

Quality of Work Life and Work–Life Balance

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to unearth the dimensions of quality of work life and work–life balance and to find the impact of the quality of work life on work–life balance. Data have been gathered from 89 managers of public and private sector banks in India using a convenience sampling method and analysed using principal component analysis and multiple regression analysis. Both qualities of work life and work–life balance are multidimensional constructs. Results indicate that the productivity dimension of a work–life balance was influenced by all dimensions of quality of work life except grievance redress. Further, the skill deployment dimension was predicted by all three dimensions of quality of work life. However, none of the quality of work life dimensions had any relation with the efficiency dimension of work–life balance. The study will help managers to ensure employee productivity and skill deployment by enhancing the quality of work life. The study has relevance for employee welfare and organizational output. The study has unearthed new dimensions in quality of work life and work–life balance and has established new relationships.

Keywords

Quality of work life, work–life balance, productivity, skill deployment, efficiency

Introduction

Survival in this competitive world propels companies to improvise on all the vital facets that contribute to the success of the business. Be it service quality, human resource quality, raw material quality, delivery efficiency or marketing efficiency. Among all these factors, one most important factor is human resources. Human resources in any company is treated as the lifeline, hence it needs to be ensured that the workers are happy with their jobs, motivated and satisfied. Because human resources is the essential element

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responsible for efficient utilization of resources and strategic decision-making, it allows organizations to have a competitive edge (Thakur & Sharma, 2019). Therefore, it is important to ensure that the quality of work life of the workers is worthy.

Quality of work life has been conceptualized as a good work environment such as pay, welfare programmes, flexible work schedules, good relations and opportunities for development (Ahmad, 2013). In general, quality of work life entails the physical, mental, social and economic facets of work. Good quality of work life is expected to provide positive outcomes for the employee and the organization. Hence, it is said that the quality of work life leads to employee satisfaction and job performance (Gayathiri et al., 2013). Besides Thakur and Sharma (2019) exhibited that except for income levels, other demographic factors (age, gender, and marital status) did not affect the quality of work life, thus making income the imperative factor in assessing the quality of work life. And this remains a significant and consistent factor across organizations and economies. Whereas this study concentrates on the other aspects of work life quality besides income, it conceptualizes the quality of work life as a three-dimensional construct including freedom and recognition, rewards and grievance redress mechanism.

Work–life balance is a construct which leads to low levels of stress and employee well-being. The impact of job demands on stress was reduced due to job control effects when the organizations followed high levels of work–life balance practices (Chiang et al., 2010). Government and organizational practices were found to promote work–life balance. While government welfare policies were found to promote work–life balance, the traditional gender-based domestic division of work seems to increase work–life conflict (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006). Hence work–life balance is considered to be essential for productivity, welfare and good family life. However, this study conceptualizes work–life balance from an organizational point of view. Productivity, skill deployment and efficiency are the organizational side of work–life balance.

Quality of Work Life and Work–Life Balance

It is generally understood that better the work life quality of employees, they will be satisfied at work which will have a positive impact on their work–life balance. Satisfied employees contribute better towards the development of the organization and would be self-motivated. Self-motivated employees are an asset to the organization. Organizations need not spend an extra penny on motivating the employees from time to time. Rather, this money be invested in their skill development. When an employee is happy and satisfied in an organization, then the employee turnover rate would reduce. The reduction in employee turnover will add value to the organization. Instead of spending money on recruiting new employees, organizations may utilize it for other developmental purposes or for improving the quality of work life of the employees. Bad quality of work adds on to the stress level of the employees, which in turn affects their quality of life at home. This would make the employees mentally weak, demotivated and dissatisfied with their work life. This would impact the output of the employees in the organization. If the organization does not take any immediate steps, then the situation would force the employee to leave the organization. This would lead to an increase in the employee turnover rate.

Moreover, the work and family conflict will reduce with increased balanced involvement of employees in both work and family. Balanced employees would give full justice to both their roles and will not allow any ‘situational emergencies’ to affect the role chronically (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). Additionally, the employees would develop routines to meet the demands of both the roles in the long run. This balanced engagement of employees in their work and family roles is expected to impact an individual’s well-being positively, as this balanced engagement would reduce work–family conflict and

stress (Frone et al., 1992). Greenhaus et al. (2003) spoke about positive involvement and negative involvement balance. The study highlighted that individuals who devote a considerable amount of psychological involvement in both their roles (work and family roles) combined, and also distribute their involvement equally between their roles, reveal positive involvement balance. And those who devote limited psychological involvement reveal negative involvement balance. They also believe that a negative balance has a limited impact on the quality of life, whereas, substantial involvement balance has a positive impact on the quality of life. In situations where there is an imbalance in the involvement, there can be a sizable difference between work and family involvement and hence, producing extensive work–family conflict and lead to increased stress levels, which would affect the quality of life of an individual. But, the results were quite different, the employees who had imbalanced involvement favouring family were more satisfied and experienced the least work–family conflict. In contrast, employees' imbalance involvement favouring work revealed the highest work–family conflict and stress levels.

Review of Literature

Studies over the years have addressed the issue of quality of work life among the workers of the organizations from different perspectives and its impact on various organizational factors that are important for its success. Caplan et al. (1975) tried analysing the impact of job environment stress on the psychological strain of the workers and complaints of their illness. Results revealed that, job environment stress had a direct impact on the psychological strain of the workers, whereas it had a moderate impact on the illness reported by the workers. One main reason for job environment stress may be job dissatisfaction. This led to the important question of which factors lead to job dissatisfaction. Job dissatisfaction is predominantly influenced by simple and monotonous work, underutilization of workers' abilities and skills, low participation of workers in the decision-making process of the organization, insecurity about the job and lack of social support from the co-workers and immediate superiors. Organizations need to devise strategies to bring about favourable and worker-friendly job environments that could lead to an increase in the satisfaction level of the workers. Cummings and Molloy (1977) suggested seven strategies (self-directed work groups, restructuring of jobs, management by participation, change across the organization, modification of organizational behaviour, flexibility in working hours and the Scanlon plan) for improving the work environment.

Moreover, work–life stress has a profound impact on the work–life balance of the employees and this needs to be assessed from the gender-specific perspective. This is so because work stress among male workers is due to different factors in comparison with those of female workers. For male workers, it is the job condition that amounts to stress, whereas for female workers, it is the demands from the domestic and job roles. Hence, results reveal that both male and female workers respond indifferently and majority women display higher amounts of distress (Lowe & Northcott, 1988; Moen & Yu, 2000). To reduce work-related stress among the workers, managers need to identify the factors contributing to an improvement in the quality of work life. This is crucial to managing the three vital components of quality of work life that direct the organization towards its success, they are: project development at various levels, management systems and structural changes and behavioural changes of senior management (Nadler & Lawler, 1983).

Efforts to reduce role conflicts are not necessarily effective in reducing role overload (Bacharach et al., 1990). The role overloads and role conflicts among the workers steered to job stress, in that way, impacting their job performance. Job stress and role overloads and conflict share a positive relationship, while job stress and job performance share a negative relationship (Sutanto & Wiyono, 2017). Moreover,

role conflict hurts the organizational commitment with the mediating factor of high job involvement factor compared to moderate or low job involvement. Thus, high job involvement too can intensify the negative impact of role conflict on work–life quality (Igarria et al., 1994). Hence, managers need to develop multiple and integrative strategies to reduce role conflict and role overload that contribute towards an increase in job stress, impacting the quality of work life.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997), the best way to boost three dimensions of everyday life, that is, work, leisure and social contact, is to keep challenging oneself with activities that involve high commitment and utilization. Moreover, Sirgy et al. (2001) provided seven new dimensions to assessing the quality of work life based on need satisfaction and spillover effects among the variables. The seven dimensions listed were safety and health needs, economic needs, social needs, esteem needs, actualization needs, knowledge needs and aesthetic needs. These were tested, measured and validated by the study and can be used for predictive purposes (Spillover effects). Though compensation and benefits are a very good strategy for retention of the workforce, they are mostly effective only in the short run. Hence, the organization should improve the quality of work life of the workforce, retain the existing best human resource and attract prospective best skilled human resources (Gifford et al., 2002).

Work–life balance was not a problematic issue in the late twentieth century, as women would manage the domestic work while men would do their regular jobs. But as time passed by, women started entering the job market in large numbers. This puts pressure on the families where both husband and wife are working. Women had to manage both domestic and work life, hence the concept of work–life balance gained importance (Crompton, 2001). Work–life balance is not just important for women but also for men, whose wives are a part of the working class. The results shown by Tausig and Fenwick (2001) revealed that family characteristics of being a parent and work characteristic of the number of hours spent at work were the significant contributors for work–life imbalance among the workers. It was not only the majority of the women who faced the issue of work–life balance but also educated men and youngsters. In countries like Finland and Norway, the government has come up with policies not just to facilitate dual-earner families, but also to encourage men to participate largely to share the domestic work of their wives. In this manner, dual-earner families can maintain a healthier work–life balance (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006).

Eventually, work–life balance was explored from various perspectives. Several other reasons could intensify an individual's work–life balance problem, irrespective of any successful outcomes from family-centred policies. High performance management—an organization policy—exerts immense pressure on the workers that demand extra work hours, hence suggesting that such organizational policies will harm the work–life balance (White et al., 2003). Moreover, too much stress at the workplace reduces the enthusiasm to work harder and gives very little time for individuals for personal accomplishments. This is termed as 'burnouts', which is very common among the professionals (especially doctors). This resulted in a loss of interest in work, broken relationships, drinking alcohol, etc. All these harmed the work–life balance of the working class. This not only disrupted the family of workers but also affected their work life, both/either directly or spillover from their family tensions (Shanafelt et al., 2012). The factors that negatively affect the work–life balance are hours spent at work, workplace demands and family expectations and demands, whereas autonomous jobs and superior support played a positive role in enhancing work–life balance (Fontinha et al., 2019; Haar et al., 2019).

A better work–life balance practice entails a reduction in the work–life conflict, to ensure better organizational performance. Individuals need to be oriented about formal and informal work balance practices existing in the organization. This would not just instil confidence in the workers but also may result in increasing their satisfaction levels (Eberman et al., 2019). Work–life balance has a tremendous impact on the organizational working conditions and performance. This also has an impact on the

recruitment and retention of workers in an organization. The better the work–life balance policies and activities in an organization, better is the turnover rate of the employees and also the recruitment of best employees (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Deery, 2008). As can be seen from the above literature, individuals' better work–life balance showcases better performance among the workers and of the organization as a whole. It has been revealed that employees with better family–work–life balance have better job performance (in terms of productivity and relation with colleagues) (Perera et al., 2019). The literature supports the view that, good work life quality has a positive effect on the work–life balance of the workers. But, it is also necessary to understand this relationship from different dimensions and in different contexts. Thus, the main objective of the study is to analyse the relationship between quality of work life and work–life balance among the public and private sector banks of India.

Hypothesis

Bad working conditions individually were found to lead to low work–life balance in past research. Low pay and work overload lead to low work–life balance, which in turn results in increased employee turnover. The effect is more pronounced in the case of talented employees, which can be addressed by appropriate training programmes (Deery & Jago, 2015). Quality of work life is a comprehensive construct which represents working conditions in totality. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

‘There is a positive relationship between quality of work life and work–life balance’.

Methodology

In conducting this study, the data required were collected from 89 bank managers from private and public sector banks in India using a structured questionnaire following the convenience sampling method. The principal component analysis with varimax rotation has been employed to unearth the dimensions in the constructs. Also, multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis by establishing a relationship among dimensions of constructs.

Results

The results reveal that the quality of work life was found to be comprised for three dimensions: freedom and recognition, reward and grievance redress. The results for the same are provided in Table 1. It is understood that employees need some amount of freedom and recognition for doing their jobs. They do not like to be supervised continuously. Besides, the workers need decentralization and delegation of authority by their superiors; this would improve the trust and interpersonal relationship among the managers and their subordinates. Also, the workers will feel a part of the organization's decision-making process, leading to organizational commitment. The recognition of the work by their superiors would motivate and encourage the employees to perform better than before, creating job satisfaction. The dimension of freedom and recognition allows the employees to engage in challenging projects by using their skills to the fullest extent. This would not just remove boredom in their work, created by monotonous activities, but also heighten their interest in work daily. Besides job autonomy and recognition, workers also expect rewards for their work. As per Herzberg's two-factor theory, reward is one of the factors for

Table 1. Dimensions of Quality of Work Life

	Factor Loading		
	1	2	3
My preferences are considered when they assign my work area	0.845	–	–
Adequate time is given to complete my task	0.793	–	–
I have been given adequate freedom to carry out my work activities	0.742	–	–
My organization gives me option to give my suggestion and it really considers its implementation if reasonable	0.728	–	–
I am recognized when I do some outstanding performance	0.700	–	–
My workplace is stress-free	0.685	–	–
My work environment is highly motivating for better performance	0.621	–	–
I am given satisfactory salary for the work I do	–	0.816	–
My income is enough to meet my life needs	–	0.760	–
Salary differentials is fairly calculated based on responsibility of work	–	0.673	–
There is good linking of rewards and work performance	–	0.593	–

Source: The authors.

motivation to work, which may be in the form of monetary benefit or non-monetary benefit. The third main factor contributing to improved quality of work life is the grievance redress. People at the workplace face a lot of issues related to interpersonal relationships with their colleagues and supervisors. These issues need to be solved without bias; hence, organizations need to have grievance redress committees that handle such issues. Even governments have asked the companies to have some mandatory committees to handle issues of workers at the workplace. When such committees perform their duties impartially, the individuals at the workplace feel safe and satisfied. All these factors result in having a positive impact on the quality of work life.

The work–life balance is loaded onto three dimensions: productivity, skill deployment and efficiency. The results are provided in Table 2. Productivity dimension: it is well known that when an employee is satisfied and maintains well balanced work–family life, it will result in increase in the productivity of the employees, low employee turnover rate, and are increased satisfaction with their existing work schedules.

Table 2. Dimensions of Work–Life Balance

	Factor Loading		
	1	2	3
The productive work of my organization is high due to effective work–life balance	0.917	–	–
The work schedule of my organization enables all employees to maintain an effective work–life balance	0.895	–	–
The retention of employees in the organization is high due to effective work–life balance	0.890	–	–
On my job, I know exactly what is expected of me	–	0.823	–
In my organization, I work as part of team and not mostly on my own	–	0.787	–
My job gives me scope to use my skills and abilities	–	0.723	–
I am given enough freedom to decide how to do my own work	–	0.694	–
My job requires that I keep learning new things	–	0.642	–
My job requires that I work very fast	–	–	0.922

Source: The authors.

Table 3. Relationship Between Quality of Work Life and work–Life Balance

Quality of Work Life	Work–life Balance (standardized beta)		
	Productivity	Skill Deployment	Efficiency
Freedom and recognition	0.488**	0.450**	–0.006
Rewards	0.464**	–0.210*	–0.053
Grievance redress	0.119	0.335**	–0.021
R ²	0.51	0.396	0.003

Source: The authors.

Note: ** and * Significant at 1% and 5% level, respectively.

Hence, productivity dimension is explained by an increase in the productivity of the employees, less employee turnover and suitable work schedules.

The skill deployment dimension articulates that employees in the organization are efficiently using their skills to the fullest extent, as per the requirements of the job profile. It also conveys that organization has been successful in employing the right person for the right job. This is not it; organizations also expect that employees from time to time keep developing their skills, which would be beneficial for the effective working in the current job and more and better opportunities in the organization.

Whereas efficiency dimension expresses the expectation of organization from their employees to complete the work fast and within the set time frame, this can be achieved only if the employees are free from any disturbance from their domestic life, conflicts within the organization and others that act as hindrances for efficient working of the employees. Good work–life balance initiatives within the organizations can increase productivity, efficiency and better utilization of current skills and development of existing and new skills in the future.

Further, a regression analysis was performed on the constructs and the results of the same are presented in Table 3. It is revealed that freedom and recognition and rewards were positively associated with productivity whereas grievance redress was not associated with productivity. This can be said because, if employees are given the freedom to work and their work is recognized by the organization, they will feel more involved and ultimately contribute to increased productivity. In addition to freedom and recognition, employees need to be rewarded for their work and contribution to the organization; this will improve their quality of work life, and they will feel more involved and satisfied with their job. They will not feel like leaving the organization, meaning a low employee turnover rate and increased productivity. This will contribute to an increase in the profitability of the organization and also improve the organization's environment and culture.

While freedom and recognition and grievance redress were positively related to skill deployment, rewards were negatively related to skill deployment. None of the dimensions of quality of work life were significantly related to the efficiency dimension of work–life balance. The reason being the efficiency dimension of work life is mostly dependent on the balance between family and work life and not just the quality of work life.

Conclusion

Human resources is a vital element for the development of any organization. If an organization does not look after the well-being of its employees, then the probability of employees leaving the job would be

very high, thus resulting in a higher employee turnover rate. This is not a good sign for the development of the organization in the long run. Organizations might have to divert more funds in recruiting and training new staff than using the funds efficiently for increasing the production, profitability and expansion of the organization. Hence, this study aims to understand the relationship between quality of work life and work–life balance among the public and private sector banks of India. On collecting the data, the study used a varimax rotation technique to find the factors involved in improving the quality of the work life of the workers. This was followed by regression analysis to understand the relationship between the dimensions. The study conceptualized the work–life balance from an organizational point of view. This was important since productivity, skill deployment and efficiency were important for the management of organizations. The research has established that by enhancing the quality of work life, it is possible to enhance productivity and skill deployment by employees. Besides, employees will also be in a position to maintain a proper work–life balance and would also be able to contribute better to the organization's overall development, as they would be satisfied with the quality of life provided at work by the management. However, grievance redress was not having a relationship with productivity. This is because grievance redress mechanisms in the organization is so strong that employees' productivity does not get affected (negatively or positively). It also shows that employees working in the organization feel safe and secured as their grievances are addressed immediately without any bias. Also, efficiency was not enhanced by the quality of work life. This could be because efficiency was captured in this research as the speed of work. The general conclusion is that organizations can improve positive outcomes from employees by managing the quality of work life.

Hence, organizations need to take steps to improve the quality of work life of the employees, which is beneficial to the organization in the long run. The quality of work life has a direct and positive impact on the work–life balance of the employees, whereas it has an indirect and positive impact on the organizations' overall development. The organization needs to concentrate on giving some amount of freedom to the employees in doing their job rather than keeping surveillance on them. A sense of trust needs to be inculcated in the minds of the employees; this can be done by giving them freedom at the workplace and also by providing suitable work timings. Suitable work timings would motivate employees to come to work on time and go home in time. By doing so, the employees will be able to maintain good balance in work and family life. Also, the employees will not feel too worked up even if they are asked to stay back on a few days due to 'situational emergencies'. They also will be in a position to take quick and effective decisions that would be in favour of the betterment of the organization.

Besides, employees' work should also get recognition and reward for the amount of time and energy invested by them. This will motivate the employees to work better and efficiently without a need for supervision by the seniors. If the above-mentioned factors are taken care of and provided to the employees, then organizations might not have to make regular investments in hiring and training new employees from time to time. Rather, they can invest in improving the work life of the current employees and provide the appropriate training to improve their skills.

All this will be beneficial to the organization in improving its business environment and culture. The study can be further extended in understanding other factors, in other industries, affecting the quality of life of employees in the organization and their impact on work–life balance.


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