



## A Study on Employees' Perception on Quality of Work Life and Job Satisfaction in manufacturing organization - an Empirical study

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### Abstract

Quality of Work Life (QWL) is being used these days by organizations as a strategic tool to attract and retain the talent. QWL policies are increasingly becoming part of the business strategies and focus is on the potential of these policies to influence employees "quality of working life and more importantly to help them maintain work-life balance with equal attention on performance and commitment at work. QWL is "The degree to which members of a work organization are able to satisfy important personnel needs through their experience in the organization" The aim of this study is to find out about the employee's perception on their work-life quality. Previous studies indicated that employees' perception on work life quality significantly influenced their job satisfaction. 460 employees were participated in this study. However, only 251 survey questionnaires were returned yielding 54.6% response rate. Ten variables to measure Quality Work Life (QWL) are examined namely support from organization, work-family conflict, relationship with peers, self competence, impact on job, meaningfulness of job, optimism on organizational change, autonomy, access to resources and time control. All these variables are tested the relationship with job satisfaction. The test indicated that each of the QWL variables on its own is a salient predictor of Job Satisfaction. However, 7 QWL variables are no longer significant predictors for job satisfaction when all the 10 QWL variables are entered into the regression equation. Using multiple linear regressions, only 3 QWL variables (meaningfulness of job, optimism on organizational change and autonomy) are significantly related to Job Satisfaction. However, they only explained 28.8% of the variance in Job Satisfaction,  $F(10, 240) = 11.134, p < .05$ .

**Key Words:** Work life, motivation, satisfaction, organizational commitment.

### PAPER/ARTICLE INFO

RECEIVED ON: 25/02/2012

ACCEPTED ON: 15/05/2012

Chitra, D. and Mahalakshmi, V. (2012) "A study on Employess' Perception on Quality of work life and Job satisfaction in manufacturing organization-An Empirical Study" Int. J. of Trade and Commerce-IIARTC, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 175-184

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Job satisfaction describes how content is with his or her job. The happier people are within their job, the more satisfied they are said to be. Job satisfaction is a very important attribute which is frequently measured by organizations. The most common way of measurement is the use of rating scales where employees report their reactions to their jobs. Job satisfaction has been defined as a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job an affective reaction to one's job and an attitude towards one's job.

As early as 1960's researchers have begun to study and connect the dots between work and family. Numerous works on work life thereafter proves that what happened in the workplace have significant impact on individuals and their families. (**Greenhaus & Beutell (1985); Kossek & Ozeki (1998); Lewis & Cooper (1987)**). The combination of a fluctuating work environment with competing job and family commitments has negatively affected employees in the form of lowered morale and motivation, reduced productivity, and increased burnout and turnover (**Galinsky & Stein (1990), Benedict & Taylor (1995)**). Moreover the inability of employee to balance the equally challenging demands of their work and personal life has contributed to the escalating stress and conflict of today's workforce (**Edwards & Rothbard (2000)**). This in turn leads to significant rise in stress related health problems, which translates to financial cost both to the employer as well as the government (**Johnson et al. (1997), Frone et al. (1997)**).

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The survey was conducted to study whether employees' perceptions towards QWL has any impacts on their job satisfaction. Past research indicated that employees have different perceptions towards their work life quality and this may have an impact on their job satisfaction. Stress in day to day work life is also assessed by looking at employees' personal life aspects as well as occupational related stressors. Specifically, the objectives of the study were first, to see whether the current organizational climate influences employees' perception of job satisfaction; second, to find out the sources of stress among employees in a higher learning institution environment and finally to find out employees level of satisfaction with regard to various job related aspects.

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **3.1 Facets of QWL: Organizational Climate**

In this study, QWL is measured using organizational climate facets that have been used in previous researches. It consists of 3 facets namely affective, cognitive and instrumental. Affective facet is measured using two dimensions namely quality of relationships and pessimism about organizational change. Quality of relationships is a critical component of the social relations aspect of climate and has been used in past climate studies. Pessimism about organizational change, as developed by **Wanous et al. (2000)** is another important indicator with regards to the affective climate as cynicism is usually backed by perceptions of ineffective leadership practices. Pessimism about change may be negatively related to job satisfaction because hope in future improvement would be low.

The cognitive climate facet consists of a sense of deriving intrinsic rewards from one's work. The cognitive climate facet is measured in this study through several dimensions of cognitive climate: meaningfulness, competence, self-determination, impact and work- family interference.

Meaningfulness has been described as the “engine” of empowerment (**Spreitzer et al. (1997)**) which gives the feeling that doing something that is worth time and effort and it is worthwhile in the large scheme of things; competence is the confidence feel in ability to do the work well; self-determination is the freedom to choose how to do work; and impact involves the sense that the task is proceeding and that are actually accomplishing something and making a difference in the organization. Together these individual dimensions of cognitive department climate suggest that if employees do not experience these cognitive elements of their work, they may become dissatisfied. Finally the level of work-family interference which describes the extent to which an employee's work demands interfere with family responsibilities is also measured through items developed by (**Gutek et al. (1991)**).

The instrumental climate facet is defined as follows: work processes, structure, and extrinsic rewards (**Carr Schimdt et al. (2003)**). The specific dimensions of instrumental climate selected in this study include: access to resources and time control. Access to resources includes access to work space, funds, support staff, supplies and materials. Time control on the other hand denotes the ability of employees to control the time at work and give priority to what they perceived to be the most important task at hand.

### **3.2 Facets of QWL: Organizational Support**

Besides items relating to organizational climate, the level of support offered by the organization was also measured as an indication of the work-life quality at an institution. Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is defined as the extent to which employees perceive that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. POS is a key factor in influencing employee commitment to the organization, job satisfaction, and general quality of work life. Many researchers have studied the relationship between perceived organizational support and work-life quality of workers and have found it to have a positive impact on organizational commitment, employee performance as well as job satisfaction (**Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002); Dixon & Sagas (2007)**).

### **3.3 Job Satisfaction**

The relationship of job satisfaction with work life quality is another aspect of working life that is often investigated by researchers. Job satisfaction is one of the central variables in work and is seen as an important indicator of working life quality. (**Cohen et al. (2007); Aryee et al. (1999)**). This study utilized instrument developed by **Aryee et al. (1999)**, which contained items to determine the extent to which the employee is satisfied or is enthusiastic about his job. This part of feeling enthusiastic or having sense of enjoyment in one's work is reflective of Herzberg's Hygiene factors in his theory of motivation. (**Herzberg et al. (1967); Herzberg (1968)**).

### **3.4 Quality Work Life (QWL), Job Satisfaction and Stress**

Some of the elements that are relevant in determining an individual's quality of work life would include the task, the physical work environment, social environment within the organization, administrative system and relationship between life on and off the job (**Che Rose et al. (2006)**). A study conducted in Malaysia by **Che Rose et al. (2006)** further concluded that the most important predictor of QWL is organizational climate, followed by career achievement, career satisfaction and career balance. **Carr et al. (2003)** in their study used **Ostroff's (1993)** taxonomy to organize

dimensions labeled as workplace climate and then used meta-analytic techniques to test a path analytic model. The results suggest that there are 3 higher order facets of climate (affective, cognitive, and instrumental) that affected individual level outcomes of job performance, psychological well-being, and withdrawal through their impact on organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Employees' source of stress and level of satisfaction regarding several aspect of work are also measured to get a better understanding of the overall QWL in the institution and although these aspects are not work life on their own, perception of quality of work- life is often assessed using job satisfaction and organizational climate surveys (Krueger et al. (2002)). The negative consequences of occupational stress are recognized as major problems for both employees and organizations. For employees, stress frequently contributes to the risk of accidents, burn-out and illnesses like coronary heart disease, hyper-tension and severe depression (Sutherland & Cooper (1988)) For organizations, stress-related problems result in low job satisfaction, poor quality of performance, increased absence from work and high turnover (Montowidlo et al. (1986)).

#### **4. RESEARCH METHODS**

##### **4.1 Data Collection**

All employees (around 460 employees) in the automation manufacturing industry from all levels were asked to participate in the survey. However, only 251 survey questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 54.6%. The sampling method is convenience sampling.

##### **4.2 Research Instruments**

The survey instrument was based on validated measures of work environment and organizational climate but some items were changed or customized to suit the targeted audience in this institution. Most of the scales used in this study has been utilized in other studies before and has been validated by past researches (Wanous et al. (2000); Gutek et al. (1991); Jones & James (1979); Spreitzer (1996); Spreitzer (1997); Callister (2006); Hackman and Oldham (1979)). All the items in the questionnaire are based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree.

#### **5. THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

As expounded earlier in the literature, QWL facets have significant impacts on employees' job satisfaction. Thus, in the present study, 10 QWL variables (work-family interference, quality of relationship, meaningfulness, pessimism about organizational change, self competence, impact, self determination, access to resources, time control and support) were tested the relationships with job satisfaction. Correlations tests and multiple linear regressions were used to examine the relationships.

#### **6. DATA ANALYSIS**

##### **6.1 Demographic Analysis**

A total of 251 employees in the institutions participated in this survey. Majority of the respondents were female staff (59.1%). Sixty five percent were at the younger age group (26 to 35 years old) and most of them (58.6%) have been working in the institution from 4 to 10 years. Largest groups were executives (28%) and non-executives (23.3%). Majority of the respondents (46.4%) possessed

Bachelor degree, 26% with Masters and 19.1% with diploma. Minority was made up of those with doctorate (0.9%) and SPM (5.5%).

**6.2 Measurement Items**

Seventy items were used to measure the QWL and job satisfaction. A factor analysis was carried out to summarize the structure of the sets of variables. The rotated factor matrix produced 20 columns whereas the intended variables were only 11. The Bartlett test of sphericity is significant and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is .914 (which is far greater than .6). Out of 20, only 11 variables were interpretable and meaningful. Reliability tests were conducted to measure the Cronbach's alpha and all the (independent and dependent) variables obtained scores ranging from .699 to .923.

**6.3 Results from Correlations Tests and Linear Regression Tests**

Correlation tests were conducted to examine the individual relationships between the QWL dimensions and job satisfaction. The outputs of the tests were summarized in Table 1 below:

<b>QWL - Job Satisfaction relationships</b>	<b>r and the associated p values*</b>
Support	r =.308, p = .000
Work Family Interference	r =.174, p = .003
Quality of Relationship	r =.303, p =.000
Meaningfulness	r =.367, p = .000
Pessimism about organizational Change	r =.368, p = .000
Self Competence	r =.213, p = .000
Impact	r =.208, p = .000
Self Determination	r =.269, p = .000
Access to Resources	r =.282, p = .000
Time Control	r =.194, p = .001

*\*Correlations are significant at the .01 level (1-tailed)*

The above correlation tests indicated that all the individual QWL variables have Significant impacts on job satisfaction. Another test (using multiple linear regression tests) was run to examine the simultaneous effects of all the QWL variables on job satisfaction. The test output indicated that 7 QWL variables (namely Support, Work Family Interference, Quality of Relationship, Self Competence, Impact, Access to Resources and Time Control) are no longer significant predictors when all the 10 QWL variables are entered into the regression equation. Only 3 QWL variables (Meaningfulness, Pessimism about Organizational Change and Self Determination) are significantly related to Job Satisfaction. However, they only explained 28.8% of the variance in Job Satisfaction,  $F(10, 240) = 11.134, p < .05$ .

**6.4 Employees' Perceptions on Other Job Related Aspects as Sources of Stress**

Table 2 below summarized the sources of stress and the mean scores. The results showed that the sources of stress that obtained relatively high scores are like child care, discrimination and unproductive committee work. In general, since none of these stressors obtained scores above 3, it is indicative that the respondents did not regard these factors as their major stressors.

**Table 2: Source of Stress (1 - not a source of stress, 2- minimal stress, 3 - moderate stress, 4 - extreme stress, 5 - not applicable)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Managing household responsibility	2.4760	1.41755
Child care	2.8480	1.56290
personal health	2.1680	1.18719
Marital or family problem	2.4395	1.98077
Personal financial problem	2.7080	1.09340
Illness or death of family members	2.7280	1.58495
Care of elderly parents	2.4032	2.49670
Discrimination	2.7218	1.45625
Lack of promotion opportunities	2.7880	1.16468
Departmental budget concern	2.8394	1.31611
Work load	2.6480	1.01598
Frequency of meetings	2.5282	1.21362
Unproductive committee work	2.8219	1.29125
Problems with colleagues	2.1084	1.14665
Relationship with superiors	2.1250	1.14730
Institutional procedures	2.8280	1.26682
Relationship with other departments	2.3080	1.30073
Problem with students/clients/outside	2.0600	1.07938
Coping with new technology	1.7460	1.13287
Changes in the organization	2.3680	1.15495

**Employees Perceptions on Other Job Related Aspects as Sources of Job Satisfaction**

Based on the findings in Table 2 below, the respondents are particularly not satisfied with most of the job related aspects. However, they indicated moderate satisfaction towards health care benefits, working environment, flexible work hours, relationship with co-workers and superiors as well as opportunity to work independently. None of these factors received scores above 4 (satisfied) and these may imply the moderate to low level satisfaction towards other job related aspects.

**Table 2: Level of Satisfaction with Job Related Aspects (1- Not applicable, 2- Not satisfied, 3- Moderately satisfied, 4- Satisfied, 5- Very satisfied)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Salary	2.3765	.69254
Health care benefits	3.1040	.91242
Access to recreational/fitness facility	2.5320	.94475
Work load	2.8750	.82748
Opportunities to develop new skills	2.7490	.84208
Working environment	3.0766	.82360
Fair and equitable performance appraisal	2.7200	.83209



Opportunity for scholarly pursuit	2.9360	.95895
Flexibility of working hours	0400 3	.97684
Job security	2.9200	.91045
Relationship with co-workers	3.5760	.81909
Relationship with supervisors	3.4137	.87158
Opportunity to work independently	3.4120	.82764
Recognition of achievement	2.8280	.89084

## 7. FINDINGS

This research attempts to find out the influence of employees' perception of work-life quality towards job satisfaction. As per findings from the previous research the independent variables which are used to determine the employees' perception toward QWL as a whole are proven to be directly related to job satisfaction. These findings are consistent with the ones in previous researches for example by **Hagedorn (1994)** as well as **Olsen and Near (1994)** as reported in **Johnsrud (2002)**; where work life variables such as salary, perceived support of colleagues, satisfaction with the administration, work and non work conflict have been proven to directly affects or are predictive of job satisfaction.

However, the insignificance of the variables individually in determining job satisfaction except for meaningfulness, pessimism and autonomy, perhaps point to the fact that there are other elements which influence job satisfaction that we didn't address in this Herzberg's two factor theory (**Herzberg et al. (1967); Herzberg (1968)**) for instance study identifies two sets of factors, motivator and hygiene to be instrumental as sources of job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction. While the instrument used in this study employ some of the factors indicated, some others that represent the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for example the competitiveness of employees' pay, opportunity for career advancement or fringe benefits as well as awards and other kinds of recognition for good performance were not included in the survey, hence the said findings of this study.

The relatively young average age of the respondents (32.97) and the fact that 58.6% of them are married indicate that they are still in the productive stage of expanding their family size and most likely to have small children or school going children. As such financial rewards and fringe benefit like medical coverage would likely contribute to their level of job satisfaction. This is supported by the low mean score (lowest among fourteen job related aspects tested) on the level of satisfaction with salary recorded among the respondents.

The respondents' average years of service in the university together with the high percentage of those in the non-academic post holding positions other than the managerial level (92.37%) on the other hand may imply that opportunity for career advancement can lead to job satisfaction. It should be noted that although on the average the respondents did not indicate their outright dissatisfaction with fair and equitable performance appraisal or performance recognition, the means for those dimensions of job aspect are only 2.72 and 2.82 respectively. The mean score for scholarly pursuits is also below 3 signifying below moderate level of satisfaction.

The contribution of meaningfulness, pessimism and autonomy elements to job satisfaction as compared to the other individual dimensions tested in this study conform to the findings of previous researches on cognitive elements and their relationship with job satisfaction (**Speitzer et**

al. (1997)) and the correlation between affective facet and organization climate (Wanous et al. (2000)). Despite the increasing level of competition and short span of technical life-cycle in the education industry, keeping abreast with new technology is rated as the least cause of stress by the respondents implying that they are confident with their level of competence. In fact with such confidence and competence the staff of the university can and will be more satisfied if given ample autonomy in carrying out their job.

An organization which believes in autonomy would empower its people rather creating stress among the employees by tangling them in red tapes. The respondents of this study however, rated institutional procedures as one of the sources of stress. They also single out involvement in unproductive committee work as stress originator. Although the mean score for the said factor is between minimal to moderate, it is worth noting that the score for institutional procedures and committee works rank third and fourth (behind child care and departmental budget concerns) in stress causation, even higher than the mean for organizational change. It is not surprising to see institutional procedures causing a lot of stress among the employees.

Another angle to be considered in determining why only three of the ten QWL variables are significantly related to job satisfaction is the fact that almost half of the respondents (41.83%) are academicians. Academicians may derive their satisfaction from seeing their students graduating and knowing those students are employed immediately after graduation. Autonomy is also extremely important to academicians in carrying out their duties. As a private university, however, cannot provide much space for academicians to maneuver as the bottom line must always be considered.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

The present study indicated that QWL variables only are insufficient to measure employees' job satisfaction. The findings from the study were partly inconsistent with the previous research done in this area. However, any generalization made from the findings of this study must be made with extreme care as the respondents seem to be somewhat indecisive in answering the questionnaire. Despite the confidentiality and anonymity assurance found that the average score for majority of the items tested for job satisfaction, sources of stress and job related aspects' satisfaction level to be around 2.0 to 3.6 (scale of 1 to 5) only. The future studies in this area should be made independent of the human resource or any department in the sample organizations so that a fair response can be extracted. Future research on job satisfaction in the education industry should also include other dimensions of job satisfaction especially on the intrinsic rewards and key performance indicators or the satisfaction especially on the intrinsic rewards and key performance indicators or the performance evaluation criteria used by the sample organizations in evaluating their employees

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