

Evaluation of Quality of Work Life and its Dimensions in Iranian Higher Education

Susan Bahrami (1)
Abbas Habibzadeh (2)

(1) PhD, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Humanity sciences, University of Qom, Qom, Iran

(2) PhD, Associate Professor, Faculty of Humanity sciences, University of Qom, Qom, Iran

Corresponding author:

Susan Bahrami,
Faculty of Humanity sciences, University of Qom,
Qom, Iran

Tel: +989134050837

Email: bahrami837@gmail.com

Abstract

Objectives: The purpose of this study was to evaluate Quality of Work Life (QWL) and its dimensions in a higher education institution Qom, Iran.

Research Design and methods: A descriptive and analytical research method was utilized. The Statistical population included all educational employees of Qom University during 2015-2016 academic year from which a sample of 240 was selected from 633 faculty members and employees of 6 faculties through stratified random sampling. The data collection instrument was QWL questionnaire adopted from Timossi et al. (2008). Face and content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by experts and its reliability was estimated as 0.81 through Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The gathered data was analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results: The findings showed in Qom University that QWL and its six dimensions (Safe and healthy working conditions, Immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities and talents, Social integration in the work organization, Constitutionalism in the work organization, Work and total life space and Social relevance of work life) mean scores were lower than mid-level. The two dimensions of QWL (Adequate and fair compensation, Opportunity for continued growth and security) were higher than mid-level while the lowest mean was related to Constitutionalism in the work organization. Significant differences were also observed regarding demographic variables.

Conclusion: QWL is an increasingly important organizational factor in health facilities. Recognizing work life within the context of the entire life, and approaching employee wellbeing through workplace factors is debated and speculated under the umbrella title of QWL.

Key words: Quality of work life; dimensions; Faculty members; employees; Higher Education

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Introduction

Higher education is the principal and main factor which addresses the requirement and challenges of industry and the society. The effectiveness and efficiency of the education industry is directly dependent on employees only because the substructure and technology is lesser required in comparison to other industries. On average, employees spend around ten hours daily at the work place, which is around one third of their entire life; this effects the overall employee's life. "Quality of Work Life (QWL)" is a human resource management concept which is used to recover the work life of employees. This in turn improves both the employee's family and social life. Today, QWL is regarded as an important dimension of the QWL. Moreover, a high QWL is crucial for organizations to attract and retain workers (1). QWL assessments of the organizational environment in accordance with a wide range of requests of their employees' wellbeing in the workplace can lead to career advancement (2, 3). QWL is the favourableness of a total job environment and working situations that are excellent for people in addition to the economic health of the organization (4). QWL is a philosophy, a set of values, which holds that people are the most important resource in the organization as they are truthful, responsible and capable of contributing valuable involvement and they should be treated with pride and respect (5, 6).

Once an organization offers QWL to their employees, it is a good indicator to boost its image in attracting and retaining employees. This is important as it indicates firms are able to offer a suitable working environment to employees (7).

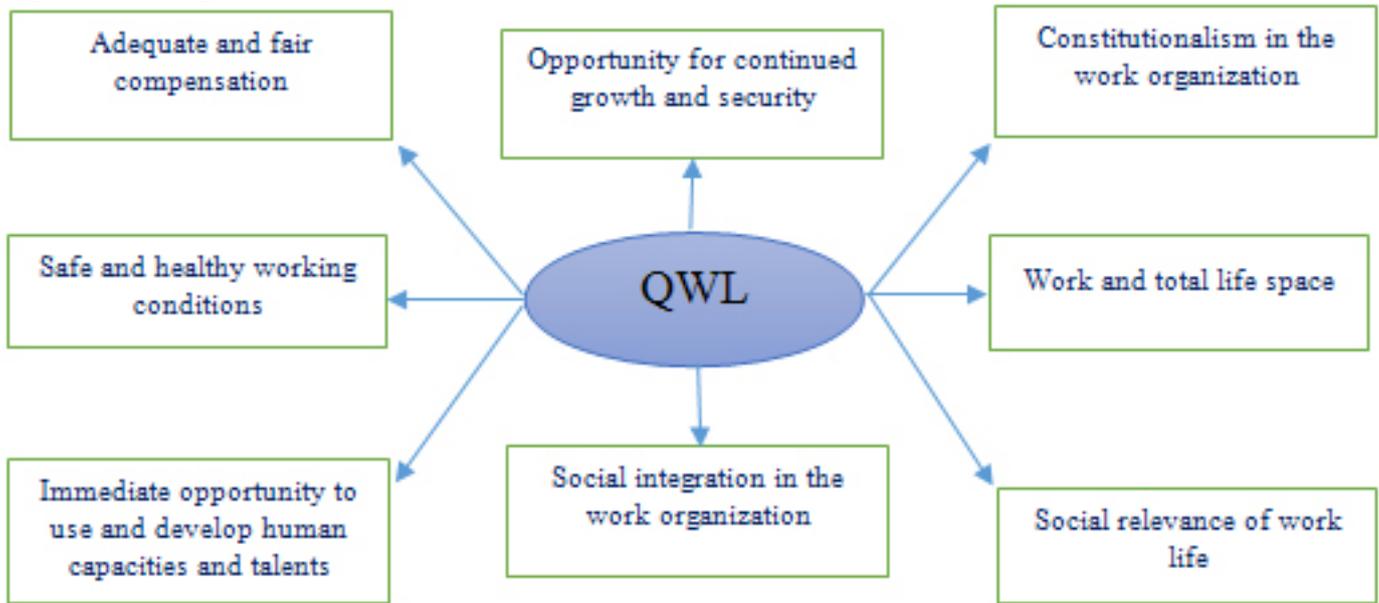
The aim of QWL culture is to generate a fear free organization in which employee involvement is pursued strongly. It generates a high grade of reciprocal commitment between the needs and development of the individual, and the aims and development of the organization (8). The evolution of QWL was created in late 1960s emphasizing the human dimensions of work that was focused on the quality of the relationship between the employee and the working environment (5, 6). Shamir and Solomon (1985) have defined QWL as a comprehensive construct that includes an individual's job-related well-being and the extent to which work skills are rewarding, fulfilling, and devoid of stress and other negative personal consequences(9). Sirgy et al. (2001) stated in their research that a new measure of QWL was developed based on need satisfaction and spillover theories. The measure was designed to meet the needs of an employee to capture the extent to which the work environment, job requirements, supervisory behavior, and auxiliary programs in an organization. They further explained that QWL differs from job satisfaction where by job satisfaction is construed as one of many consequences of QWL (3). Furthermore, QWL in an organization also concerns the contribution of workers in problem solving and decision making. Higher QWL would then connect with lower work-to-family interference (10). This review on the meanings of QWL indicates that QWL is a multi-dimensional construct. It is difficult to best conceptualize the quality of work life elements.

For instance, Casio (1992) determined that components of the qua QWL consist of employees' participation, job development, conflict resolution, communication, health, job security, equal compensation, safe environment, and sense of honor (2). Walton (1975) stressed that QWL was a significant approach to save human and environmental values which have been ignored due to technological advancement of economic growth and productivity (11). QWL was no longer a new issue in organizations because most past studies conducted by various researchers have proved that QWL was the most significant priorities that should be measured by an organization. Hackman and Oldhams (1980) mentioned that conceptual elements of QWL in relation to the association for work environment and employees personal needs. The work environment satisfied employees' personal needs that were considered to provide a positive interaction effect that will cause an excellent QWL (12). Work environment must be conducive as it is the place where employees will work and pass most of their time to do their work. Employees will still attempt to work hard to complete their task regardless of the workload when they find that their working environment is pleasant for them. If their salaries were better with good benefits that satisfied their personal needs they will stay and be loyal to the organization which is a good approach of employee retention in an organization. Walton, proposed eight main conceptual categories relating to QWL as (a) adequate and fair compensation, (b) safe and healthy working conditions, (c) immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities, (d) opportunity for continued growth and security, (e) social integration in the work organization, (f) constitutionalism in the work organization, (g) work and total life space and (h) social relevance of work life (5, 6, 13). Walton pointed out that QWL emphasized humanistic values and social responsibilities and suggested the QWL was eight dimensional constructs as shown in Figure 1 (next page).

QWL defines satisfaction of employees in seven foremost needs and consists of: (a) Health and safety needs, (b) Economic and family needs, (c) Social needs, (d) Esteem needs, (e) Actualization needs, (f) Knowledge needs and (g) Aesthetic needs (3). Wyatt and Wah (2001) also stated that Asia emphasized to a lesser degree on QWL compared to North America and Europe because of few organizations working using QWL programs and few research papers published on QWL in the South East Asia regions (14). Certo (2004) believes that QWL is the degree of opportunity of employees to make decisions that impact their work condition. The greater the opportunity of workforces to make such decisions, the higher the quality of work life is said to be. Employees would like to make decisions, that tend to create the following:

- 1) jobs that are interesting, challenging and responsible;
- 2) worker rewards through fair wages and recognition for worker contributions;
- 3) workplaces that are clean, safe, quiet and bright;
- 4) minimal but available supervision;
- 5) secure jobs that promote the development of friendly relations with other system members, and
- 6) organizations that provide for personal welfare and

Figure 1. The eight dimensional constructs of Walton’s QWL



medical attention (15). Luthans (2005) consider QWL as an attempt to develop more satisfying work situations through the collaborative efforts of management and employees. Many popular QWL projects provide opportunities for growth in the workers’ personal and professional lives. Some popular QWL activities include problem solving meetings with representatives of management, labor and members of product development teams (16). Serey (2006) defined that QWL was connected with meaningful and satisfying work. It includes an opportunity to utilize one’s skills and capacities, to confront challenges and situations that require self-initiative and self-direction, an activity that should be practiced by the persons in organization (17). Muftah (2011) mentioned that QWL was one of the key areas of human resource management that is attracting attention and research focus. It is a philosophy that considers persons as the most important resources in the organization and views them as an “asset” to the organization rather than as “costs” (18). Hisk et al. (2010) indicated that by motivating communication between employer and employee, increasing experience to the working environment can improve self-efficacy and skill of more adaptive coping strategies (19). Gangly (2010) indicated that the selected group of university employees supposed different aspects of their QWL as uncongenial viz: Autonomy, top management support and worker’s control mainly or they had a certain amount of dilemma in commenting on a few other aspects such as personal growth opportunities and work complexity mainly bearing the potential involving a slight trend of negative opinion (20). Kumar and Deo (2011) did a study to measure the effect of stress on QWL of college teachers. Findings exposed that junior teachers had more stress than senior teachers. Also female teachers were feeling more stress in their job in comparison to male teachers (21). Arif and Ilyas (2013) focused on QWL of private universities. This study also explored the QWL effects on employee commitment, engagement, job involvement and reputation of the university (22). Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine the QWL and its dimensions at Qom University.

In this research, the scores of employees on the main factors such as adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities, opportunity for continued growth and security, social integration in the work organization, constitutionalism in the work organization, work and total life space and social relevance of work life, were analyzed.

Methodology

This research was a descriptive and analytical research method. The research population included all educational employees (Faculty members and employees) in Qom University; 633 individuals, where 240 individuals were chosen as the sample using Cochran’s formula.

$$n = \frac{\frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}}{1 + \frac{1}{N} \left(\frac{z^2 pq}{d^2} - 1 \right)}$$

Data were gathered by one questionnaire: QWL questionnaire, consisting of 8 variables including Adequate and fair compensation, Safe and healthy working conditions, Immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities and talents, Opportunity for continued growth and security, Social integration in the work organization, Constitutionalism in the work organization, Work and total life space and Social relevance of work life. The questionnaire contained 47 questions of which 29 questions were for determining QWL according to Walton’s theory with a five-point Likert scale (1=very little, 5=very much) used. To gather data from the respondents, an established measuring instrument was adopted and employed which was developed by Timossi et al. (2008) for QWL (23). To collect the data, the samples were chosen through simple random sampling. Of the 240 returned questionnaires, 5 were incomplete. The residual 235 valid

and complete questionnaires were used for the quantitative analysis. To verify the questionnaires validity face and content method and authority opinions were utilized. Reliability coefficient of questionnaires were estimated through Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Table 1). The questionnaires were distributed among the participants by the researcher who tried to attend for clarification if needed and after two weeks the questionnaires were collected by the researcher. According to the researchers' follow-up and participants' cooperation, 95% questionnaires were returned to the researchers.

Ethical Considerations

The questionnaires were distributed among examinees by the researchers who tried to attend for clarification if needed. To observe morality in research, the examinee's agreement to participate was acquired. Impartiality and avoiding bias by the researchers, was achieved utilizing the newest informative and scientific resources, observing objectivity while analyzing data, and avoiding distortion of data and keeping the questionnaire data confidential.

Data Analysis

Mean scores of the QWL were calculated through descriptive statistics. Besides, one way ANOVA, t-test, Fisher test and MANOVA were used to determine differences among them with demographic variables. The study used SPSS, version 21, and the level of significance was considered as 0.05.

Results

69% of faculty employees, who participated in the research, were male, and 31% were female. 67% of the members who responded were age 31-40. 46.5% of the members who responded were Bachelor, 86% were married and 39.9% of faculty members, who participated in the research, had a 6-10 year working background.

According to the result, in Table 2, the mean score of the QWL and six dimensions were less than mid-level, and Social integration in the work organization, highest mean score was 2.50 ± 0.506 and Constitutionalism in the work organization the lowest mean score which was 2.23 ± 0.680 . The two QWL dimensions where mean scores were higher than mid-level were: Adequate and fair compensation mean score at 3.21 ± 0.960 and Opportunity for continued growth and security mean score at 3.13 ± 0.947 . ($P < 0.001$). (Table 2 - next page).

According to the findings of multivariate analysis (MANOVA) showed that observed F at confidence level of $p \leq 0.05$ for QWL dimensions according to demographic characteristics was significant. Eta square for age was not significant. But Eta square for sex, working background, married status, and grade was significant (Table 3).

According to findings of table (3), LSD test results identified that Social relevance of work life in married employees was more than in single employees, Opportunity for continued growth and security to grade employees with MS grade were more than those with Bachelor grade. LSD test results identified that Social relevance of work life to sex of employees with males more than with females and Adequate and fair compensation to working background of 15-20 years were more than those with 5-10 year working background. Furthermore, LSD test results identified that QWL dimensions in Faculty members were more than those of employees of the Faculty.

Table1: Variables' alpha coefficients

Variables	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Adequate and fair compensation	0.85
Safe and healthy working conditions	0.71
Immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities and talents	0.82
Opportunity for continued growth and security	0.91
Social integration in the work organization	0.83
Constitutionalism in the work organization	0.80
Work and total life space	0.72
Social relevance of work life	0.83
QWL	0.81

Table 2: Mean and Standard deviation of QWL dimensions (=3, df = 239)

Variables	\bar{X}	S	\bar{X}_d	t _{ob}	P
QWL dimensions	2.33	0.816	0.051	11.32	<0.001
Adequate and fair compensation	3.21	0.960	0.088	8.45	0.008
Safe and healthy working conditions	2.42	0.819	0.057	5.41	0.004
Immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities and talents	2.37	0.841	0.061	10.57	<0.001
Opportunity for continued growth and security	3.13	0.947	0.092	8.31	<0.001
Social integration in the work organization	2.50	0.506	0.066	6.05	<0.001
Constitutionalism in the work organization	2.23	0.680	0.063	4.11	0.002
Work and total life space	2.30	0.602	0.087	5.22	0.003
Social relevance of work life	2.48	0.729	0.097	7.45	0.007

Table 3: Paired comparison of Mean Differences and standard deviation of QWL dimensions

QWL dimensions	Demographic Variables	Mean Differences	Sig
Work and total life space	married status married and single	0.9612	0.005
Opportunity for continued growth and security	grade MS and Bachelor	0.4302	<0.001
Social relevance of work life	Sex male and female	0.7915	0.006
Adequate and fair compensation	working background 15-20 year and 5-10 year	0.3482	<0.001
QWL dimensions	Educational employees Faculty members and employees	0.679	<0.001

Discussion

A new world can be built by young brains and educational institution employees have a major contribution for nurturing, and educating these brains. The educational employees' working life and environment play a major role in their life. QWL is important to organizational performance and it is an important factor that affects employee motivation at work (13).

Research results showed that QWL dimensions mean such as safe and healthy working conditions, immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities, social integration in the work organization, constitutionalism in the work organization, work and total life space and social relevance of work life, were lower than mid-level and QWL dimensions mean such as adequate and fair compensation, opportunity for continued growth and security were higher than mid-level. And so, research results showed that Social relevance of work life in married employees was more than in single employees, Opportunity for continued growth and security to grade employees with MS grade were more than those with Bachelor grade. The results identified that Social relevance of work life to sex of employees was

more with males than those with females and Adequate and fair compensation to working background with 15-20 years was more than those with a 5-10 year working background. Furthermore, the results identified that QWL dimensions in Faculty members was more than those employees of Faculty.

Results of this study are almost compatible with a study that showed that the selected group of university employees perceived different aspects of their QWL as either uncongenial viz. Autonomy, top management support and worker's control mainly or they have had a certain amount of dilemma in commenting on a few other aspects such as personal growth opportunities and work complexity mainly bearing the potential involving a slight trend of negative opinion (20). Kumar and Deo (2011) did a study to measure the effect of stress on QWL of college teachers. They took 100 college teachers of universities of Bihar and Jharkhand and studied their different perceptions of QWL. Findings exposed that junior teachers had more stress than senior teachers. Also female teachers felt more stress in their job in comparison to male teachers (21). Arif and Ilyas (2013) focused on quality of work life of private universities in Lahore, Pakistan. They explored various dimensions of QWL which affected life and the attitude

of teachers. This quantitative study took 360 members of university and analyzed their perception of QWL. This study also investigated the QWL effects on employee commitment, engagement, job involvement and reputation of the university (22). This research suggested that the perceived value of work, work climate, work-life balance and satisfaction are the main factors which shape the work attitude and also improve employees work life. Therefore, the educational employees (Faculty members and employees) feel that the University leaders do not: make any attempt to eliminate unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, provide immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities, social integration in the work organization, constitutionalism in the work organization, work and total life space and social relevance of work life in the organization. However, this perception exists and the management should take some measures to persuade the Faculty members to express their beliefs where they feel that the senior manager value their beliefs and managers should pay attention to it to increase the QWL dimensions. In order to justify this finding, it could be said that if senior managers encourage educational employees to freely express their opinions, so they have to create the ground for more participation in the organizational duties. There are some limitations of this study. It should be noted that the generalizability of the research results may be limited to educational employees' university population. This study was conducted in Qom University, so these results cannot be generalized to all universities in Iran. Secondly, the data collecting instrument was questionnaire; thus, a common method bias may be present.

Conclusion and Recommendations

An educational institution is made up of people who possess skills, ability and aptitudes that create a competitive advantage for it. Various functions of an institution are planned, executed and controlled by human resources. So it is essential for the educational institutions to provide proper management of human resources in order to achieve their objectives efficiently and effectively. The management of human resources plays a key role in opening up new opportunities for promoting the growth of both individual and institution. Through 'Quality of work life' an institute works in the same direction. Now-a-days, jobs are so demanding that, they imbalance the family and work life due to job pressure and conflicting interests. So it is essential for the educational institution to develop a better and effective working environment, where employees should be treated as a key element rather than working as a machine. In order to attract and retain

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