

THE PROBLEMS OF QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE MEASURE

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Abstract: The publication discusses issues related to the problems of Quality of Working Life (QWL). QWL is the set of indicators created to measure the quality of the working life. This is not an easy problem to address because different approaches to work exist, from the negative approach, to the approach that concentrates on satisfaction and fulfillment obtained through work. The aim of the paper is to analyze the concept of QWL indicator and present some examples of the sub indicators used in this case.

Keywords: QWL, Quality of Life, Quality of Working Life, indicators, human resource management, CSR, Corporate Social Responsibility.

1. Introduction

The problem of quality of life in the context of work is very important nowadays. Quality of Work Life (QWL) now has become an important tool in the process of management and improvement of employee fulfillment within organizations. Indeed, the issues related to quality of working life have been officially been part of the agenda of European policies beginning with the European Council which take place in March 2000 (in this congress, the Lisbon Strategy was launched).

In literature, we can find different approaches to work. Some authors think that work has a negative impact on life, others thinks that work is an indispensable part of life's satisfaction and fulfillment. The conception of QWL is also closely-related to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The QWL indicator can be used as a part of the measures used in CSR reporting to help organizations improve their strategies so as to achieve the objectives and targets set out in European Union Directives (Hąbek, and Wolniak, 2013, 2016; Wolniak, and Hąbek, 2016; Wolniak, 2016, 2017; Ponomarenko et al., 2016; Kozubek, 2017; Kuzior, and Knosala, 2015; Męczyńska et al., 2013; Hys, and Wolniak, 2018; Wolniak et al., 2019; Olkiewicz et. al. 2019; Dźwigoł-Barosz, and Wolniak, 2018; Wolniak, and Skotnicka-

Zasadzień, 2018; Jonek-Kowalska, 2014, 2017; Wolniak, and Grebski, 2018). According to Kriel, QWL strongly depends on workplace justice in general and business ethics in particular. We can say, therefore, that the ethical approach set out in CSR enactment play crucial role in QWL indicators.

By following CSR guidelines, organizations can understand and fulfill the employees' needs by creating opportunities for work-personal life balance improvement, and by generating quality of working life improvement. The notion of CSR may help to satisfy the needs for security and safety as it holds a strong reputation. Employees and prospective employees may then infer from CSR activity and by the enterprise creating and maintaining high QWL indicator value, that their organization is moral and conclude that is worthwhile investing their efforts into the success of their place of work (Thardsatien, 2019).

2. Quality of Working Life – basic concepts

The history of the QWL method and indicator dates back to the 60-ties of the last century and has been completely described by Martel and Dupuis (Markel, and Dupuis, 2006). Herein, Quality of Work Life is defined as follows:

- QWL is a way of thinking about people, work and organization (Nadler, and Lawler, 1983).
- QWL means something different for each individual, and is likely to vary according to the individual age, career stage, and/or position in the industry (Kiernan, and Knutson, 1990).
- QWL is both a goal and an ongoing process for achieving that goal. As a goal, the QWL is an organizational commitment to improve the quality of work by creating more involving, satisfying, and effective jobs and work environments for people at all levels of the organization. As a process, QWL calls for efforts to realize this goal through the active involvement of people throughout the organization (Carlson, 1980).
- QWL is creating employee satisfaction by providing resources, activities and outcomes stemming from recognition of needs (Sirgy et al., 2001).
- QWL at a given time, corresponds to the condition of an individual in his dynamic pursuit of his hierarchically organized goals within work domains where the reduction of the gap separating the individual from these goals is reflected by a positive impact on the individual's general quality of life, organizational performance, and consequently, the overall functioning of society (Markel, and Dupuis, 2006).
- QWL – the EU definition relies on a multidimensional approach, including objective characteristics of the job, subjective evaluation of workers, workers' characteristics, and the match between the worker and the job. Within the framework of the European

Employment Strategy, ten groups of indicators have been defined in monitoring employment quality: health and safety at work; intrinsic job quality; skills; life-long learning and career development; gender equality; health and safety at work; flexibility and security; inclusion and access to the labor market; work organization and work-life balance; social dialogue and worker involvement; diversity and non-discrimination; overall economic performance and productivity.

There is a huge set of QWL characteristics and it is not easy to describe them all. According to Sojka (2014), by means of QWL indicators we could measure such problems as:

- The degree to which managers and line chiefs treat the people working for them with respect and have confidence in their ability.
- Variety of the daily work.
- Challenge of work.
- Equitable promotions.
- Extent to which life outside work affects life at work.
- Self-esteem.

In Figure 1, we give a conceptual model of sustainable development in the concept of working life. In essence, this model points to the fact that when speaking about quality of working life, it is not possible to ignore either the subjective or objective element of quality because they are both essential to the all-embracing perception of this conception. According to this model, the indicators of the objective quality of life are the individual assessment elements of the wholeness of the environmental and economic situation; whereas the subjective component should be related to individual social values (Ruževičius, 2007).

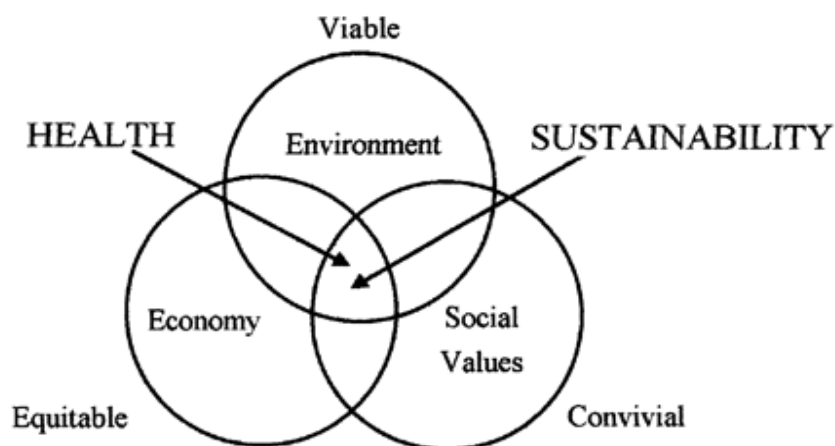


Figure 1. Conceptual model of sustainable development in the context of quality of working life. Source: (Ruževičius, 2007).

3. Quality of Working Life – indicators

Yadaw and Khanna undertook a very interesting and broad meta-analysis about the quality of working life. Therein, they compared 26 papers about this topic to find the variables used in various QWL models. The findings of their paper (Table 1) show that there are some drivers that have been used more frequently in the literature than were other drivers. Commitment, employees' relationship, cohesiveness were the most frequent drivers used in the literature that deals with establishing a positive relationship via the application of quality of work life standards. Herein, 8 out of 25 literature studies cited that commitment, relationship, cohesiveness are effective drivers of QWL, while proper and quality supervision, pay and benefits increase the organizational commitment of employees and improve QWL. Furthermore, 5 out of 25 literature studies said pay and benefits, supervision gave a positive relationship with the QWL, but participation management sometimes generated positive as well as negative QWL relationships. In addition, 6 out 25 submitted papers held that there was no relationship between gender and QWL, while age affected the QWL according to 4 out of 25 studies in the field. Perception, too, plays a vital role in QWL and sometimes it gives a positive as well as a negative relation with QWL. What is more, 4 out of 25 literature studies reveal positive relationships with QWL and 2 out of 25 submissions show a negative relationship with QWL. The other important factor which affects QWL is work experience (Yadaw, and Khanna, 2014).

We can also divide QWL indicators into three groups (Sojka, 2014):

- primary characteristics,
- secondary characteristics,
- tertiary characteristics.

Primary characteristics are directly connected with, and specific to the working place. They are the following: financial reward, working load, content of work, working conditions, social conditions and work position and potential for career development. Secondary characteristics are usually common for all workplaces in any organization. These include: workplace localization – or the cost to go to and from work and the act of doing so. If it is excessive or too stressful, then QWL is diminished. Tertiary characteristics are characteristics going beyond the organization (Sojka, 2014). These include corporate culture and degree of workplace autonomy.

The developed list of quality of life main indicators was summed up in the Table 2. This table can be a basis for further development of particular indicators for the specific industry – for example, the mining industry. There are few recognized measures of quality of working life, and of those that exist, few have evidence of validity and reliability, although the Brief Index of Affective Job Satisfaction has been systematically developed to be reliable and is rigorously psychometrically validated (Edmund, and Florence, 2012).

Table 1.*Variables used to measure quality of working life*

Least variable used	Average variable used	Extremely highly used
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegation of authority • Training and development • Equal job opportunities • Financial ratio (current ratio, return on assets, return on capital employed etc.) • Organization citizenship behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social integration • Employee participation • Rewards • Welfare and opportunities • Autonomy • Team work • Work life balance and relationship • Attitude and perception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job satisfaction • Pay and benefits • Organisation commitment • Safety and healthy environment • Growth and development • Supervision • Demographic factor

Source: (Yadaw, and Khanna, 2014).

Table 2.*Main quality of working life indicators*

Area	Main indicators
Work load	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical load, • mental load, • time load
Content of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • autonomy, • variety of task, • feed back, • meaningful work
Working condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical conditions, • safety of work
Work position a potential for career development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work position, • potential of new higher positions, • possibility for learning
Corporate culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tangible and intangible aspects of corporate culture, • leaders style, • communication

Source: own work on basis: (Sojka, 2014).

Another possible QWL indicator is that of the dimensions of the quality of working life (Table 3).

Table 3.*Examples of dimensions of the quality of work and their indicators*

Dimension	Indicator
Job context	I might lose my job in the next 6 months (Agree) (%)
Working time	How many hours do you usually work per week in your main paid job? (less than 30) (%)
Working time	How many hours do you usually work per week in your main paid job? (more than 40) (%)
Working time	How many times a month do you work in the evening, for at least 2 hours between 6.00 pm and 10.00 pm? (once or more) (%)
Working time	Normally, how many times a month do you work at night, for at least 2 hours between 10.00 pm and 05.00 am? (once or more) (%)
Working time	How many times a month do you work in the weekend? (index) (once or more) (%)
Work intensity	Job involves working to tight deadlines (At least a quarter of the time) (%)
Health and well-being	Do you think your health or safety is at risk because of your work? (yes) (%)
Career prospects	My job offers good prospects for career advancement (agree) (%)

Cont. table 3.

Job fulfilment	Very satisfied or satisfied with working conditions in your main paid job? (%)
Job fulfilment	I am well paid for the work I do (agree) (%)
Work-life balance	In general, working hours fit in with family or social commitments outside work very well or well (%)

Source: (Ionescu, and Cuza, 2013).

Summing up, according to its broad definition as pointed out by Sojka (2014), to evaluate the QWL level, it is necessary to:

- determine the object for which we want to define the quality,
- assess the characteristics of work life,
- ascertain the level of needs (standard, etalon) which must be fulfilled within the organization with regard to the concrete work place,
- propose the mathematic model on the base of which the quality level will be calculated.

4. Conclusion

The problem of Quality of Working Life and its measure is very important nowadays. In utilizing this indicator we can measure the employee attitude towards their jobs and the level of fulfillment they find in completing them. The QWL indicators can be also use in CSR reporting to show the company's commitment towards people and the possibility for looking there for good job opportunities – but only if the QWL indicators are satisfactory. Because of that it is very important to research the measure of QWL indicator results in many companies and industries prior to seeking employment therein. Using this indicator we can easy compare not only particular organizations but also sectors, countries, and so on. Hence it can be a tool for governmental or pan governmental social engineering.

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