

**QUALITY OF WORK LIFE ISSUES:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MULTINATIONAL AND INDIAN FOOD
COMPANIES OF PUNJAB**

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Abstract

A good quality of work life (QWL) is essential for organizations to attract and retain employees. QWL programs are designed to improve employee motivation and job satisfaction. Considering the significance of the concept of QWL the present study attempts to examine and compare the employees' perceptions about QWL issues. The data was collected from 100 employees of food industry in Punjab (50 from MNCs and 50 from INCs) using a Likert type structured questionnaire. Independent sample t-test has been applied to analyse the data. The findings of the study revealed that a significant difference exists between the MNCs and INCs employees' perception over various QWL issues such as job characteristics, welfare facilities, personal growth and development and social relevance of work. Finding revealed that in most of the cases MNCs are performing better than INCs.

Keywords: INCs, MNCs, perception, Quality of Work Life.

Introduction

In the era of cut-throat competition, the amount of time and energy people spent at the workplace has increased to a great extent. Therefore, it is important for employees to be satisfied about their life. As work occupies an important place in many people's lives, now-a-days the conditions at the work place are likely to affect not only their physical but also their psychological and spiritual well-being (Chan and Wyatt, 2007). In this regard, the term quality of work life was coined four decades back and it refers to the favourableness or unfavourableness of job environment for the people. The terms like 'work improvement', 'worker's participation', 'work humanization', 'industrial democracy and 'job enrichment' have been widely used to mean quality of work life.

QWL 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 (Straw & Heckscher, 1984 and Tabassum et al, 2011). The elements that are relevant to an individual's quality of work life include the task, the physical work environment, social environment within the organization, administrative system and relationship between life on and off the job (Rose et al, 2006). People also conceive of QWL 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.

According to Rowland and Ferris (1982), "QWL comprises worker involvement, better communication, more self control by employees, better job design and shared decision making." QWL programmes basically have two objectives: (a) to increase productivity and

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(b) to enhance the satisfaction of employees (Gadon, 1984), Thus QWL provides healthier, satisfied and productive employees, which in turn provides efficient and profitable organization (Sadique, 2003). QWL has direct bearing on employee outcomes and it significantly reduces absenteeism, workplace accidents, grievances etc. (Havlovic, 1991), enhances job satisfaction (Ruzevicius, 2007) and is essential for improving organizational and operational productivity (Sink & Tuttle 1989). Moreover, employee turnover can be minimized with better QWL (Newaz et al, 2007).

Specific Issues in Quality of Work Life: A Review

It is difficult to best conceptualize the QWL issues (Seashore 1975). Walton (1974), one of the major interpreters of QWL movement, has proposed eight major conceptual areas for understanding QWL. These are (1) adequate and fair compensation, (2) safe and healthy working conditions, (3) immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities, (4) opportunity for continued growth and security, (5) social integration in the work organization, (6) constitutionalism in the work organization, (7) work and total life space and (8) social relevance of work life. Arts et al (2001) proposed following factors of QWL: job satisfaction, involvement in work performance, motivation, efficiency, productivity, health, safety and welfare at work, stress, work load, burn-out etc. These dimensions provide a framework for the salient features of quality of work life

Further, the researchers have identified some specific issues in QWL besides normal wages, salaries, fringe benefits etc. These are:

1. **Pay:** Various alternative means for providing wages should be developed in view of increase in cost of living index, increase in levels and rates of income tax (Walton, 1974 & Robbins, 2007). QWL must be built around an equitable pay programs (Taylor, 1977).
2. **Occupational Stress:** It is determined by the nature of work, working conditions, working hours, pause in work schedule, worker's abilities and nature and match with the job requirements (Baba and Jamal, 1991).
3. **Organizational Health Programs:** These programs cover drinking and smoking cessation, hyper-tension control, other forms of cardiovascular risk reduction, family planning etc. (Rosow & Kerr, 1979).
4. **Alternative Work Schedules:** These refer to four-day work week, flexi-time, compressed work-week, work at home, staggered hours, part-time employment which may be introduced for the convenience and comfort of the workers (Tabassum et al 2011).
5. **Participative Management and Control of Work:** Worker's participation in management and decision making improves QWL. Workers also feel that they have control over their work, use their skills, perform job better if they are allowed to participate in the creative and decision making process (Rao and Mohan, 2008).
6. **Recognition and Rewards:** Recognizing and rewarding employees and considering them as associates increases QWL (Rose et al, 2006). Congratulating the employees for their achievement (Joshi, 2007), job enrichment, offering prestigious designations to the jobs, providing well furnished and decent work places are some means to recognize the employees.
7. **Congenial Worker-Supervisor Relations:** Harmonious supervisor-worker relation gives the worker a sense of social association, belongingness, achievement of work results etc. (Rao & Mohan, 2008 and Taylor, 1973). This in turn leads to better QWL.
8. **Grievance Redressal Procedure:** Effective grievance redressal procedures provide satisfaction to employees.
9. **Job Security:** Job security leads to a sense of belongingness and association with the organization. Job insecurity reduces morale and leads to lower order QWL (Kaur, 1978 & Joshi 2007).

10. Adequacy of Resources: For increasing the performance every work related resources must be at place and should match with stated objective.

Often it is observed that management fails to provide sufficient QWL, especially in the areas of job security, perks, and pay, for a fear incurring high cost. However, if management wants to develop a cohesive, loyal, and dedicated workforce, a clear and nurturing policy must be in place.

Objective of the Study

The study purports to explore and gain better understanding of QWL in the food processing industry in Punjab. The main objective of present study is to examine and compare employees' perception about various QWL issues in MNCs and INCs.

Sample

The sample comprises of 100 respondents (50 from MNCs and 50 from INCs) of food companies in Punjab. The average age of the respondents lies between 20-30 years in MNCs as well as INCs. The level of qualification level was found to be higher in MNCs as most of the employees in MNCs are post graduates.

Instrument

Primary data has been collected by using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed on the basis of certain pre-determined parameters of Quality of Work Life derived from the review of existing literature. The questionnaire consists of questions relating to different job characteristics such as work load, working hours, health and safety, office ambience, relation with colleagues, business model, decision making authority, training and development needs, etc. Perception of the employee has been judged through 5-point Likert scale.

Hypothesis Development

H0: There is no significant difference between the mean perception of QWL of the employees of MNCs and INCs.

The H0 is broken down in some sub-hypotheses. These are stated below in the form of null hypotheses.

H0.1: There is no significant difference between the mean perception about job characteristics of the employees of MNCs and INCs.

H0.2: There is no significant difference between the mean perception about welfare facilities of the employees of MNCs and INCs.

H0.3: There is no significant difference between the mean perception about interpersonal relations of the employees of MNCs and INCs.

H0.4: There is no significant difference between the mean perception about personal development and growth of the employees of MNCs and INCs.

H0.5: There is no significant difference between the mean perception about social relevance of work of the employees of MNCs and INCs.

Data Analysis

In order to attain the objective of the present study an Independent-samples t-test was performed to compare the mean scores QWL issues of MNCs and INCs. The results are shown in table 1.

Table 1. t-statistics for various QWL issues

S.No.	Parameters	Mean (MNC)	Mean (INC)	t-value	Sig. level
1.	Job Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income • Workload • Job security • Working hours • Incentives and benefits 	3.7100	3.2350	2.186	.046
2.	Welfare Facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Facilities • Housing Facilities • Canteen Facilities • Health and Safety 	3.8017	3.2217	8.176	.013
3.	Interpersonal Relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operation from Colleagues • Decision Making Authority • Communication Level • Encouragement from superiors 	3.8920	3.7880	4.709	.518
4.	Personal growth and development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and Development • Opportunity of new learning • Job adds efficiency in my performance • Recognition and Rewards 	3.9000	3.3350	6.920	.038
5.	Social relevance of work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main satisfaction in life comes from work • Motivation for better performance at work • Proud to be working for employer • Treated with respect at work 	3.9850	3.5950	3.016	.013
6.	Overall Quality of Work Life	3.9009	3.2475	4.697	.000

The null hypothesis on the issue of job characteristics has been considered that there is no mean difference between the perception of the employees of MNCs and INCs employees regarding this topic. Considering the level of significance as 5%, the result of independent sample t-test has showed that the H_{0.1} is rejected as $p < .05$. Thus there is a significant difference between perceptions regarding the job characteristics provided by their employers. In table 1, a slightly greater mean value of MNCs employees (3.7100) than that of the INCs employees (3.2350) have indicated that more satisfaction about job characteristics of the MNCs.

The null hypothesis in case of welfare facilities, H_{0.2} is rejected as $p < .05$, considering the level of significance as 5%. Thus there is a significant difference between the two types of employees' perception regarding the welfare facilities provided. In table 1, a slightly greater mean value of MNCs employees (3.8017) than that of the INCs employees (3.2217) have indicated that MNCs employees perceive more satisfaction from the welfare facilities than that of their counterpart.

In case of interpersonal relations, the null hypothesis H0.3 is not rejected as $p > .05$, considering the level of significance as 5%. Thus it can be said that there is a no significant difference has been found between the INCs and MNCs employees' perception regarding the interpersonal relations.

In case of personal growth and development, the null hypothesis, H0.4 is rejected as $p < 0.05$ considering the level of significance as 5%. Thus it can be inferred that there is a significant difference between the INCs and MNCs employee's perception regarding the opportunity provided by the concerned companies for personal growth and development. From table 1, it can be found that the mean value of MNCs employees (3.9000) is slightly greater than the INCs employees (3.3350) which mean MNCs provide better growth and development opportunities than INCs.

The null hypothesis H0.5 for social relevance of work is rejected as the p value is less than 0.05 at 5% significance level. So there exists a significant difference between the perception of INCs and MNCs employees regarding social relevance at work. Table 1 shows that the mean value of MNCs employees (3.9850) is slightly greater than the INCs employees (3.5950) which indicates social relevance of work is better in MNCs than in INCs.

From the results of independent sample t-test, it can be inferred that there is a significant difference between the INCs and MNCs employees' perception regarding overall QWL. The p-value for overall QWL is 0.000 considering the level of significance as 5%. Thus the null hypothesis H0 is rejected. Table 1 indicates the mean value of MNCs employees (3.9009) is slightly greater than the INCs employees (3.2575) which indicate MNCs employees better QWL than INCs employees.

Summing Up

QWL can be defined as the favourable conditions and environments of a workplace that support and promote employee satisfaction by providing workers job security and growth opportunities. The results of independent sample t-test revealed that there is a significant difference over the various QWL issues such as job characteristics, welfare facilities, personal growth and development and social relevance of work among the employees of MNCs and INCs and MNCs are performing better than INCs. Further, no significant difference has been found among the employees regarding the interpersonal relations. As a whole, mean QWL of MNCs employee is also significantly different from that of INCs employees at 5% level of significance.

The results of the study revealed that with respect to the various job characteristics such as income, workload, job security, health and safety, promotion policy, perks and fringe benefits working hours the employees of MNCs are more satisfied than INCs. MNCs provide better growth and development opportunities, rewards and recognition, authority to make decision than INCs. The employees of MNCs are more satisfied by the various types of welfare facilities provided by their companies such as medical, housing, canteen and in-service training facilities. The employees of MNCs mainly satisfied in life from their work and greatly respected by their employer, are proud of their employer and are motivated by the business environment provided by the company. At the end it was found that the employees of MNCs are slightly more satisfied than INCs as their job being more creative, prestigious, higher paid with more promotional avenues.

Recommendations

A good quality of work life (QWL) is essential for organizations in order to continue to attract and retain employees. In today's competitive environment it is essential for every corporation to have satisfied and loyal workforce for long run association which in turn necessitates a high degree of quality of work life. As observed in the present study, many of

the aspects of quality of work life, the employees of INCs are less satisfied than employees of MNCs. The companies should improve promotion policy and job security and provide skill based pay, better perks and fringe benefits for long term association of employees. Rewarding and recognizing the individual and team efforts will increase motivation and help in improving organization goal attainment. Employees should be provided with better career growth and development opportunities and whenever requires in-service training must be provided to improve their skill and knowledge base. It also helps in developing employees for succession planning. Steps should be taken to encourage professional and personal-life balance.

Limitations of study

The limitations encountered during the course of present study are mentioned below:-

1. The data has been collected using convenient sampling technique so it might not be a true representative of the universe. Moreover, there are chances of biasness.
2. Further the sample size taken is small. Thus, may not be sufficient to predict the results with absolute accuracy and hence finding cannot be generalized.

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