individual. This study aims to reveal the perceptual differences on QWL that existing between urban and rural workers. 100 respondents (50 from each sector) were selected by convenience sampling technique. Data were collected with the use of well structured interview schedule. The overall reliability co-efficient of the instrument is $r=0.862$ Cronbach Alpha while Pearson Correlation was $0.924(p<0.001)$ showing that the instrument was reliable. The results revealed that there is a significant perceptual difference in the QWL factors namely worker dignity, superior's attitude towards fellowmen, working hours and quality time for family care.

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Citation: Vinotha, R. and Dr. Radhakrishnan, S., 2015. "Perceptual Differences on Quality of Work Life between Urban and Rural Workers", *International Journal of Current Research*, 7, (11), 22897-22899.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, work has occupied an important place in the life of human beings. How people have thought and felt about the working experience has been an age-old concern. Basically, people work for earnings to lead a decent life. The term quality of working life (QWL) was probably coined originally at first international conference on QWL at Arden House in 1972 (Davis and Cherns, 1975). Mills (1978) probably coined the term quality of working life and suggested that it had moved permanently into the vocabulary of unions and management, even if a lot of the people using it were not exactly sure what territory it covered. During the twentieth century, our social science conceptualizations regarding work have been labeled scientific management, human relations, socio-technical systems theory and now possibly holistic learning organizations. Cherns (1978) argued that: QWL owes its origins to the marriage of the structural, systems perspective of organizational behavior with the interpersonal, human relations, supervisory-style perspective (p.39). As the perception of quality of working life differs from individual to individual this study attempts to find the major perceptual differences about quality of working life between urban and rural workers.

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Review of Literature

The term 'Quality of Work Life (QWL)' is reputed to have originated from an international labor relations conference in 1972 at Arden House, Columbia University, New York (Davis and Cherns, 1975). While there seems to be no agreed upon definition of quality of work life, it has been used as a construct which relates to the well-being of employees. Some say that Mills (1978) may have first coined the term 'quality of work life' and he suggested that QWL had moved into the permanent vocabulary of both unions and management. From a business perspective, quality of work life (QWL) is important since there is evidence demonstrating that the nature of the work environment is related to satisfaction of employees and work-related behaviors (Greenhaus *et al.*, 1987). QWL is also found to affect employees' work responses in terms of organizational identification, job satisfaction, job involvement, job effort, job performance, intention to quit, organizational turnover and personal alienation (Carter *et al.*, 1990; Efraty and Sirgy, 1990; Efraty *et al.*, 1991).

QWL is said to differ from job satisfaction (Quinn and Shephard, 1974; Davis and Cherns, 1975; Hackman and Suttle, 1977; Kabanoff, 1980; Near *et al.*, 1980; Staines, 1980; Champoux, 1981; Kahn, 1981; Lawler, 1982) but QWL is thought to lead to job satisfaction. QWL refers to the impact of the workplace on satisfaction in work life (job satisfaction),

satisfaction in non-work life domains, and satisfaction with overall life (Sirgy *et al.*, 2001). Some researchers (Danna and Griffin, 1999) see QWL as a hierarchy of concepts that include non-work domains such as life satisfaction (at the top of the hierarchy), job satisfaction (at the middle of the hierarchy) and more work-specific facets of job satisfaction including such things as pay, co-workers, and supervisor (lower in the hierarchy). Although QWL originated over three decades ago, the interest in the construct has not waned entirely.

During the 1990s, scholars and practitioners regained an interest in the study of QWL and this concept has become of renewed concern and increased importance to the organization and its human resources both in terms of employee job satisfaction and in terms of the ultimate performance of the organization. People began to know more about quality of work life when the United Auto Workers and General Motors introduced a QWL program for work reform (Beer *et al.*, 1985; May, 1999). The list of QWL factors and literature review is not meant to be exhaustive of all possible theories or variables rather the emphasis in this study is placed on testing the relative frequency with which various QWL factors emerge while analyzing employees' versions of high-quality working-life experiences.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

The study used a comparative and descriptive survey design. A thorough review of literature was conducted before selecting the topic of the study.

Aim of the study

This study focused on the major perceptual differences about quality of working life that emerges between rural and urban based workers.

Sample

Totally 100 respondents (50 workers each from urban and rural sector) were selected as sample size. Respondents from Chennai city were selected to represent the urban sector and for rural sector workers from Ambathurai village in Dindigul district were selected. A convenient sample technique was used to select the respondents.

Instrument

A set of six factors were selected for the study after going through the literature. A structured interview schedule was constructed utilizing these six measures namely, pay and other benefits, dignity of worker, friendly colleagues, superior's attitude towards fellowmen, working hours and quality time for family care.

A structured interview schedule was constructed utilizing these eight measures of pay and other benefits, work place safety, work place dignity, friendly colleagues, superior attitude towards fellowmen, non-harassing verbal communication, hours of working and quality time for family care. The schedule was specifically designed to accomplish the objectives of the study. The instrument consisted of 24 items web-based questionnaire (Carayon, Schoepke, Hoonakker, Haims, and Brunette, 2004) were scored on a five point scale ranging from 1 to unimportant, 2 to less important, 3 to neutral, 4 to important, 5 to more important. The overall reliability coefficient of the instrument is $r=0.862$ cronbach alpha while Pearson Correlation was $0.924(p<0.001)$ showing that the interview schedule was reliable. Group discussions were conducted to collect further relevant data.

Analysis

Analysis was conducted using the statistical software program SPSS©. To look for significant differences between urban and rural workers in the QWL factors, the mean values reported by those workers were compared using t-test.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the consistency of relationship of the factors with quality of working life. The results showed that there is a high relationship at significant level of 1%. It is clearly identified from Table 2 that there some perceptual differences on Quality of Working Life between Urban and Rural based workers. There is no significance difference in the factors namely pay and other benefits and friendly colleagues. There is significant difference in the factors worker dignity, superior's attitude towards fellowmen, working hours and quality time for family care. The preference for high pay and other benefits and friendly colleagues was very high among both the urban and as well as the rural workers. In contradict with the urban workers, the rural workers preferred worker dignity, superior's attitude and quality time for family care. The urban workers more preferred the hours of working factor than the rural workers.

Table 1. Relationship between Factors and Quality of Work Life

	Quality of work life	
	r	p
Pay and other benefits	.503**	<.001
Dignity of worker	.310**	<.001
Friendly colleagues	.469**	<.001
Superior's attitude towards fellowmen	.418**	<.001
Working hours	.396**	<.001
Quality time for family care	.374**	<.001

** Significant at 1% level

Table 2. QWL factors for urban and rural workers

	Pay and other benefits	Worker dignity	Friendly colleagues	Superior's attitude	Working hours	Quality time for family care
Urban workers [mean]	30.86	18.04	31.16	20.03	28.62	18.62
Rural workers [mean]	30.75	22.31	31.54	30.14	22.24	21.13
t-test (p value)	0.503	0.14	0.9	.01	.03	.05

DISCUSSION

It was expected that rural workers may less prefer the factor pay and other benefits than urban workers. While group discussing it is revealed that even though the cost of living is less in rural sector the pay getting too is less compared to urban workers. As human beings are always expects emotional support from the peers the friendly colleagues factor is preferred by both the urban and rural sector workers. The factor working hours got more preference by the urban workers as they tend to do some other work for more earning in the rest of the time. Generally rural sector workers' attitude is filled with emotions. So there is no speculation while they preferred worker dignity and superior's attitude towards fellowmen. On contrary with urban workers the rural workers want to spend more quality time with their family members. The limitation of this study is the sample size is too small thus limiting the generalizability of the results.

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