

The Drivers of Quality of Working Life (QWL): A Critical Review

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Abstract: To achieve the quality of work life, regular effort is required by the organizations which offer the employees more opportunities for their job effectiveness and collaboration on the overall effectiveness. The high quality of work life (QWL) is essential for all organizations to continue attracting and retaining employees. QWL is a comprehensive program which is designed to increase employees' satisfaction. The purpose of this paper is to find the drivers that can affect the quality of work life. Based on an intensive literature review which was conducted to identify the frequency of eight drivers in 15 selected research papers, it has been chosen specific drivers which estimated to have an impact on QWL. The factors that investigated are: reward, benefits and compensation; job satisfaction; career development; top management involvement; communication; employee motivation; cohesion of work and life; and safety and security. The findings of the study reveal that the most frequent drivers are rewarded, benefits and compensation, followed by career development, communication, and safety and security respectively in order of frequency. The other drivers top management involvement, cohesion of work and life, job satisfaction and employee motivation were found to be less frequent in the literature review.

Key words: Quality of Work Life; Drivers of QWL

INTRODUCTION

To achieve the quality of work life, regular effort is required by the organizations which offer the employees more opportunities for their job effectiveness and collaboration on the overall effectiveness. Therefore, every organization with optional and influential effectiveness is looking for the ways to cause the employees to reach to a degree of ability that apply their own ability and intelligence which can be accomplished through appropriate QWL. QWL movement represents a sort of organization culture or management approach which employees feel ownership. Autonomy, responsibility and self-steam. QWL includes all the measurements which are taken for the preservation of an employee's body and soul, and brings about their satisfaction and gratitude. QWL is a complex issue, and is a combination of job environment and personally overall assessment process of job variable as reported by Behnam, (2012). Better Quality of Working Life (QWL) is very important for organizations to achieve its organizational goals. Creating high quality of working life for employees can enhance their productivity and increase their job satisfaction. Organizations which seek to attract and retain qualified, committed and motivated employees have to understand the term quality of working life and invest to build desirable one. During the last two decades, the organization in the developed world increased the concern in QWL aiming to build a high quality corporate culture and increase the organizational performance. However, there are many barriers such as perception of fairness, job stress, equal opportunity for reward and promotion job security and upward and downward communication inside the organization (Ethgen, Bruyere, Richy, Dardennes and Reginster, 2004).

QWL refers to an employee satisfaction with working life. It is a multidimensional concept and covers an employee's feelings about various dimensions of his or her work including the job content, work environment, pay and reward systems, training and career development opportunities, participation in decision-making, occupational health and safety, work stress, job security, organizational and interpersonal relations, and the relationship between life on and off the job (Adhikari and Gautam, 2010; Lau, 2000).

Improving employees' QWL is a prerequisite to increase their organizational productivity. High QWL organizations achieve better productivity and become highly competitive (Korunka, Hoonakker and Carayon, 2008).). Positive results of QWL include reduced absenteeism, lower turnover and improved employee job satisfaction (Barling, Kelloway and Iverson, 2003). QWL enhances employees' dignity through job satisfaction and humanizing the work by assigning meaningful jobs, giving opportunities to develop human capacity to perform well, ensuring job security, adequate pay and benefits, and providing safe and healthy working conditions (Korunka *et al.*, 2008; Barling *et al.*, 2003; Adhikari and Gautam, 2010; Gupta, Gupta and Commerce, 2010).

The purpose of this study is to find the most extracted drivers in 15 selected studies that investigated the drivers of QWL. Based on an intensive literature review, the 15 research articles were selected.

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This study consists of four sections. First section presented the introduction of the study. The second sections review the literature pertaining to the factors that selected to be extracted and reviewed. The third section draws the research methodology of this paper. Fourth section analyses the selected article and presents the findings through the use of frequency analysis.

1. Literature Review:

1.1 Quality of Working Life:

The term Quality of Work Life was initially introduced in the late 1960's as a way of focusing on the influences of experience (Bowditch and Buono, 2005). The monitoring of employees' views about the quality of their work and the quality of their work life helps the employers get an idea of where improvements in an organization can be made. There are different objectives for different organizations, but the overriding elements seem to be; the impact of work on the employee, worker participation in problem solving and decision-making, and a structure which rewards an employee for input into the work process (Sinha, 2012).

QWL is one of the most major issues in every organization, including job security, better reward systems, higher pay; opportunity for growth, participative groups, increased organizational productivity, and a good indicator to boost its image in attracting and retaining employees (Beauregard, 2007). Quality of Work Life can be defined with regard to the employees' satisfaction, work related behaviours (Bagtasos, 2011), the attempt to develop more satisfying work conditions through the collaborative efforts of management and employees. Job security, stability and continuance of that job (Probst, 2003). Attracting and retaining the employees and improving one's work to satisfy the personal needs (Akdere, 2006). Confidence about QWL is one of the best methods to attract and preserving talent staffs and to obtain better performance in an organization (Farjad and Varnous, 2013). QWL is meeting different needs of stuffs including social needs, need to esteem, need to use skills (Farjad and Varnous, 2013).

Abbasi *et al.*, (2011) conducted a comparative study of quality of life and family performance in satisfied and unsatisfied groups of staff in industrial units of Ardabil province. The results indicate that there is a significant difference between satisfied and unsatisfied group regarding quality of life. However, there was no significant difference between satisfied and unsatisfied group in terms of family performance. The findings also show that the quality of work life has a positive relation to other variables in the organization such as performance, efficiency, organizational commitment and job satisfaction which the latter is one of the consequences of quality of life.

1.2 Drivers of QWL:

Although research has uncovered important predictors of QWL, yet it has been absent present and has not been fully explored. To date, much of the empirical research on QWL has implicitly, if not explicitly, adopted a contemporary view of job satisfaction, stress, labour relations and a broad based view of the occupation. Past scholars have offered a variety of definitions and suggestions of what constitutes QWL. For instance, QWL is a philosophy, a set of principles, which holds that people are the most important resource in the organization as they are trustworthy, responsible and capable of making valuable contributions and they should be treated with dignity and respect (Straw and Heckscher, 1984). QWL inside an organization is estimated through measurement of satisfaction, low absence, and high motivation of staffs (Ahmad *et al.*, 2010).

Gillet *et al.*, (2013) in their study on nurse found that the distributive justice and interactional justice were found to fully mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and nurses' quality of work life. In addition, nurses' quality of work life positively related to their work engagement. It is clearly seen that the transformational leaders may help ensure nurses' quality of work life which in turn increases their work engagement.

Talebi *et al.*, (2012) conducted a study to find the relationship between the related factors of job quality and building design, and employees' rate of effectiveness in the banking industry. The findings of the study show that there is a significant relationship between the variables of salary and benefits, job security healthy and secure work environment, autonomy at work, providing the basis for skills education, and determining the job development direction with the employees' effectiveness. Zare, Sari and Kor (2012) flawed quantitative approach to examine the QWL of employees at the hospital. The findings indicated that the QWL is high in the majority of residents, but the QWL is still not desirable in a significant proportion of them.

Reviewing the literature, Different authors have suggested different drivers for the improvement of quality of work life. While some of them attribute the drivers to financial indicators (Walton, 1973; Sinha, 2012; Hosseini, Jorjafki and Ashrafi, 2010), others relate the drivers to psychological indicators (Hai-wei and Feng-Ian, 2005; Rose, Beh, Uli and Idris, 2006). The following drivers are investigated in this study.

1.2.1 Rewards, Benefits and Compensation:

Financial benefits that employees receive are very important to drive his or her QWL level (Sinha, 2012). Walton, (1973) found a direct and significant relationship between pay and benefits, and QWL level. However,

many employees feel they are not compensated fairly for their work. Saraji and Dargahi (2006) pointed out that among the factors that affect the QWL is fair pay. Hosseini *et al.*, (2010) placed fair and adequate pay, and benefits rights as one of the QWL parameters.

Many other researchers found the rewards and pay are among the drivers of QWL. Koppelman *et al* 2006 found that the pay and reward is significant driver of QWL. Similar the findings of Davoodi (1998) and Jozee (1998) found the same results. However, this driver were not found an effective driver in studies conducted by some researchers such as the study of Tao *et al* (2007) and Levine *et al.*, (1984).

1.2.2 Job Satisfaction:

Aziz *et al.*, (2011) found that quality of work life increases when the librarians are satisfied with their level of work variable and non-work variables. Similarly, Noor and Abdullah (2012) found in their study that there is a significant relationship between job satisfaction and quality of work life. Mosadeghrad (2013) conducted a study on hospital employees. The findings show that the employees have low QWL. The low of QWL was a result of employees were least satisfied with pay, benefits, job promotion, and management support.

However, there are a lot of studies have found that job satisfaction is not an effective driver of QWL. Studies such as Hosseini *et al* (2010), Tao *et al* (2007) did not mention job satisfaction as a driver of the QWL.

1.2.3 Career Development:

Many researchers have found a positive correlation between career development and QWL. Farjad and Varnous (2013) listed growth opportunities and future development as a driver for QWL. Saraji and Dargahi (2006) pointed out that training and career advancement opportunities are one of the drivers of QWL. Sinha (2012) studied the drivers of QWL and she found that career development is one of the major drivers for QWL in India. Hosseini *et al* (2010) pointed out that career development drives up the level of QWL in Iran.

Other studies by Tao *et al* (2007) did not found career development as an effective driver of QWL. In the same vein, Koppelman *et al* (2006) did not mention career development as a driver of QWL.

1.2.4 Top Management Involvement:

Ingelgård and Norrgren (2001) found positive correlations between the learning strategy, the quality of working life, and economic output. The study also found that top management involvement was not associated with QWL. In a study conducted in Catalonia by Dolan, *et al* (2008) to find the predictors of quality of work and poor health among primary health care personnel, the researchers disagreed with Ingelgård and Norrgren (2001) and they found that lack of supervision or top management involvement is a predictor of low QWL. Similarly, Sinha (2012), Tao *et al* (2007), Saraji and Dargahi (2006) found that top management involvement is a significant driver of QWL.

1.2.5 Communication:

Cohen *et al.*, (2007) found the drivers of QWL for work life of child protective investigators to include staff development, concern for health and safety, participation in decisions, good communications, and opportunity for advancement. Wan and Chan (2012) conducted a study on casino employees to measure their level of QWL. The finding suggested that QWL can be enhanced by introducing a competitive compensation package, transparent promotion policies, better communication and supervision. Walton (1973) pointed out that communication is an effective tool to drive the QWL. However, the findings of Stein, 1983 did not mention communication as a driver of QWL. Similarly, the findings of Koppelman *et al* (2006) and Tao *et al* (2007) found that communication is not a driver of QWL.

1.2.6 Employee Motivation:

The general perception is that people leave an organization for higher pay. This hypothesis, though intuitively quite appealing, is often not sufficient in describing the entire picture with regard to sales force turnover. Because the Hawthorne studies (19th century) have already proved long back that money is not the only motivator (Mayo 1960), whereas other environmental factors also play a significant role for employee motivation and performance. It is important to recognize that individuals have unique motives for working (Haim 2003) and quite often it is complex to know what motivates employees (Mishra & Gupta 2009). Though there is no universally accepted definition of the term QWL, yet there is consensus in the research literature that QWL involves a focus on all aspects of working life that might conceivably be relevant to worker satisfaction and motivation, and that QWL is related to the well-being of employees (Davis and Cairns 1975, Nadler and Lawler 1983, Ryan 1995, Sirgy *et al.* 2001).

1.2.7 Cohesion of Work and Life:

Organization's culture toward combining work and family roles is at least as important for employees seeking work-family balance (Thompson & Prottas, 2006). A supportive work environment provides the

employee with emotional resources, such as understanding, advice, and recognition (van Daalen *et al.*, 2006). When organizations have an understanding attitude toward employees who combine work and family roles (family-responsive culture), employees are not likely to worry about career opportunities if they reduce their working hours due to family responsibilities (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). In line with the conflict approach, we expect that a family-responsive culture is only relevant for employees who have substantial family responsibilities, such as parents and couples. The enrichment approach, expected to be most effective for employees with the fewest family resources, is less applicable in this case, because singles do not need this particular resource (Muse *et al.*, 2008). A family-friendly culture may even lower singles' work outcomes if they feel excluded by such a culture (Casper *et al.*, 2007).

1.2.8 Safety and Security:

Walton (1973) emphasizes that safety and security are a driver of QWL. It is widely accepted in societies that workers should not be exposed to physical conditions or hourly arrangements that are unduly hazardous or detrimental to their health. Legislation, union action, and employer concern have resulted in continually rising standards of satisfactory working conditions (Madankar and Nazem, 2012). Saraji and Dargahi (2006) in their study found that safety and security an effective driver of QWL. In the same vein, Hosseini *et al* (2010) found similar results.

1.3 Importance of QWL:

QWL is important since there is evidence demonstrating that the nature of the work environment is related to satisfaction of employees and work-related behaviours (Greenhaus, Bedian and Mossholder, 1987). QWL is also found to affect employees' worker 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 as referenced in Sinha, 2012). The quality of work life is not only concerned with the monetary aspects but conditions of employment, interpersonal conflicts, job pressure, lack of freedom and absence of challenging work (Drobnič *et al.*, 2010; Gillet *et al.*, 2013; Abbasi *et al.*, 2011; Farjad and Varnous, 2013) . It is a way of thinking about people, work and organization and creates a sense of fulfilment in the minds of the employees and contributes to greater job satisfaction, improving productivity, adaptability and overall effectiveness of an organization (Noor and Abdullah, 2012; Ingelgård and Norrgren, 2001; Koonmee *et al.*, 2010).

QWL is increasingly important for policy makers, it is essential to have objective indicators and to conduct surveys in order to reliably measure QWL (Royuela *et al.*, 2008). Koonmee *et al.*, (2010) found a positive relationship between the implicit form of ethics institutionalization and both lower-order and higher-order aspects of QWL. The results also indicate that the implicit form of ethics institutionalization and the two aspects of QWL have positive impacts on the three employee job-related outcomes: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and team spirit. Rastegari *et al.*, (2010) found a direct and significant relationship between job performance and quality of working life in all the aspects. According to the research findings, it is important to consider the workplace and the quality of working life of employees for improving their productivity and performance.

2.0 Methodology:

An intensive literature review conducted to extract the most common drivers of QWL. Frequency analysis was employed. The choice of the article was based on the topics that these articles are investigating. 15 articles were selected to be investigated.

2.1 Proposed Theoretical Framework:

Quality of work life is the dependent variable of this study. There are many factors that estimated to affect the QWL these factors are: reward, benefits and compensation that the employees get from the organization, employees' job satisfaction, the motivation that the employees get from the management, the opportunity to grow and develop, Cohesion of work and life, safety and security, the role of top management and involvement in the workplace, the communication between the employees and the management. These factors are the independent variable of this study and they expected to have an impact on the quality work life. Therefore, based on the literature review, the proposed theoretical framework for this study is presented in figure 1 below:

2.2 Hypotheses Development:

Based on the proposed theoretical framework and the literature review, the following hypotheses can be proposed:

H1: There is a positive relationship between rewards, benefits and compensation and quality work life.

H2: There is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and quality work life.

H3: there is positive relationship between employee motivation and quality work life.

- H4: there is positive relationship between career development and quality work life.
- H5: there is positive relationship between top management involvement and quality work life.
- H6: there is positive relationship between communication and quality work life.
- H7: there is positive relationship between Cohesion and quality work life.
- H8: there is positive relationship between Safety and security and quality work life.

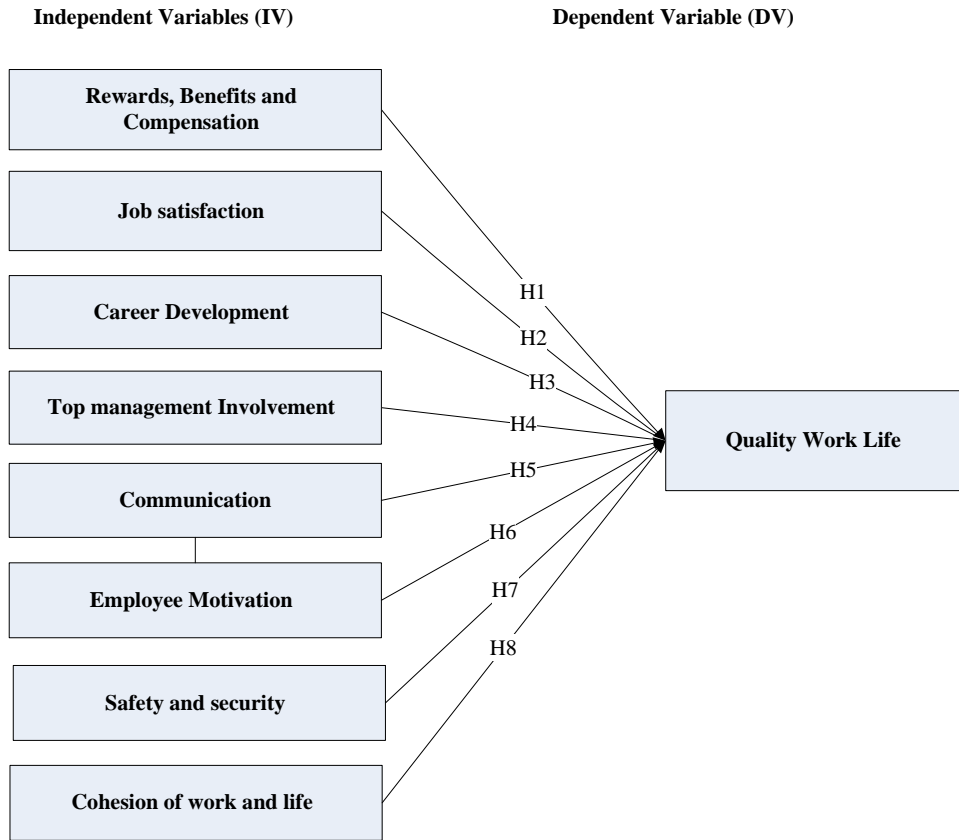


Fig. 1: Theoretical Framework.

3.0 Research Findings:

The finding of the paper is based on intensive review of the selected research articles. The finding of the paper can be presented through table 1 and 2 as follows:

Table 1: Analysis of QWL Drivers.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Walton, 1973	x		x		x		x	x
Stein, 1983	x		x					
Levine <i>et al</i> , 1984			x				x	
Casio, 1992	x			x				x
Mir Sepas, 1993	x		x					x
Hui-run, 1994	x		x	x	x			x
Jozee, 1996	x				x			x
Davoodi, 1998	x							
Jia-sheng and Jing-Li, 2000	x		x	x	x			
Lewis <i>et al</i> , 2001	x		x		x			
Koppelman <i>et al</i> , 2006	x							
Saraji and dargahi , 2006	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Tao <i>et al</i> , 2007				x			x	
Hosseini <i>et al</i> 2010	x		x		x			x
Sinha, 2012	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Total	13	2	10	6	8	1	5	7

Note: 1- Reward, benefit and compensation; 2- Job satisfaction; 3- Career development; 4- Top management involvement; 5- Communication; 6- Employee motivation; 7- Cohesion of work and life; 8- Safety and security.
 From table1, the drivers can be rearranged as shown in table 2:

Table 2: Most extracted drivers across the 15 studies.

Driver	Frequency out of 15 Studies
Reward, benefits and compensation	13
Career development	10
Communication	8
Safety and security	7
Top management involvement	6
Cohesion of work and life	5
Job satisfaction	2
Employee motivation	1

By conducting frequency analysis, it can be seen from table 1 and 2 that the most extracted drivers of QWL are rewarded, benefits and compensation followed by career development, communication, safety and security, top management involvement, cohesion of work and life , job satisfaction and employee motivation respectively.

4.0 Conclusion:

The purpose of this research article was to find the most frequent drivers that have been cited or found by other researchers. 15 selected literatures were investigated and the most extracted factors were gauged. The finding shows that there are some drivers have been more frequent in the literature rather than other drivers. Reward, benefits and compensation were the highest frequent drivers in the literature. 13 out of 15 literatures cited the reward, benefits, and compensation as an effective driver of QWL. The second highest frequent driver was career development. The driver was cited in 10 literatures as an effective driver of QWL. The third highest frequent driver was communication. Communication was cited in 8 out of 15 literatures. It can be seen that the most important driver is financial rewards this can be due to the financial situation of employees as employees view the reward and compensation that they get from the employer as an appreciation of their effort for the organization. The better the rewards and compensation, the more involved the employees. After securing good salary, the employees hope to develop their skills and get promoted to a higher position. Communication is a way of creating mutual understanding between the employee and employer, the more the employer uses an open door policy, the better the performance of the employees.

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