Factors Contributing To Quality of Work Life of Employees: An Empirical Study

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Introduction

The success of any organization depends to a large extent upon the capability, competence, efficiency, and level of development of human resources, who being the active agents, accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, and build social, economic and political organizations. No organization can think of viability and effectiveness without the efficient utilization of human resources. Therefore, human resource is the most important resource and is considered the backbone of every organization. Though factors such as exploration of natural resources, availability of physical and financial resources, and international aid contribute to the economic development of a country, none of these factors is more significant than committed manpower. In fact, it may be said that all the development comes from the human mind. There are great differences in development between countries which seem to have almost equal resources. As such, the countries are endowed with the same level of natural resources, technology, and international aid. Their productivity and development mostly depend upon the availability, efficiency and committed human resources. However, globalization makes human resource management of the organizations more challenging and it raises a number of new issues like cross-cultural training, compensation, benefits, etc.

Today, organizations operate in an environment characterized by technological changes, which in turn, affect employment opportunities, skill requirement, management policies, strategies and style, expectations and aspirations of employees as well as the physical working conditions. In the industrial world, the thrust is now given to “quality” in order to foster a quality culture. Quality assumes a goal or an objective or even a priority. Quality work cannot be achieved easily. Besides, people's issues move to the foreground and technical issues take a supporting role. It is evident from history that work has occupied an important place in the life of human beings. How people have thought and felt about the working experience have also been an age old concern for both workers and managers. With the rapidly changing technological, socio-economic, political, and legal environment, effective management of human resources has become a challenging job. Effective utilization of human resources requires better quality of work life by providing adequate financial compensation, good working conditions,
suitable opportunities for growth and development, workers’ participation in management and by ensuring social justice in the organization.

**Concept of Quality of Work Life**

Since time immemorial, there has been a focus on the quality of work life in India. This is due to the fact that the entire Indian philosophy has developed itself on the basis of improving the quality of life of employees due to the stress even in the scriptures, sacred books and the epics, to the need and maintenance of quality in every one's life. Karma-Yoga is prescribed as a way of life. Karma refers to work and Karma Yoga deals with meaning of work, its implications, and the way in which it should be done. Applied in a narrow sense, it can describe requisites of the highest quality in work. Quality of work life is a generic phrase that covers a person’s feelings about every dimension of work, including economic rewards and benefits, security, working conditions, organizational and inter-personal relationships and intrinsic meaning in a person’s life. It focuses on creating a human work environment where employees work co-operatively and contribute to organizational objectives.

Different expressions have been used to denote quality of work life in different countries. To quote a few, for example, in French speaking nations, the most common expression is 'improvement in working conditions'. In the former socialist economies 'workers’ participation' is the term that is widely accepted. In Scandinavia, the concept of quality of work life centers on 'work environment' and 'democratization of work place'. The English concept of 'quality of work life' is understood commonly in all industrialized countries, even if it is sometimes bare.

Quality of work life 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 contribution and they should be treated with dignity and respect. The elements that are relevant to an individual’s quality of work life include the task, physical work environment, social environment within the organization, administrative system and relationship between life on and off the job. People conceive of quality of work life as a set of methods, such as autonomous work groups, job enrichment and high involvement aimed at boosting the satisfaction and
productivity of workers. It requires employee commitment to the organization and an environment in which this commitment can flourish. Therefore, quality of work life is a comprehensive construct that includes an individual’s job related well-being and the extent to which work experiences are rewarding, fulfilling and devoid of stress and other negative personal consequences. The quality of work life means the sum total of values, material and non-material, attained by a worker through his life as a wage or salary earner.

Sirgy, et al., define quality of work life as employee satisfaction with a variety of needs through resources, activities and outcomes stemming from participation in the workplace. The quality of work life is conceptually similar to well-being of employees but differs from job satisfaction which solely represents the workplace domain. Quality of work life is not a unitary concept, but has been seen as incorporating a hierarchy of perspectives that not only include work-based factors, but also factors that broadly reflect life satisfaction and general feelings of well-being. Quality of work life can be described as the nature of work, the physical conditions, the psychological stress one experiences from the work and from other components at the work place, and the group morale where he performs.

The quality of work life is the working conditions’ response to needs and desires of an individual. Cummings and Worley mention that the quality of work life has two meanings. Firstly, it means a good feeling towards work and good mental health experienced from work in terms of incentives, safe working conditions, and growth. Secondly, it means the ways that organizations use to assure the quality of work such as creating the meaning and importance of work responsibility by applying efficient teamwork and management and labour relation systems. For promoting the quality of work life various management strategies such as new designs, quality control circle, and participative management are to be initiated. To sum up, quality of work life is viewed as a wide-ranging concept, which includes adequate and fair remuneration, safe and healthy working conditions and social integration in the work organization that enable an individual to develop and use all his or her capacities. Most of the definitions aim at achieving effective work environment that meets with the organizational and personal needs and values that promote health, well being, job
security, job satisfaction, competency development and balance between work and non-work life.

**Importance of Quality of Work Life**

As more companies have started realizing that a happy employee is a productive employee, they have started to look for ways to improve the work environment. Many have implemented various work-life programs to help employees, including alternate work arrangements, onsite childcare, exercise facilities, relaxed dress codes, and more. Quality of work life programs go beyond work or life programs by focusing less attention on employee needs outside work and realizing that job stress and the quality of life at work have even more direct bearing on worker satisfaction. The quality of work life movement aims at integrating the socio-psychological needs of employees, the structure and process of the organization and the existing socio-cultural milieu. It creates a culture of work commitment in organizations and society at large so as to ensure higher productivity and greater job satisfaction. The quality of work life has an important bearing on the total quality of the people. It leads to a better quality of life of the people and vice versa. Thus, it has been considered a means and at the same times an end in itself. It is an end because the quality of life can be achieved only through the quality of work life. It means the experience gained through work life that helps workers to acquire excellence, high amount of civic competence and better skills which are necessary for the development of manpower.

The benefits of quality of work life have direct effects on increasing job satisfaction, creating feelings of belonging, and reducing rates of change with high productivity. The quality of work life affects the organization in three ways: Firstly, it increases organizational productivity; secondly, it increases work spirit, encouragement and motivation of workers, and lastly, it helps to improve the potent of workers. Quality of work life programmes are desirable for human needs because they act as a motivating factor for better working, comprehend conditions at employment, include work environment and social integration and seek to employ the higher skills of work and provide an environment that encourages them to improve their skills. If quality of life at work could be improved, it would benefit...
and reward not only the individual employee, but also the company, its customers and society as a whole. There is no doubt that to prosper and expand at work is beneficial to both national health and balance of payment.

**Statement of the Problem**

Globalization of the economies and the consequent compulsion of facing competition both in the domestic and international markets pose a serious challenge to all concerned, viz. employers, employees and the society. This has necessitated improving the performance of work organizations. All these demand a new work culture and a high level of motivation and commitment to the job and organizational goals on the part of employees. This cannot be attained unless adequate measures are taken to enhance quality of work life in work organizations. Though the positive effect of quality of work life has already been established, all parties of the organization still resist to any scheme or procedure to improve quality of work life. The management may feel that the quality of work life at the present level is satisfactory enough and no steps need to be taken to improve it. Therefore, they fail to measure the impact of quality of work life on the psyche of the employee, though all employees basically aspire for satisfaction. Employees, on the other hand, resist changes with a preconceived notion that any scheme the management takes up, would be to increase production without extra cost. The changing scenario, marked by uncertainty, has given rise to high expectations and higher performance standards from people and organizations alike. The challenges of globalization, technological advance, increasing competition and growth through expansion, diversification, and acquisition have important implications for quality of work life of employees. The quality of work life movement seeks to achieve integration among the technological, human, organizational and societal demands which are often contradictory and conflicting. The participation of employees in problem-solving and decision making, particularly, in areas related to their work is considered a necessary condition for providing grater autonomy and opportunity for self-direction and self-control to workers with the ultimate objective of upgrading the quality of life. But these opportunities are restricted to employees in the public sector organizations due to their bureaucratic principle; therefore, the NLC is no exemption.
Quality of work life is concerned with overall climate of work situation and it refers to the favourable or unfavourable conditions at the work environment. Of course, majority of the public sector undertakings have been in the red since 1991 and whenever certain demands arose in the past, the management pleaded its helplessness in meeting such demands because of financial constraint and steadily declining profitability. It leads to poor morale of employees, lack of complete integration between employees and management, demoralization and lack of job security. It is therefore essential to see the problem in its totality and a planned approach is needed to study the quality of work life. It is not uncommon for a person to change careers six times in his or her lifetime on an average. It is now rare for a person to stay with a single company throughout his or her entire working life. Because employees are often willing to leave a company for better opportunities, companies need to find ways not only to hire qualified people, but also to retain them.

There are a great number of common demands between the employees list and the employer list. To attract and retain employees, companies need to be exploiting those points of convergence and continuously work with employees to redesign the work, eliminate job stress, increase job autonomy, provide learning and training opportunities and to handle such problems, quality of work life of employees is required. For bringing out quality of work life of employees in Neyveli Lignite Corporation (NLC), examining the perception of the employees and evolve a suitable parameters to improve their quality of work life has become imperative. The results of the present study might contribute to a better understanding of the importance of quality of work life to match the changing environmental demands and employee needs so as to enhance employees’ commitment and improve the internal climate. In this context, the researcher has made an attempt to study the quality of work life of employees in the NLC.

**Objectives of the Study**

1. To study the need and importance of quality of work life of employees

2. To review the quality of work life practices of the Neyveli Lignite Corporation Limited, Neyveli
3. To study the level of acceptance of the employees towards factors contributing to quality of work life of employees in Neyveli Lignite Corporation Limited, Neyveli

4. To suggest appropriate measures to improve the quality of work life of employees in NLC Neyveli Lignite Corporation Limited based on the findings of the study.

Testing of Hypotheses

In order to examine the perception of the employees towards quality of work life in Neyveli Lignite Corporation, the following null hypotheses have been formulated and tested:

\[ H_{01} \]: There is no significant association among the satisfaction levels of the employees belonging to different demographic profiles towards quality of work life of employees in Neyveli Lignite Corporation.

\[ H_{02} \]: There is no significant relationship among the acceptance levels of the respondents belonging to different demographic profiles towards factors contributing to quality of work life of employees in NLC.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is to examine the quality of work life of employees in Neyveli Lignite Corporation. In the present study, the most common 11 factors that influence the quality of work life of employees such as nature of job, compensation, working conditions, opportunity for growth and development, social integration of work, constitutionalism in the work organization, work and total life space, occupational stress, workers’ participation in management, grievance handling, and social relevance of work have been studied.

Sampling Design

The Neyveli Lignite Corporation Limited has seven functional areas. The present study is limited to only five functional areas which outnumber in terms of number of the employees, such as, Mines, Thermal Power Stations, Central Service...
Unit, Township Administration and Central Establishment. The employees working in these five functional areas are considered as total population and they were about 16882 as on 30.04.2010. By adopting stratified random sampling, 506 respondents (3% of the population from each stratum) were selected by using Tippet’s random number table. For this study, the employees were categorized into executives, supervisory staff and workmen.

Tools for Data Collection

This study is empirical in nature based on survey method. The first-hand information for this study has been collected from the personnel department of the Neyveli Lignite Corporation Limited. The study is mainly based on primary data. As an essential part of the study, the primary data were collected from 506 employees with the help of questionnaires. Taking into consideration the objectives of the study, a questionnaire was prepared after a perusal of available literature. The questionnaire was constructed based on Likert scaling technique. Pre-testing of questionnaire was done during January 2011, involving 25 respondents to know the relevance of the questions. In the light of pre-testing, necessary changes were incorporated in the questions and their sequences. As an essential part of the study, the primary data were collected for a period of 6 months from March 2011 to August 2011. The secondary data were collected mainly from journals, magazines, government reports, books and unpublished dissertations. The more relevant secondary sources of information were collected from the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore; Documentation Centre, Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi; School of Economics, Delhi University, New Delhi; and Karnataka University, Dharwad. The data so collected were entered into a master table and tabulated to arrive at useful conclusions. The ultimate object of the study is to examine the quality of work life of employees in the Neyveli Lignite Corporation. In order to study the attitude of employees, chi square test, analysis of variance, student t test, co-efficient of variation, multiple discriminant function analysis, multiple regression analysis, and percentage analysis are employed.

Findings
1. Out of 506 respondents, 3.16% are highly satisfied, 44.86% are satisfied and 32.41% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied towards quality of work life of employees in Neyveli Lignite Corporation. 10.28% and 9.29% of the respondents are dissatisfied and highly dissatisfied respectively towards quality of work life of employees.

2. There is no significant relationship among the acceptance level of the respondents belonging to different genders, age groups, educational status, monthly salary and length of experience towards factors contributing to quality of work life of employees in Neyveli Lignite Corporation. A significant relationship is found at the satisfaction level of the respondents belonging to different cadres and places of work towards factors contributing to quality of work life of employees.

3. Female respondents, respondents in the age group of 36-45 years, respondents having degree qualification, respondents belonging to monthly salary of Rs.25001-35000, executives, respondents with the length of service of 11-15 years and employees working at Central Establishment have higher acceptance level towards factors contributing to quality of work life of employees in Neyveli Lignite Corporation.

4. There exists consistency in the acceptance level of female respondents, respondents belonging to 46-55 years, respondents who have H.Sc qualification, respondents drawing salary upto Rs.15000, supervisors, respondents having above 20 years, and mines employees towards factors contributing to quality of work life of employees.

5. The multiple discriminant function technique applied results in two discriminant functions, of which the factors relating to working conditions and compensation to employees contribute to the first function (Work and Work Life) and the variables ‘workers’ participation in management’ and ‘grievance handling’ contribute to the second discriminant function (Employee-Management Relationship). The efficiency of these functions has been tested using classification matrix which predicts 91.30% of the cases correctly. Workmen and supervisors differ more from executives in ‘Work and Work
Life’. Supervisors differ in the ‘Employee-Management Relationship’ from both workmen and executives.

6. Gender, age, education and monthly salary of the employees have no significant effect on the factors contributing to quality of work life of employees in Neyveli Lignite Corporation. The years of service of the respondents have a significant effect on factors contributing to quality of work life of employees at 5 per cent significance level.

7. In regards to impact of quality of work life of employees in NLC, majority of the respondents indicate that they agree (32.21%), followed closely by strongly agree (24.90%) and neither agree nor disagree (16.60%). 14.03% and 12.25% of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree respectively with the impact of quality of work life of employees. The average acceptance score reveals that respondents have a higher acceptance level (4.04) towards the role of QWL in improving job satisfaction of employees, followed by its role in increasing productivity (3.88), and building employee loyalty (3.63). On the other hand, the respondents have a lower acceptance level towards role of QWL in reducing absenteeism and turnover (2.96), followed by its role in establishing team spirit (2.99).

8. Inconsistent promotion policy, lack of measures for the improvement of standard of living, inadequate measures to control and reduce stress, lack of encouragement to experiment with new methods and inadequate counseling are the problems of the employees ranging from 24.11 per cent to 41.50 per cent with regard to quality of work life of employees in Neyveli Lignite Corporation. Employees ranging from 43.67 per cent to 63.64 per cent state lack of appreciation of the good work of subordinates, lack of top management understand the subordinates’ problems, injustice and discrimination of employees, absence of strong mechanism for grievance redressal and inadequate training programmes as the problems in quality of work life of employees in Neyveli Lignite Corporation. More than 67 per cent of the respondents state the poor working conditions and lack of employees’ participation as their problems in quality of work life in NLC.
Suggestions

1. In most of the organizations, especially government owned, it is very difficult to have a consistent promotional policy due to complying with statutory regulations such as reservations. Being the most reputed lignite corporation in India, promotional aspect should be included in the personnel policies of Neyveli Lignite Corporation. A consistent promotional policy can be followed only through meritorious career landmarks. Therefore, it is recommended that besides time bound promotion, about 50 per cent of promotions are to be given to out-performers.

2. About 35.62 per cent of the respondents state that there is lack of measures for improving the standard of living of employees in the Neyveli Lignite Corporation. Provision for better work environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time activities, and social belonging will improve the standard of living. Though these are non-statutory measures, the employees of the Neyveli Lignite Corporation shall be provided necessary labour welfare measures to improve their standard of living.

3. Work stress is an important barrier in the quality of work life of employees. About 36.16 per cent of the respondents state that there are inadequate measures to control and reduce stress in Neyveli Lignite Corporation. Therefore, the NLC can conduct regular health check up, health screening camps, yoga classes and meditation for employees to make them physically and mentally fit. Stress audit and research could be conducted with the employees working in key areas in the Neyveli Lignite Corporation.

4. The excellence of an organization is highly influenced by dynamic employees and use of new methods. In order to develop the creativity of the employees, the Neyveli Lignite Corporation must encourage them to experiment with new methods in work places. For this purpose, the management can institute a separate cell to enable employees to experiment with new methods, and employees with creativity can be rewarded.
5. About 41.50 per cent of the employees state that the counseling facility in the Neyveli Lignite Corporation is inadequate. It is therefore suggested that the NLC may give special attention to employee counseling in areas like personal problems, career aspects, productivity and so on.

6. The management of the Neyveli Lignite Corporation must identify dynamic employees and their groups and appreciate them by giving suitable rewards, increment, special pay, family tour, extra leave, holiday home, get together with their families, appreciation letters, highlighting their good work amongst other employees on special occasions, etc. The outstanding performance of the employees must be considered at the time of their promotion.

7. According to 46.24 per cent of the respondents, top management of the Neyveli Lignite Corporation does not understand their problems. Therefore it is suggested that the management of the Neyveli Lignite Corporation may make use of informal groups by taking them into confidence to mediate as bridges of understanding between the management and the employees. The Neyveli Lignite Corporation should use it along with formal structures to make a workable system to understand the problems of the subordinates in order to ensure the organizational objectives.

8. In principle, the Indian employer, believes in and has adopted the policy of equality of opportunity and treatment at work. The company’s commitment to equality should be reflected in its policies and programmes. Therefore, Neyveli Lignite Corporation shall comply with the constitutional and legal obligations in respect of non-discrimination, equality of opportunity in training, careers prospects, facilities, etc.

9. As technology grows in rapid pace, it is imperative for the Neyveli Lignite Corporation to keep the employees acquainted with development and train them appropriately. About 63.64% of the respondents state that there exist inadequate training facilities. Therefore, the line managers of the Neyveli Lignite Corporation should formulate training modules and such modules should get the consent of the top management for implementation. Further, line managers of the Neyveli Lignite Corporation shall be deputed to attend training programmes,
conferences, seminars, etc. conducted by various outside agencies to learn the new systems. Besides, experts from repute and similar organizations shall also be invited to share their experiences with the employees of the Neyveli Lignite Corporation.

10. A common myth is that people are basically good, and they need to be managed with right mechanisms, better work environment, and job enrichment for better results. Therefore, it is suggested that the manager’s role here is to create a friendly atmosphere to encourage and motivate employees. The Neyveli Lignite Corporation shall establish and develop congenial working conditions to ensure the safety of employees. Therefore, regular inspection of compliance with rules and regulations of safety shall be undertaken by the Safety Committee/Safety Officer at all levels. In order to inculcate confidence in the minds of employees, the inspected report shall be submitted to the top management of the Neyveli Lignite Corporation as well as to recognized trade unions periodically.

Conclusion

The quality of work life approach considers people as ‘asset’ to the organization rather than ‘costs’. Employees should love their work and love the place they work with the quality of work life. Better quality of work life promotes human dignity and growth, collaborative work, compatibility of people, organizational goals, etc. Only when the right ambience is provided to the employees, they will be able to deliver their goods effectively and efficiently. As a result, employees become satisfied, motivated, involved and committed individuals with respect to their lives at work. In the present study, about 48% of the respondents are satisfied with the quality of work life in the Neyveli Lignite Corporation. The employees have a few problems with the quality of work life such as inconsistent promotion policy, lack of measures for the improvement of standard of living, inadequate measures for control and reduction of stress, lack of encouragement to experiment with new methods, inadequate counseling, lack of appreciation of the good work of subordinates, lack of top management’s understanding of subordinates’ problems, injustice and discrimination of employees, absence of strong mechanism for grievance redressal, inadequate training programmes, poor working conditions and lack of employees’
participation. To ensure a positive outcome, attention to the factors identified in the suggested framework is important for improved quality of work life.
References


