# QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AS A HR SUB-SYSTEM: A STUDY ON PERCEPTION OF EMPLOYEES

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## Abstract

*The present research on Quality of work life as a HR sub-system: A study on perception of employees is an attempt to identify the factors affecting the Quality of Work Life in the organization along with the perception of the employees regarding the quality of life. A descriptive cum exploratory research design was adopted for the purpose of the study. A sample of 70 employees from middle and top level management of an organization were interviewed to find out the factors affecting quality of life along with their perception.*

*The primary data was collected by administrating the interview schedule along with observation and discussionmethod. The result of the study clearly demonstrates that majority of the respondents were satisfied with drinking water facility, canteen and medical facility provided by the company along with other measures. It was noted that there is strong association between age and the health & safety related working conditions such as drinking water facility, canteen facility, medical facility, transportation, recreation, library, lunchroom, temperature control, safety measures. The study suggests Employee's contribution in the organization must be considered and appreciated and the organization should allow employees to participate in all decision making process.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION:

The term 'quality of work life' has different connotation to different persons. For example, to a worker in an assembly line, it may just mean a fair day's pay, safe working conditions, and a supervisor who treats him/her with dignity. To a young new entrant, it may mean opportunities for advancement, creative tasks and a successful career. To academics it means the degree to which members of work organization are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experiences in the organization.

Quality of work life is fundamentally a philosophy or an approach that can permeate many different activities in the workplace. For example, if the performance appraisal program moves from a scenario where the supervisor plays god, to one of a joint superior-subordinate review and evaluation, it could be characterized as an improvement in QWL. Job enlargement and enrichment, instead of highly specialized job assignments, are also frequently described as QWL programs. Joint union-management programs to reduce accidents and prevent health problems are QWL programs. Merely cleaning up the workplace, improving the lighting, and painting the walls can be construed as an improvement in the quality of working life. Reducing stress on the job and providing counselors are also similarly categorized.

**Lehrer** describes QWL as a *process of labour-management collaboration*. He suggests that workers should have greater participation in decisions which influence them at the work place. **Hackman and Shuttle** describes QWL from varied viewpoints. From a professional viewpoint, it refers to industrial democracy, increased worker participation in corporate decision-making, or a culmination of the goals of human relations. In terms of management perspective, it relates to *a variety of efforts to improve productivity through improvements in the human, rather than the capital or technological, inputs of production.* From the standpoints of the characteristics of individual workers, it refers to the degree to which members of a work organization are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experience in the organization. From the Union's perspective, it is a more equitable sharing of the income and resources of the work organization, and more humane and healthier working conditions.

## Evolution of Quality of Work Life

**Walton (1973)** attributes the evolution of QWL to various phases in history. Legislation enacted in early 20$^{th}$ century to protect employees from job-injury and to eliminate hazardous working conditions, followed by the unionization movement in the 1930s and 1940s were the initial steps. Emphasis was given to 'job security, due process at the work place and economic gains for the worker'. The 1950s and the 1960s saw the development of different theories by psychologists proposing a 'positive relationship between morale and productivity', and the possibility that improved human relations would lead to the enhancement of both. Attempts at reform to acquire equal employment opportunity and job enrichment schemes also were introduced. Finally, in the 1970s the idea of QWL was conceived which, according to Walton, is broader than these earlier developments and is something that must include 'the values that were at the heart of these earlier reform movements' and 'human needs and aspirations.'

## Current status of Quality of Work Life Efforts

In theory, QWL is simple-it involves giving workers the opportunity to make decisions about their jobs, the design of their workplaces, and what they need to make products of to deliver services most effectively. It requires managers to treat workers with dignity on the job. Its focus is on employees and management operating the business together.

In practices, its best illustrations can be found in the auto, steel, food, electronics, and consumer products industries, in plants characterized by self-managing work teams, flat organizational structures, and challenging roles for all. It requires a willingness to share power, extensive training for workers and managers, and considerable patience by all involved. Workers must get to know the basics of cost, quality, profits, losses, and customer satisfaction by being exposed to more than a narrowly defined job. Managers must come to understand their new role: leaders, helpers, and information gatherers. None of this is simple or easily done.

One reviewer found that QWL efforts often require 3 to 10 years or more to become fully integrated into a business.

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## 1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Quality of Work Life refers to the quality of relationship between employees of the total working environment. The basis underlying Quality of Work Life is the humanization of work which means developing a work environment that ensures self respect to the employees, stimulates his resourceful abilities and facilities self growth.

Quality of Work Life plays a significant role in overall job satisfaction and employees involvement in the organization. In the entire process of Quality of Work Life sound culture and positive management and employee relationship provide the wheel to implement it. The effectiveness of the organization depends on the efficiency of its employees. The efficiency of employees depends, to some extent, on the environment in which they work or perform. The Human Resources have the need to derive satisfaction from the work they do. The environment, in which the Human Resources work, plays a pivotal role in fulfilling this need. Now the question arises, what are the variables, which bring about satisfaction to work life?

To know the answer of this question in this study an effort has been made to identify the factors affecting the Quality of Work Life along with the perception of the employees regarding the quality of life.

## 1.3 REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Some of the important and relevant studies that have been reviewed are as follows:-

**R. Sheth (1990)** in his study describes, "Wherever the social order was seriously threatened by external aggression or internal conflicts, there was a vigorous efforts to adapt the social, religious and philosophical heritage to the emerging needs. As knowledge and learning ceased to be a preserve of the Brahmin priestly classes, the non-religious thinkers and leaders began to synthesize the qualify of life represented by the Western culture." According to Sheth "reality (truth, God or whatever else on may seek) was bridged with the hard facts of social life (poverty, deprivation, social injustice, discrimination, etc.). Work was comprehended both in terms of

one's social obligation to resolve social problems within the framework of the values of social quality, justice and liberty and also the means of spiritual uplift.

"The contemporary stories of organizations like General Motors are of HRM and QWL achievements and not of downsizing and closure programs occurring simultaneously in other parts of the organization..... Like the myths of the cowboy and the Wild West which served to obscure the reality of the massacre of the Indians, so HRM can serve to obscure the assault on the union movement in the **USA.(Guest, 1990:519)**

According to **Heinz Weihrich and Harold Koontz (1994),** one of the most interesting approaches to motivation is the Quality of Work Life program, which is a system approach to job design and a promising development in the broad area of job enrichment, combined with a grounding in the socio-technical systems approach to management. QWL is not only a very broad approach to job enrichment but also an interdisciplinary field of inquiry and action combining industrial and organization psychology and sociology, industrial engineering, organization theory and development, motivation and leadership theory, and industrial relations. Although QWL rose to prominence only in the 1970s, there are now hundreds of case studies and practical programs and a number of QWL centers, primarily in the United States, Great Britain and Scandinavia.

According to **Wavne F. Cascio (1993),** there are two ways of looking at what Quality of Work Life means. One way equates QWL with a set of objectives organizational conditions and practices (e.g., promotion-from-within policies, democratic supervision, employee involvement, and safe working conditions). The other way equates QWL with employees' perceptions that they are safe, relatively well satisfied, and able to grow and develop as human beings. This way relates QWL to the degree to which the full range of human needs is met.

According to renowned management consultant, **Sharu S. Ranganekar,** the following are the factors (Human Aspects) that matter in the future for achieving excellence:

   a. Sense of Identity
   b. Sense of Importance
   c. Sense of Development

One recent survey of 521 of US's largest firms indicated that more than 90% offered alternative work schedules ranging from flextime to job sharing to summers off. These programs are designed to help employees balance their work and non-work lives (e.g., families, leisure, community activities) Flexible Working Arrangements

In addition, the federal government's survey in U.S. of 325000 employees who participated in a flextime program discovered that 90% of them believed the program was at least somewhat important for resolving their work-family problems

## 1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN:

The research design used in the present study was descriptive cum exploratory in nature. 70 respondents from middle level and top level management employees of an organization were selected purposely as the universe of the study.

### Tools and Techniques Used for Data Collection and Data Analysis

The study was based on both primary as well as secondary data. The primary data was collected from the employees by using the local language. The secondary data were collected from the books, internet, magazine, documents, files, brochures etc. Interview schedule was used as the main tool for data collection along with interview schedule, observation and discussion methods were also used. For analyzing and interpreting the data simple percentage is used as a statistical technique.

## 1.5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The results of statistical tests related to perception of employees on quality of work life are presented in the following tables.

**Table No– 1.1: Age-wise distribution of the respondents**

| Age | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 20-30 | 46 | 65.71 |
| 31- 40 | 18 | 25.71 |
| 41 and above | 06 | 08.58 |
| TOTAL | 70 | 100.00 |

The table 1.1 shows that majority of the respondents (65.71%) were in the age group of 20-30 years, followed by 25.71% from the age group of 31-40 years. in the age group of 41 years and above only 8.58% of the respondents were reported.

**Table No– 1.2: Perception on Health and Safety**

| Category | Always f (%) | Mostly f (%) | Rarely f (%) | Never f (%) | No response f (%) | Total f (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Drinking water | 42(60) | 26(37.2) | 1(1.4) | - | 1(1.4) | 70(100) |
| Canteen Facility | 22(31.4) | 38(54.3) | 9(12.9) | 1(1.4) | - | 70(100) |
| Medical Facility | 29(41.4) | 38(54.3) | 1(1.4) | 2(2.9) | - | 70(100) |
| Transport Facility | 19(27.1) | 27(38.6) | 11(15.7) | 11(15.7) | 2(2.9) | 70(100) |
| Recreation facility | 25(35.7) | 25(35.7) | 14(20) | 5(7.2) | 1(1.4) | 70(100) |
| Library Facility | 27(38.6) | 30(42.9) | 12(17.1) | 1(1.4) | - | 70(100) |
| Lunchroom Facility | 32(45.7) | 30(42.9) | 7(10) | - | 1(1.4) | 70(100) |
| Air cooler/conditioner (temperature control) | 28(40) | 30(42.9) | 10(14.4) | 2(2.9) | - | 70(100) |
| Safety Measures and training related to safety measures | 35(50) | 30(42.9) | 3(4.2) | 2(2.9) | - | 70(100) |

(The figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage)

The above table 1.2 shows that majority of the respondents, that is 60% were always satisfied with the drinking water facility provided in the company while 1.4% were rarely satisfied. Out of 70 respondents, 54.3% of the respondents replied that they are satisfied with the canteen facility and medical facility while 2.9% of the respondents are not satisfied with the medical facility provided by the company.

Out of 70 respondents 31.4% of the respondents were either rarely satisfied or never satisfied with the transport facility. Majority of the respondents, that is 71.4% were either always or mostly satisfied with the recreational facility provided to them. Majority of the respondents, that was 42.9% were fully satisfied with the lunchroom facility as well as with the library facility provided in the company whereas 17.1% of the respondents were rarely satisfied with the library facility. 42.9% of the respondents were mostly satisfied with the temperature control system of their company whereas 14.4% were rarely satisfied with the same. Out of 70 respondents, 50% of the respondents were always satisfied with the safety measures and the training related to safety measures provided by their company.

**Table No– 1.3:  Views on Opportunity to Develop Human Capabilities**

| Category | Always f (%) | Mostly f (%) | Rarely f (%) | Never f (%) | Total f (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Learn new skills while on job | 38(54.3) | 25(35.7) | 5(7.1) | 2(2.9) | 70(100) |
| Job makes use of my existing skills appropriately | 23(32.9) | 45(64.2) | 2(2.9) | - | 70(100) |
| Consulted before any major decision | 13(18.6) | 22(31.4) | 28(40) | 7(10) | 70(100) |
| Encouragement by company for participate in administration/management | 25(35.7) | 24(34.3) | 15(21.4) | 6(8.6) | 70(100) |

(The figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage)

The above table 1.3 shows that majority of the respondents, which is 54.3% feel that they learn new skills while on job while 10% of the respondents rarely or never feel the same. Out of 70 respondents, 97.1% of the respondents were satisfied that their job makes them use their existing skills appropriately. Out of 70 respondents, 50% of the respondents feel that they were not being consulted before any major decision is taken in the company while the other 50% of the respondents do not feel the same and were satisfied. Majority of the respondents, that is 70% were satisfied that their company encourages them to participate in administration/management work while 8.6% of the respondents never feel the same.

**Table No– 1.4:    Attitude towards Career Planning and Growth**

| Category | Always f (%) | Mostly f (%) | Rarely f (%) | Never f (%) | No response f (%) | Total f (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quite satisfied with the promotional chances | 23(32.9) | 35(50) | 11(15.7) | - | 1(1.4) | 70(100) |
| Satisfied with the transfer policies of the company | 16(22.9) | 34(48.6) | 13(18.6) | 5(7.1) | 2(2.9) | 70(100) |
| Satisfied with the availability of career counseling facility. | 17(24.3) | 23(32.9) | 24(34.3) | 4(5.7) | 2(2.9) | 70(100) |
| Promotion chances | 10(14.4) | 43(61.4) | 15(21.4) | 1(1.4) | 1(1.4) | 70(100) |

(The figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage)

The above table shows that majority of the respondents that is 82.9% were always and mostly satisfied with their promotional chances in the company while 15.7% of the respondents were

rarely satisfied. 71.5% of the respondents were always and mostly satisfied with the transfer policies of their company while 25.7% were rarely or never satisfied with the same. Out of 70 respondents, 57.2% of the respondents were satisfied with the extent of available career counseling facility in the company while 34.3% of the respondents were rarely satisfied with the same. Majority of the respondents, that is 75.8% of the respondents feel that they have good chances for their promotion while 21.4% rarely feel the same.

**Table No– 1.5: Transfer as an opportunity for growth and development**

| Transfer as an opportunity for growth and development | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 58 | 82.86 |
| No | 12 | 17.14 |
| TOTAL | 70 | 100.00 |

The table 1.5 reveals that 82.86% of the respondents looking transfer as an opportunity for growth and development, while 17.14% of the respondents don't see transfer as an opportunity for growth and development.

**Table No– 1.6:  Consideration of personal problems before transfer by an organization**

| Consideration of personal problem before transfer | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 59 | 84.29 |
| No | 11 | 15.71 |
| TOTAL | 70 | 100.00 |

From the above table it can be seen that a majority 84.29% of the respondents had responded that personal problems/preferences and constraints are considered before transfer, while rest 15.71% of the respondents had responded that personal problems/preferences and constraints were not considered before transfer.

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**Table No– 1.7: Attitude towards Their Social Integration in the Company**

| Category | Always f (%) | Mostly f (%) | Rarely f (%) | Never f (%) | No response f (%) | Total f (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Possibility to mingle with colleagues during work hours | 32(45.7) | 24(34.3) | 13(18.6) | - | 1(1.4) | 70(100) |
| Boss always expects more | 16(22.9) | 41(58.6) | 11(15.7) | 1(1.4) | 1(1.4) | 70(100) |
| Atmosphere of good interpersonal relationship exits | 26(37.1) | 41(58.6) | 3(4.3) | - | - | 70(100) |
| Consulted about matters concerned to me | 23(32.9) | 40(57.1) | 7(10) | - | - | 70(100) |
| Acceptance of suggestions | 13(18.6) | 47(67.2) | 8(11.4) | 1(1.4) | 1(1.4) | 70(100) |
| Interferes by boss in work more than what is supposed to do | 13(18.6) | 6(8.6) | 33(47.1) | 17(24.3) | 1(1.4) | 70(100) |
| Free to give suggestions to the superior | 24(34.3) | 37(52.9) | 8(11.4) | - | 1(1.4) | 70(100) |
| Co-operation from subordinates | 24(34.3) | 43(61.5) | 3(4.2) | - | - | 70(100) |

(The figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage)

The above table shows that majority of the respondents that is 80% always or mostly mingled with their colleagues during work hours while 18.6% indicated that they really did. Out of 70 respondents, 58.6% of the respondents feel that their boss always expects more than what they do while 15.7% of the respondents feel that their boss rarely expected. Majority of the respondents, that is 95.7 agree that atmosphere of good interpersonal relationship exists in their company while 4.3% still rarely believe for the same. Majority of the respondents, that is 57.1% mostly feel that they are being consulted about matters concerned to them while 10% rarely think the same. Majority of the respondents, that is 67.2% indicate that their suggestions were accepted mostly in their company whereas 11.4% rarely feel the same. Out of 70 respondents, 71.4% of the respondents never or rarely feel that their boss interferes in their work more than what he is supposed to do whereas 18.6% of the respondents always feel that their boss interferes. Majority of the respondents, that is 52.9% mostly feel that they are free to give suggestions to their

superior whereas 11.4% rarely feel so. The 61.5% of the respondents feel that they receive good co-operation from their subordinates whereas 4.2% of the respondents rarely feel the same.

**Table No– 1.8: Satisfaction regarding training facilities**

| Satisfaction of training facilities | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 59 | 84.29 |
| No | 11 | 15.71 |
| TOTAL | 70 | 100.00 |

The table 1.8 indicates that 84.29% of the respondents were satisfied with available training facilities, while rest15.71% of the respondents was not satisfied with available training facilities.

**Table No– 1.9:  Views on usefulness of performance appraisal system**

| Usefulness of performance appraisal system | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Guiding job changes with the help of continuous learning | 20 | 28.57 |
| Facilitating fair and equal compensation based on performance ranks | 18 | 25.71 |
| Contribution towards employee growth and development | 32 | 45.71 |
| TOTAL | 70 | 100.00 |

From the above table it can be interpreted that a majority 45.71% of the respondents responded that performance appraisal system is useful in contribution towards employee growth and development, 28.57% of the respondents responded that performance appraisal system is useful in guiding job changes with the help of continuous learning, 25.71% of the respondents responded that performance appraisal system is useful in facilitating fair and equal compensation based on performance ranks.

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**Table No– 1.10: Role of job rotation and job enrichment helps in growth of employees**

| How job rotation and job enrichment helps in growth of employees | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Makes job more interesting | 25 | 35.71 |
| Provides more challenging opportunities | 35 | 50.00 |
| Helps to use abilities optimally | 10 | 14.29 |
| TOTAL | 70 | 100.00 |

From the above table it can be seen that a majority 50% of the respondents replied that job rotation and job enrichment helps in growth of employees by providing more challenges and opportunities, 35.71% of the respondents replied that it makes their jobs more interesting 14.29% of the respondent replied that it helps them to use their abilities optimally.

## 1.6 MAIN FINDINGS:

The major findings of the present study are given below:

- Majority of the respondents 65.71% were in the age group of 20-30 years
- As regard to the satisfaction with drinking water facility, it was found that 60% of the respondents were always satisfied.
- From the study it was found that54.3% of the respondents of the respondents were satisfied with the canteen facility and medical facility provided by the company.
- In relation to recreational facility it was found that 71.4% of the respondents were either always or mostly satisfied.
- The study show that 42.9% of the respondents were mostly satisfied with the lunchroom , temperature as well as with the library facility provided in the company
- The 50% of the respondents were satisfied with the safety measures and the training related to safety measures provided by the company.
- Majority ie.50% of the respondents feel that they are not being consulted before any major decision is taken in the company

- From the study it was found that 82.9% of the respondents were satisfied with their promotional chances in the company.

- The 71.5% of the respondents were satisfied with the transfer policies of their company

- Majority i.e. 82.86% of the respondents see transfer as an opportunity for growth and development.

- Majority i.e. 64.29% of the respondents responded that the supervisor is concerned about the welfare of the employees.

- The 51.43% of the respondents responded that training is an instrument for better performance in terms of productivity.

- In relation to training facility it was found that 84.29% of the respondents were satisfied with available training facilities.

- The study show that 45.71% of the respondents responded that performance appraisal system is useful in contribution towards employee growth and development.

- From the study it was also found that 50% of the respondents agreed that job rotation and job enrichment helps in growth of employees by providing more challenges and opportunities.

- 84.29% of the respondents replied that job security is good.

- It was noted that there is strong association between age and the health & safety related working conditions such as drinking water facility, canteen facility, medical facility, transportation, recreation, library, lunchroom, temperature control, safety measures.

- It was observed that there is strong association between gender and the health & safety related working conditions such as drinking water facility, canteen facility, medical facility, transportation, recreation, library, lunchroom, temperature control, safety measures.

## 1.7 SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the major findings, the following suggestions may be offered.

♦ Employee's contribution in the organization must be considered and appreciated.

♦ Employee's growth in the organization should be taken in to consideration.

♦ Employees must be provided conducive and pleasant working environment so that they can contribute in a proper way to the organization goal.

♦ The organization should allow employees to participate in all decision making process.

♦ It should be suggest that for better welfare facilities, housing facilities should be provided more adequately which will improved quality of work life of the respondents,

♦ Organization should conduct social get together programmes which can help in developing team work, belongingness and interpersonal relations.

**Strategies for Improving Quality of Work Life**

QWL is the shared responsibility, not only the management and workers but also the union leaders, government officials and behavioral scientists. In order to improve the quality of work life, the following things need to be strengthened:

- Employment conditions (physical environment, health, safety)

- Equitable rewards (Pay, incentives, benefits, services)

- Job security

- Participative climate and team spirit

- Training to employees, managers, and supervision so that they share the vision, values and culture of the organization.

- Recognition for work done, followed by rewards so as to encourage commitment and belongingness.

- Open and transparent management style.

- An atmosphere of trust and open communication.

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**1.8 CONCLUSION:**

The success of any organization is highly dependent on how it attracts recruits, motivates and retains its workforce. Today organizations need to be more flexible so that they are equipped to develop their workforce and enjoy their commitment.

Therefore, organizations are required to adopt a strategy to improve the employees' 'quality of work life' (QWL) to satisfy both the organizational objectives and employee needs. Quality of work life produces more humanized jobs. It seeks to serve higher order needs of the employees as well as their basic needs. It also seeks to bring out higher skills of the worker and provide an environment that encourages improving skills.

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