

A Study of Quality of Working Life Amongst Employees in Public Institutions in Selangor State, Malaysia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of quality of working life amongst employees in two public institutions in Selangor State, Malaysia that consists of 210 employees. A validated questionnaire was used to collect data from managers. The seven scales was used in the survey namely by the Scale A for job satisfaction, challenge, use of skills and autonomy. Scale B for communication, decision making and job security, Scale C for supervisory support, Scale D for freedom from work related stress, Scale E focused on salary and additional benefits, Scale F is related with the social relationships with work colleagues and management and Scale G for involvement of management in the organizational climate at workplace. The research findings showed that employees have average job challenge. Employees experienced an average dissatisfaction with their communication and also perceived that they are getting a moderate support from supervisors and management and have an average satisfaction social relationship with colleagues and management. Employees are moderate satisfied with their salaries and report average stress at the work place. They want the responsibility given match with the salary, benefits and incentives given by the employer plus the morale support and motivation from employer.

Key Words: *Quality of Work Life, Job Satisfaction, Job Challenge, Job Involvement, Communication.*

Introduction

Quality of work life (QWL) refers to the level of happiness or dissatisfaction with one's career. Those who enjoy their careers are said to have a high quality of work life while those who are unhappy or whose needs are otherwise unfulfilled are said to have a low quality of work life (Indumathy and Kalamraj, 2012). Today,

the QWL is viewed as an essential dimension of the quality of life and for organizations as to attract and retain workers. The quality of work life approach considers people as an “asset” to the organization rather than as “costs” as it believes that people perform better when they are allowed to participate in managing their work and make decisions (Indumathy and Kalamraj, 2012). The QWL affects quality of life in four areas: Competency, Health, Time and Wealth (Macstravic, 2006). QWL is comprehensive and program designated to improve worker’s satisfaction, strengthen workplace learning and help workers better manage the change and transition which affects almost all workers regardless of position or status (Saraji and Dargahi, 2006). In the service industries, many managers seek to reduce dissatisfaction in all organizational levels because it is difficult to isolate and identify all of stress attributes, which affect the quality of work life (Walton, 1973). Service organizations especially, service provision often unfolds within the constraints of limited fiscal resources and increasing demands for service accountability (Wallach & Mueller, 2006). Kosny and Eakin (2008) added that despite some of the intrinsic rewards the work offers, jobs in these organizations can be difficult and demanding, characterized by high demands, long working hours, low pay, exposure to violence and infectious disease, conditions which may be deleterious to worker health and safety (Baines 2004; Holness, Somerville, Kosny, Gadeski, Mastandrea & Sinclair, 2004). Unfortunately, according to Grant (2008) managers face considerable challenges in motivating employees in service organizations, which are riddled with high levels of burnout and emotional exhaustion (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Employees in service organizations are often exposed to extensive negative feedback and overloaded with responsibility for helping (Marshall, Barnett & Sayer, 1997). According to Niels (2003), the satisfaction of employees was originally achieved by ensuring that work experience satisfied a common set of needs that can improving employees’ quality of work life. Given the importance of the function, both in terms of its activity and the volume of assets and people involved, the question need to be asked if the function is undervalues, and how public and private institutions employees feel about their jobs (Vic Gilgeous, 1998).

Literature Review

The relationship between the job satisfaction, communication, support, freedom, salary, relationships and involvement of quality of working were summarized as follows:

Dimensions	Research	Outcome
<u>Job Challenge:</u>	Niel O. Pors (2003). Job Satisfaction among Library Managers: A Cross-Cultural Study of Stress, Freedom and Job Conditions. <i>New Library World</i> , 2003:104, 11/12; Pro-Quest Education Journal	Related with quality of work life
<u>Communication:</u>	Lee Andresen (1998). Quality Managers – How Shall We Educate Them? <i>Innovations in Education and Teaching International</i> ; May 1998; 35:2. Pro-Quest Education Journals Eaton, A.E., Gordon, M.E., and Keefe, J.H., (1992), “The impact of quality of work life programs and grievances system effectiveness on union commitment”, <i>International and Labor Relations Review</i> , Vol. 45, No. 3.p. 591-603.	Related with Quality of work
<u>Supervisory Support:</u> Support from management and colleagues	Laura Pekkarinen, Timo Sinervo, Marja Leena Perala and Marko Elovainio (2004). Work Stressor and the Quality of work life in long-term care units. <i>The Gerontologist</i> ; Oct. 2004, 5: Pro-Quest Education Journals. Havlovic, S. J., (1991), “Quality of work life and human resource outcomes”, <i>Industrial Relations</i> , Vol. 30, No. 3,	Related with quality of work life

	p.469-479.	
Freedom: Freedom from work related stress	Laura Pekkarinen, Timo Sinervo, Marja Leena Perala and Marko Elovainio (2004). Work Stressor and the Quality of work life in long-term care units. The Gerontologist; Oct. 2004, 5: Pro-Quest Education Journals. Lowe, G. S., (2001), "Quality of Work-Quality of Life", Canadian Policy Research Network, Conference Key Note Paper, 14 May, 2001.	Related with quality of work life
Salary: Salary and additional benefits	Jos Benders and Frank Van de Looj (1994). Not Just Money: Quality of Working Life as Employment Strategy. International Journal of Health Care Quality Assurance. Vol.7 Iss: 6 pp. 9-15. Havlovic, S. J., (1991), "Quality of work life and human resource outcomes", Industrial Relations, Vol. 30, No. 3, p.469-479.	Related with quality of work life
Relationships: Social Relationships with work colleagues and management	Vic Gilgeous (1998). Manufacturing Managers: Their Quality of Working Life. Integrated Manufacturing Systems 9/3 [1998], 173-181 Nadler, D. A., and Lawler, E. E. (1983), "Quality of Work Life: Perspectives and Directions". Organizational dynamics, 11, 20-30.	Related with quality of work life
Involvement: Involvement of management in the organizational climate at workplace	Hans Pruijtit (2000). Performance and Quality of Working Life. Journal of Organizational Change Management, Vol. 13 Iss: 4 pp. 389-400 Maks, M. I., P. H. Mirvis, E. J. Hackett and J. F. Grady, Jr. (1986), "employee participation in quality circle program: Impact on quality of work life, productivity, and absenteeism", Journal of applied Psychology, Vol.71, No. 2, pp 61-69. Francisco Javier Llorens Montes, Antonia Ruiz Moreno and Luis Miguel Molina Fernandez (2003): Assessing the organizational climate and contractual of support for innovation. Context: empirical research among 312 observations of the employees in 80 offices of a Spanish financial company. Dimensions: Support/sincerity, Pressure Cohesion, Intrinsic recognition Impartially. Fenwick Feng Jing, Gayle C. Avery and Harald Bergsteiner (2010); Organizational Climate and performance in retail pharmacies. Context: manager and up to three staff members and three buying customers at 100 retail pharmacies in Sydney, Australia.	Related with quality of work life

Research Methodology

Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are to identify:

1. The public employees' institutions perceptions on the aspects of job challenge, communication, support, freedom, salary, relationships involvement and the Quality of Work Life.
2. The relationship between job challenge, communication, support, freedom, salary, relationships, involvement with the Quality of Work Life.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study are as follows:

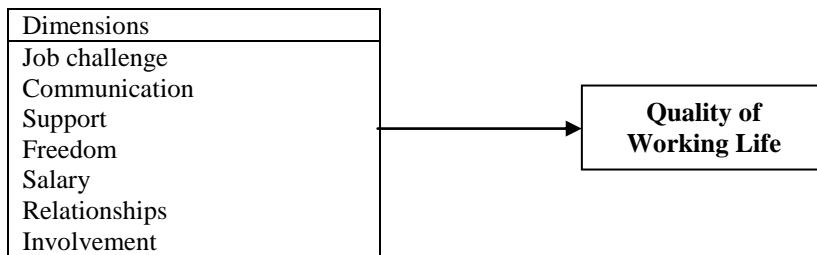
1. What is the perceptions of public institutions employees' in the aspects of job challenge?
2. What is the perceptions of public institutions employees in the aspects of communication?
3. What is the perceptions of public institutions employees in the aspects of support?
4. What is the perceptions of public institutions employees in the aspects of freedom from stress?
5. What is the perceptions of public institutions employees in the aspects of salary?
6. What is the perceptions of public institutions employees in the aspects of relationships?
7. What is the perceptions of public institutions employees in the aspects of involvement?
8. What is the perceptions of public institutions employees in the aspects of Quality of Work Life?
9. Is there any relationship between job satisfaction, communication, support, freedom, salary, relationships and involvement with the Quality of Work Life?

The Research Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study is as presented in Figure 1 that focused on the relationship on the following dimensions:

- Job Challenge with the Quality of Working Life
- Communication with the Quality of Working Life
- Support with the Quality of Working Life
- Freedom with the Quality of Working Life
- Salary with the Quality of Working Life
- Relationships with the Quality of Working Life
- Involvement with the Quality of Working Life

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework



The Respondents

The respondents of the study consists of 210 employees in two public institutions at Selangor State, Malaysia.

Research Instrument

A questionnaire is the research instrument based on Mc Donald (2001) “*Quality of Working Life Questionnaire*” which was modified to meet the need and requirement of this research. The number of statement for each scales of dimensions were as follows:

Scale	Summary Descriptor	Number of Statements
Job challenge, use of skills and autonomy	Job Challenge	5
Communication and job confidence	Communication	4
Support from manager/supervisor	Support	6
Freedom from work related stress	Freedom	14
Salary and additional benefits	Salary	5
Relationships with work colleagues	Relationships	6
Involvement of management in organizational climate	Involvement	30
Quality of Working Life	QWL	14

Pre-Test Research

The pre-test research was conducted by taking sample of 30 respondents consisting of a group of employees from factories as related. From the statistical analysis using SPSS Window, the acceptance index for this instrument is Alpha Cronbach 0.700.

Procedures of Data Analysis

The statistics used in analyzing the data are descriptive statistics. The interpretation for the mean scores will be based on the table below:

Mean Score	Interpretation
1.00 – 1.80	Completely Dissatisfied
2.61 – 2.60	Dissatisfied
2.61 – 3.40	Average Satisfaction
3.41 – 4.20	Good/Satisfied
4.21 – 5.00	Very Satisfied

Research Findings

The research findings were presented as follows:

1. Research Question 1: What is the perceptions of public institutions employees in the aspects of job challenge?

Table 1 shows the status of employees’ perceptions in the aspect of Job Challenge: The overall job challenge dimensions are only average satisfaction with a mean score of 3.20. The highest mean score is 3.68 on the perceptions over the simple and repetitive job.

Table 1: Mean Value of Job Challenge

Scale	Mean Score	Mean Interpretation	Score
Items:			
• The job requires me to use a number of variety skills	3.01	Average Satisfaction	
• I have new and interesting things to do in my work	2.99	Average Satisfaction	
• My work challenges me	3.20	Average Satisfaction	
• The job is quite simple and repetitive	3.68	Satisfied	
• The job requires me to do many different things at work, using a variety of skills and talent	3.12	Average Satisfaction	
Overall job challenge mean value	3.20	Average Satisfaction	

2. Research Question 2: What is the perception of employees' in public institutions in the aspects of communication?

Table 2 shows the status of employees' perceptions in the aspect of Communication: The overall score for dimension of communication shows average dissatisfaction with the mean score of 2.28. The highest mean score is 3.02 with the average satisfaction over the trust and confidence in higher management.

Table 2: Mean Value of Communication

Scale	Mean Score	Mean Score Interpretation
Scale B: Communication		
• I have trust and confidence in higher management	3.02	Average Satisfaction
• This management gives praise and recognition for outstanding performance	1.98	Dissatisfied
• Management here does a good job of communicating with employees	2.01	Dissatisfied
• Around here, conflicts are resolved to the satisfaction of those concerned	2.12	Dissatisfied
Overall communication mean value	2.28	Average Dissatisfaction

3. Research Question 3: What is the perceptions of public institutions employees in the aspects of supervisory support?

Table 3: Mean Value of Supervisory Support

Scale	Mean Score	Mean Score Interpretation
Scale C: Supervisory Support		
• Supervisor communicate with me in a supportive way when I have problems in my work	2.85	Average Satisfaction
• Supervisor encourage me and others to generate new ideas for improvement	2.92	Average Satisfaction
• Supervisors here are really good at understanding people's problems	2.10	Dissatisfied
• Supervisors show that they have confidence in those they manage	3.00	Average Satisfaction
• Supervisors can be relied upon to give good guidance to people	2.75	Average Satisfaction
• Supervisors show an understanding of the employee who work for them	2.68	Average Satisfaction
Overall supervisory support meanvalue	2.71	Average Satisfaction

Table 3 shows the status of employees' perceptions in the aspect of Supervisory Support: The overall score for dimension of supervisory support shows only the average satisfaction with the mean score 2.71. The highest mean score is 3.00 with the average satisfaction over the supervisor confidence in managing people.

4. Research Question 4: What is the public institutions employees' perceptions in the aspects of freedom of stress?

Table 4 shows the status of employees' perceptions in the Freedom of Stress: The overall score for dimension of freedom of stress shows the average satisfaction with mean score 2.70. The highest mean score is 3.10 with the average satisfaction over the expectation of employees' job.

Table 4: Mean Value of Freedom from Stress

Scale	Mean Score	Mean Score Interpretation
Scale D: Freedom from Stress		
	2.40	Dissatisfied
1. I welcome change, even if it affect my job	2.85	Average Satisfaction
2. People here follow through on commitments	2.60	Dissatisfied
3. I get the support as needed	3.10	Average Satisfaction
4. I understand what is expected of me	2.85	Average Satisfaction
5. I am highly appreciated by my peers	2.45	Dissatisfied
6. People here accept other people's points of view	2.80	
7. Our institutions has a strong leadership that help me to work in peace	2.88	Average Satisfaction
8. People here understand the purpose of our work to achieve goals	2.70	Average Satisfaction
9. I can see better ways of doing my work	2.60	Average Satisfaction
10. I can handle new initiatives	2.25	Average Satisfaction
11. My work motivates me to be creative	2.65	Dissatisfied
12. Management shows concern and sincere to help employees	2.90	Average Satisfaction
13. People here communicate openly	2.85	Average Satisfaction
14. This institution delivers what it promises in their mission	2.78	Average Satisfaction
15. I have no stress of completing my work as required		
Overall Freedom from stress mean value	2.70	Average Satisfaction

5. Research Question 5: What is the public institutions employees' perceptions in the aspects of salary and additional benefits?

Table 5 shows the status of employees' perceptions in the Salary and additional benefits: The overall score for dimension of salary and additional benefits shows the average satisfaction with mean score of 2.82. The highest mean score is 3.45 with the average satisfaction over supporting income like overtime given to employees.

Table 5: Mean Value of Salary and Additional Benefits

Scale	Mean Score	Mean Score Interpretation
Scale E: Salary and Additional Benefits		
• The salary given is not fairly enough for the work I did	2.35	Dissatisfied
• Incentives and benefits are good enough to cover part of my needs and requirements	2.55	Dissatisfied
• The increment of my salary is fair enough for me	2.75	Average Satisfaction
• The Financial support is not good for those needed in time required	2.50	Dissatisfied
• Other supporting incomes like overtime is not encouraging	3.35	Average Satisfaction
	3.45	Average Satisfaction
Overall salary and additional benefits	2.82	Average Satisfaction

6. Research Question 6: What is the perceptions of public institutions employees' in the aspects of relationship?

Table 6 shows the status of employees' perceptions in Relationships: The overall score for dimension of relationships shows the average satisfaction with the mean score of 2.90. The highest mean score is 3.35 with the average satisfaction over the relationships with peers.

Table 6: Mean Value of Relationships

Scale	Mean Score	Mean Score Interpretation
Scale F: Relationships		
• The management always organize social gathering with employees	2.80	Average Satisfaction
• The relationships between employees and management is always on the positive ways	2.95	Average Satisfaction
• The management appreciate and recognize the achievement of the employees	2.90	Average Satisfaction
• Relationship with peers is good and encouraging	3.35	Average Satisfaction
• The management always remember on birthdays, wedding and other happy moments of employees by wishes and gifts	2.75	Average Satisfaction
• This institutions can be considered as caring organization	2.68	Average Satisfaction
Overall relationship mean value	2.90	Average Satisfaction

7. Research Question 7: What is the perceptions of public institutions employees' in the aspect of the involvement?

Table 7 shows the status of employees' perceptions in Involvement: The overall score for dimension of involvement shows the average satisfaction with the mean score of 2.96. The highest mean score is 3.43 with the average satisfaction over the accountable of people in the work unit.

Table 7: Mean Value of Involvement

Scale	Mean Score	Mean Score Interpretation
<u>Scale G: Involvement</u>		
• Suggestions to get job done	3.12	Average Satisfaction
• Addresses unsafe employee work practices	2.95	Average Satisfaction
• Keeps employee updated	3.15	Average Satisfaction
• Management keeps me informed	3.18	Average Satisfaction
• Expectations about work quality is clear	3.09	Average Satisfaction
• Satisfaction with the recognition given	2.85	Average Satisfaction
• Provides solutions for unsafe work conditions	3.15	Average Satisfaction
• Ability to communicate with employees	2.88	Average Satisfaction
• People in the work unit held accountable	3.43	Average Satisfaction
• Unsafe work conditions addressed	3.10	Average Satisfaction
• Supervisors treat me with dignity and respect	2.68	Average Satisfaction
• Thanks me for the work I do	2.44	Dissatisfied
• Company works to prevent accidents/injuries	3.18	Average Satisfaction
• Safety on the job	3.07	Average Satisfaction
• Enough information to do the job	2.95	Average Satisfaction
• Physical working conditions	2.98	Average Satisfaction
• Received training needed to do the job	3.10	Average Satisfaction
• Security measures in place	3.11	Average Satisfaction
• Union and management work well together	2.75	Average Satisfaction
• Work unit cooperates to get the job done	2.90	Average Satisfaction
• Unit provides quality service	2.73	Average Satisfaction
• Discrimination and harassment in the workplace are addressed	2.90	Dissatisfied
• Can believe the information from the company	2.90	Average Satisfaction
• Companies values diversity	3.10	Average Satisfaction
• Emergency evacuation procedures in place	3.23	Average Satisfaction
• Prevents unauthorized access	2.89	Average Satisfaction
• Proud to work for the company	2.90	Average Satisfaction
• Feel discriminated against based on races and gender	2.70	Average Satisfaction
• May be the victim of physical violence	2.85	Average Satisfaction
• Feel excluded from the work unit	2.98	Average Satisfaction
Overall involvement mean value	2.96	Average Satisfaction

8. Research Question 8: What are the public institutions employees' perceptions in the aspects of Quality of Working Life (QWL)

Table 8 shows the status of employees' perceptions in QWL with the overall score for QWL is average satisfaction with the mean value of 2.88. The highest mean score is 3.10 with the average satisfaction over the goals and role descriptions and workplace health and fitness program.

Table 8: Mean value of Quality of Working Life

Scale	Mean Score	Mean Score Interpretation
Items		
Communication and information sharing	2.87	Average Satisfaction
Employee involvement	2.88	Average Satisfaction
Goals and role descriptions	3.10	Average Satisfaction
Performance evaluation and feedback	2.95	Average Satisfaction
Job autonomy	2.75	Average Satisfaction
Physical changes	2.90	Average Satisfaction
Work schedule autonomy	2.88	Average Satisfaction
Management style changes	2.78	Average Satisfaction
Social interactions	2.98	Average Satisfaction
Work redesign	2.75	Average Satisfaction
Career development	2.80	Dissatisfied
Stress management training	2.90	Average Satisfaction
Reduce job demands	2.75	Average Satisfaction
Workplace health and fitness program	3.02	Average Satisfaction
Overall QWL mean value	2.88	Average Satisfaction

9. Research Question 9: Is there any relationship between job challenge, communication, support, freedom, salary, relationships and involvement with the Quality of Work Life?

The findings of correlations in Table 9 indicate that QWL is positively related to job challenge ($r = 0.451$, $p=0.001$), communication ($r = 0.690$, $p<0.001$), support ($r = 0.645$, $p<0.001$), freedom ($r = 0.690$, $p<0.001$), salary ($r = 0.720$, $p<0.001$), relationships ($r = 0.566$, $p<0.001$) and involvement ($r = 0.567$, $p<0.001$).

Table 9: The Relationship between job challenge, communication, support, freedom, salary, relationships and involvement with the Quality of Work Life

Scale	Correlations (r)
▪ Job challenge	0.451
▪ Communication	0.690
▪ Support	0.645
▪ Freedom	0.690
▪ Salary	0.720
▪ Relationships	0.566
▪ Involvement	0.567

According to the correlation result, all seven variables are positively related to Quality of Work Life. The highest correlation is salary and additional benefits with $r = 0.720$ followed by communication and freedom with $r = 690$ and support with $r = 0.645$.

Recommendation and Conclusions

Specifically the result shows the average satisfaction of each factor that affect the quality of working life for employees in factories. The management should look over the issues of each factor carefully and specifically in order to have an efficient of work force at the support level. The insight gained from this study are that the quality of working life for factory employees should improve and they would perform their jobs even more effectively if the following recommendations were adopted:

Job Challenge - Improve the job challenge elements such as:

- Variety of skills
- Interesting work environment
- Challenging work for future enhancement

Communication - Increase levels of communication effectively as follows:

- Trust and confidence in management
- Praise and recognition to employees
- Communicate with employees as necessary
- Conflicts should be resolved effectively

Supervisory Support – the majority of employees believed the supervisory support is good for both the company and employees morale:

- Supportive and motivation to employees
- Encouragement and support
- Understanding employee problem
- Confidence and trust
- Guidance and understanding of work problem

Freedom from Stress – Management needs to consider the stress level of employees that can affect the quality of working life.

- Training and awareness raising programs
- Changes in organizational policies and procedures to reduce sources of stress
- Counseling will undoubtedly help to create a better work environment for employees
- Commitment to help employees

Salary and Additional Benefits– Salary and additional benefits have both surface and symbolic value that need the management to pay highly concerned on this matter as it can be called as rewards for employees. Rewards take the form of money, benefits, awards, and incentives. Factors such as motivational impact, cost, and fit with the organizational system must be considered when the management designing or analyzing a reward or salary system:

- Financial support
- Overtime work to add salary
- Increment for good income
- Incentives like medical and insurance

Relationships – increase the harmony of relationships and friendship at the work place will help employees increase their self-motivation for QWL in the following aspects:

- Feeling respect of each other
- Feeling complicity in relationships between employees and colleagues and superiors
- Feeling compassion and affective support, sharing good times, laughing, playing and teasing with peers and management at certain period of time can help to build up the happiness at the workplace and gives impact towards QWL.

Involvement – promote new learning experiences among employees as to let get more involvement with their job and organization in the following aspects:

- Actively participate in organizational committees and groups
- Promote change as constructive
- Engage staff in the change process and reward positive involvement in behavior and practices

- Occupational health and safety
- Conducive working environment
- No discrimination and harassment
- Manage complaint and conflicts

Quality of Work Life – should be improved for building up a good life for employees as what has been said “happy workers are the productive workers and productive workers will have a better QWL”, so the management and employees should pay more attentions in the following aspects of QWL in order to have a better quality of working life and quality of life as a whole:

- Communication and information sharing should be enhanced
- Employee involvement in part of the working life dimensions
- Goals and role descriptions should be clear
- Performance evaluation and feedback must be specific
- Job autonomy and Work schedule autonomy
- Physical changes in the working environment to avoid accidents at the workplace
- Work schedule autonomy
- Management style changes
- Social interactions and caring society should be the practice
- Work redesign to reduce repetitive and boredom of work
- Career development must be clear for better future
- Stress management training should be in line of the employees stress at workplace and in life
- Reduce job demands especially in the level of difficulty work
- Workplace health and fitness program should be the practice in the company

Conclusions

Employees in factories are more susceptible to high and low QWL because of intense daily demands. Effectively dealing with low QWL by helping to increase hardiness may better equip employees to prevent or reduce physical and psychological illness. The employees should have knowledge and skills with the help of management and the work environment to build up a better quality of working life.

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