

Quality of Work Life of Non-managerial Employees in Manufacturing Industries

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ABSTRACT

Quality of Work Life (QWL) is primarily an initiative of management and its consultants, along with academics and government bureaucrats. According to Keith (1989), QWL refers to “the favourableness or un-favourableness of a job environment for people”. QWL provides employers with one method of permanently reducing the workforce, introducing automated technologies while still maintaining control of the workplace. The QWL philosophy proposes a socio-technical view which matches worker and technology. Workers are social, psychological and physiological beings, not just automatons, and the technical aspect of work must be compatible in analyzing their work and environment so that the social and technical aspects can be optimized. This is an exploratory study using confirmatory factor analysis to make out the contribution of various parameters of quality of work life towards the total quality of work life on the perspective of non- managerial employees.

Keywords: *Quality of Work life, Work life, Life Space, Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

INTRODUCTION

Enterprises are made up of people and function through people. Without united human efforts no organisation can achieve its goal. Human resource is considered to be the most important factor of production. Human capital is regarded as an asset to any organisation. So in no case it can be replaced with figures or logarithms. In spite of the tremendous development in the areas of technology, marketing and finance, the overall organisational situation cannot be improved unless good human resource

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development practices are introduced. Human resource development is a much debated topic today. In recent years human resource management has gained momentum all over the world as the most effective approach to accelerating the productivity and profitability of organisations. Quality of Work Life (QWL) is one of the most important elements of human resource management which leads to better conducive atmosphere for employees. Beginning in the seventies and during the next two decades a constellation of principles and methods evolved into a movement called QWL. The quality of work life is a broad expression covering a vast variety of programs, techniques, theories, and management styles through which organisation and jobs are designed so as to grant workers more autonomy, responsibility, and authority. The term QWL is a generic phrase that covers a person's feelings about every dimension of work including economic rewards, benefits, security (Sing and Das, 1996).

The term Quality of Working Life was probably coined originally at the first international conference on QWL at Arden House in 1972 (Davis and Cherns, 1975). Quality of work life is the extent of relationships between individuals and organisational factors existing in the working environment. It is the extent to which workers can satisfy important personal needs through their experiences in the organisation. It focuses strongly on providing a work environment conducive to satisfying individual needs. It is assumed that if employees have more positive attitudes about the organisation and their productivity increases, everything else being equal, the organisation should be more effective.

Emergence of concern for quality of work life can be traced to the revival of interest in the large area of quality of life in most of the countries of the world. This is so because the two terms are closely related to each other. Life at work is an integral part of total life space. The QWL may therefore be conceptualized as a subset of the quality of life, which is an all-inclusive notion of life and living conditions. To quote Biennium (1974), it is the quality of the content of relationship between human beings and their work.

Richard Walton (1979) had taken up an extensive research on QWL. According to Richard Walton, "QWL is the work culture that serves as the corner stone". In fact, measuring QWL has become easy and practicable with the eight factors or elements that Walton proposed and this is considered as the most comprehensive criteria for the measurement of QWL. The eight point criterion of Walton to measure QWL includes adequate and fair compensation (AF), safe and healthy working conditions

(SH), opportunity to use and develop human capacity (OD), opportunity for continued growth and security (OC), social integration in the work organisation (SI), constitutionalization in the work organisation (CW), work and the total life space (WT), social relevance of work life (SR).

In the Indian context, De (1976) has rightly pointed out that “QWL is an indication of how free the society is from exploitation, injustice, inequality, oppression, and restrictions of the continuity of growth of man, leading to his development to the fullest”. One of the reasons for growing importance of QWL could be realization on the part of employees about their rights and growing unionism. Workers are no more illiterate. So they expect the management to improve their working environment.

The present study is an exploratory one using confirmatory factor analysis to make out the contribution of various parameters of quality of work life. Along with the eight point criterion of Walton to measure QWL, two more elements superior subordinate relationship (SS) and welfare facilities (WF) are also included to make the study more effective. The study aims to know the contribution of each element towards the total quality of work life on the perspective of non- managerial employees of public and private sector manufacturing enterprises.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

In recent years, industries in India have registered tremendous growth. Industries occupy an important place in our economy both in view of the employment they generate and the contribution they make to the national product. A nation's overall economic performance is enhanced by the performance of individual industrial sectors. In the Indian context, manufacturing industries have been recognised as the main engine of economic growth and creation of wealth. Kerala, the God's own country, is a well-off state with a high socio-economic status. Employees of Kerala are conspicuous about their higher socio-economic background as compared to employees of other states but are found to be with low productivity as compared to other states. If the employees of Kerala are provided with good working environment and facilities, they will produce the maximum output.

Even though India emerged as one of the top ten manufacturers in the world in 2010, in many parts of the country like Kerala the employees are facing ample problems which may lead to low productivity and job dissatisfaction. The present situation which they are facing like

scanty compensation, insufficient welfare facilities, malicious superior-subordinate relationship, increased absenteeism, labour turnover, industrial conflicts, job dissatisfaction, low productivity, inadequate safety and training measures, poor career development opportunities will lead employees to rebellion nature.

But on the contrary it is a truth that the employees are the backbone of an organisation and they should be given better treatment. So here in this paper an attempt has been made to study the disposition of non-managerial employees towards QWL and the contribution of each element of quality of work life towards the total QWL in public and private sector manufacturing industries in Kerala.

METHODOLOGY

This study is mainly based on primary data and is conducted in large and medium size manufacturing public and private sector companies. The study is conducted in large and medium size manufacturing enterprises with not less than 500 employees and is chosen from northern, central and southern regions of Kerala. Simple random sampling technique is used for selecting four public and four private sector manufacturing companies. Through systematic random sampling, 800 non-managerial employees from both sectors, covering 100 employees each as of randomly selected eight companies are considered for the study.

The statistical tool used for analysis is Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) which is a multivariate statistical procedure that is used to test how well the measured variables represent the number of constructs. It is a structural equation modeling, widely used because it provides a quantitative method for testing substantive theories, and it explicitly accounts for measurement error, which is ever present in most disciplines. Here the perception of non-managerial employees of private sector and public sectors about the contribution of various parameters of QWL towards maintaining QWL of the enterprise is studied through confirmatory factor analyses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quality of work life is not based on a particular theory, nor does it advocate a particular technique of application. Instead it is more concerned with the overall climate of work place. The concept of quality of work life can be

viewed in two ways. One way is as a set of organisational objectives and practices, encompassing job enrichment, democratic supervision, safe and healthy working conditions, and employee involvement in decision making. The other way is from the employees' perceptions that they are safe and able to grow and develop as human beings. The quality of work life can thus be defined in terms of employees' perception of their physical and mental well-being at work.

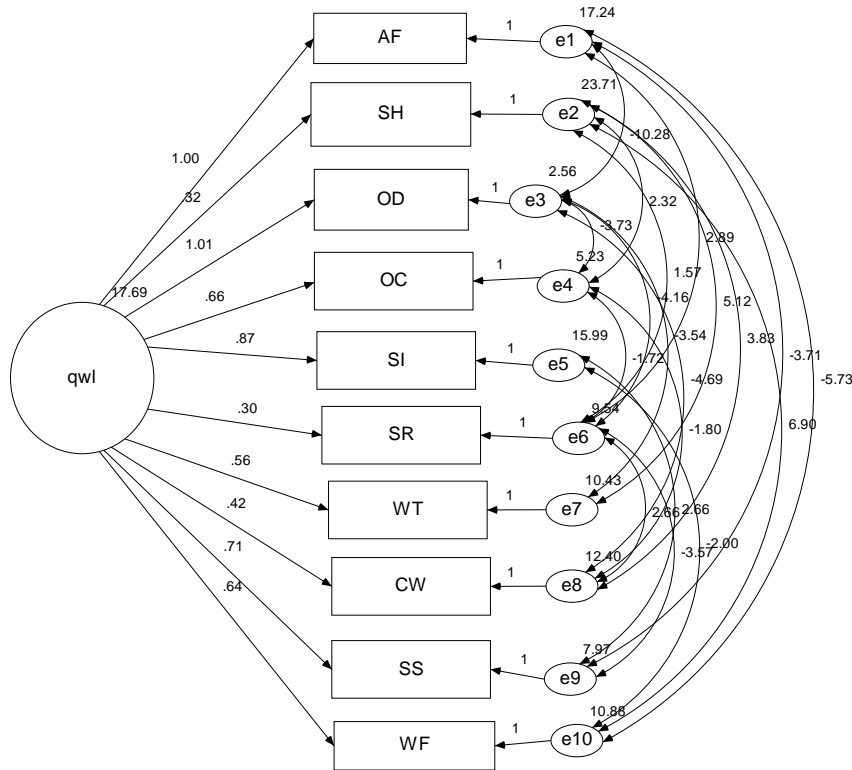


Figure 1. Perception: Non-managerial Employees of Private Sector Manufacturing Companies

Various criteria are evolved in the past two decades to measure the quality of work life. Various researchers who carried out studies in this area came up with various criteria which are not entirely different from each other. Prof. Richard E. Walton (1979) has identified eight dimensions which make up the quality of working life framework. This is considered as the most comprehensive criteria for measurement of QWL. The 8 point criterion of Walton to measure quality of work life includes adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, opportunity to

use and develop human capacity, opportunity for continued growth and security, social integration in the work organisation, constitutionalization in the work organisation, work and total life space, and social relevance of work life. To make the study more useful the superior-subordinate relationship and welfare facilities are also added.

The present exercise is an attempt to study the contribution of various parameters towards maintaining better quality of work life of non-managerial employees of public and private sector manufacturing companies through the eight dimensions of Prof. Richard E. Walton (1979).

Table 1. Standardized Regression Weights of Private Sector Employees

Parameters			Estimate	Contribution Rank
Adequate and Fair Compensation	<---	QWL	.378	IX
Safe and Healthy Working Conditions	<---	QWL	.268	X
Opportunity to Use and Develop Human Capacity	<---	QWL	.936	I
Opportunity for Continued Growth and Security	<---	QWL	.772	II
Social Integration in the Work Organisation	<---	QWL	.676	V
Social Relevance of Work life	<---	QWL	.712	IV
Work and the Total Life Space	<---	QWL	.586	VII
Constitutionalization in the Work Organisation	<---	QWL	.632	VI
Superior Subordinate Relationship	<---	QWL	.725	III
Welfare Facilities	<---	QWL	.445	VIII

Source: Survey data

Figure 1 shows that the contribution of opportunity to use and develop human capacity is higher than all other parameters. Table 1 indicates that the parameter opportunity to use and develop human capacity (.936) has a greater contribution with regard to quality of work life. The contribution of welfare facilities (.445), adequate and fair compensation (.378) and safe

and healthy working conditions (.268) are less than other parameters. This shows that non-managerial employees in private sector manufacturing enterprises in Kerala aren't satisfied with the elements of QWL like welfare facilities, adequate and fair compensation and safe and healthy working conditions.

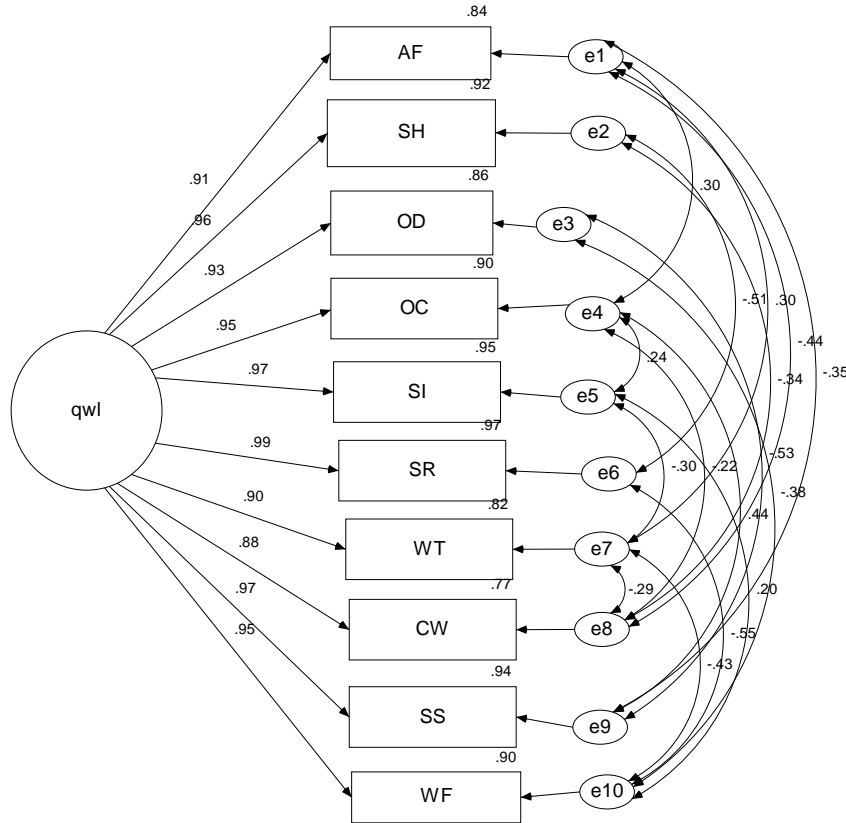


Figure 2. Perception: Non-managerial Employees of Public Sector Manufacturing Companies

Table 2 indicates that the parameter social relevance of work life (.911) has a greater contribution with regard to quality of work life. The contribution of safe and healthy working conditions (.382), welfare facilities (.278), superior-subordinate relationship (.191) and adequate and fair compensation (.112) are comparatively less than other parameters on the view of non-managerial employees of public sector enterprise. This shows that non-managerial employees in public sector manufacturing enterprises in Kerala aren't satisfied with the contribution from elements

of QWL like safe and healthy working conditions, welfare facilities, superior subordinate relationship, and adequate and fair compensation.

Table 2. Standardized Regression Weights of Public Sector Employees

Parameters			Estimate	Contribution Rank
Adequate and Fair Compensation	<---	QWL	.112	X
Safe and Healthy Working Conditions	<---	QWL	.382	VI
Opportunity to Use and Develop Human Capacity	<---	QWL	.735	IV
Opportunity for Continued Growth and Security	<---	QWL	.850	II
Social Integration in the Work Organisation	<---	QWL	.737	III
Social Relevance of Work life	<---	QWL	.911	I
Work and the Total Life Space	<---	QWL	.331	VII
Constitutionalization in the Work Organisation	<---	QWL	.587	V
Superior Subordinate Relationship	<---	QWL	.191	IX
Welfare Facilities	<---	QWL	.278	VIII

Source: Survey data

Table 3 and Figure 3 indicate that the parameter superior-subordinate relationship (.799) and social integration in the work organisation have a greater contribution with regard to quality of work life. The contribution of safe and healthy working conditions (-.137), adequate and fair compensation (.267), opportunity for continued growth and security (.268) and welfare facilities (.430) are less than other parameters on the viewpoint of non-managerial employees of both the sectors.

This brings to light that the contribution of welfare facilities, adequate and fair compensation, and safe and healthy working conditions are less than other parameters on the point of view of non-managerial employees of both private and public sector enterprises. But if we take the situation in its totality it can be seen that for maintaining better quality of work life in the organisation, the contribution of parameters like safe and healthy working conditions, adequate and fair compensation, opportunity for

continued growth, and security and welfare facilities are incalculably essential in the following ways.

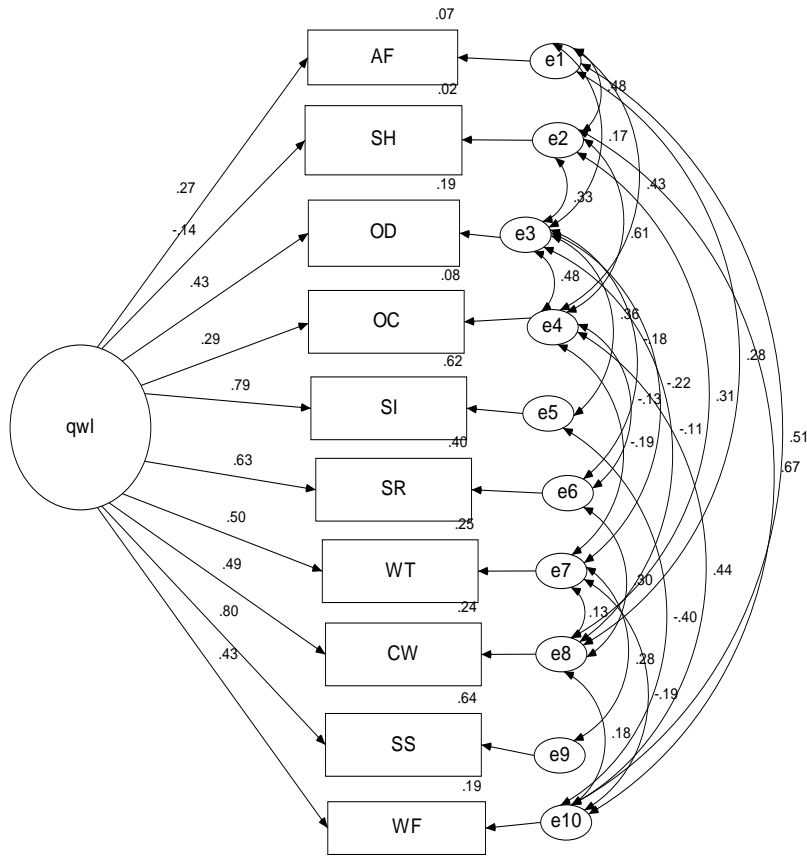


Figure 3. Perception: Non-managerial Employees of Private and Public Sector Manufacturing Companies

Adequate and Fair Compensation

Remuneration is the compensation an employee receives in return for his or her contribution to the organisation. It occupies an important place in the life of an employee through maintaining standard of living, status in the society; motivation, loyalty, and productivity depending upon the remuneration he or she receives. To be specific, typical remuneration of an employee comprises wages and salary, incentives, fringe benefits, perquisites and non-monetary benefits. One of the biggest factors

affecting industrial relations is the salary or wage an employee receives for a fair day's work. A majority of union management disputes relate to remuneration.

Table 3: Standardized Regression Weights of Non -managerial Employees of Both Sectors

Parameters			Estimate	Contribution Rank
Adequate and Fair Compensation	<---	QWL	.267	IX
Safe and Healthy Working Conditions	<---	QWL	-.137	X
Opportunity to Use and Develop Human Capacity	<---	QWL	.432	VI
Opportunity for Continued Growth and Security	<---	QWL	.286	VIII
Social Integration in the Work Organisation	<---	QWL	.785	II
Social Relevance of Work life	<---	QWL	.633	III
Work and the Total Life Space	<---	QWL	.504	IV
Constitutionalization in the Work Organisation	<---	QWL	.489	V
Superior Subordinate Relationship	<---	QWL	.799	I
Welfare Facilities	<---	QWL	.430	VII

Source: Survey data

A fair and equitable remuneration will attract competent personnel, help to retain present employees, improve productivity, improve union management relations, and also improve public image of the company. No organisation can expect to attract and retain qualified and motivated employees unless it pays fair compensation. For employees, pay is more than a mean of satisfying their physical needs. It provides them a sense of recognition and determines their social status.

What is adequate and fair is another question for discussion. What is adequate at one place may not be same in the other. John Bernardin (2007) in his study claimed that the organisations at rural, semi-urban regions can satisfy their employees with comparatively low levels of compensation compared with their urban-based counterparts. The urban-based organisations usually compensate the extra cost of living through higher dearness allowances, keeping basic the same. Thus employee

compensation is a very significant issue from the view point of employers, employees and the nation as a whole. Robert Heller (2008) pointed out that money is by no means the only motivator of people, but too little money demotivates powerfully, and financial reward remains a strong incentive.

Safe and Healthy Working Conditions

Safety means freedom from the occurrence or risk of injury or loss. Industrial safety or employee safety refers to the protection of workers from the danger of industrial accidents. Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease. It is the outcome of interaction between the individual and his environment (Heinrich, 1959).

Workers spend a great deal of their time in industrial settings. In many industries, workers are exposed to various types of health hazards. Unless the working conditions are proper, workers cannot concentrate on work. As a result, productivity will be low. The ill health will force workers to be absent from work and result in greater absenteeism and labour turnover. The quality of work will suffer and the firm's resources will be wasted. The major physical factors influencing worker's health are cleanliness, lighting, temperature and ventilation, freedom from noise, dust control, working space, and seating arrangements.

Owing to rapid industrialization, mechanical, chemical, electrical, and radiation hazards have increased. Every year lakhs of employees are injured in factories, mines, ports, railways, etc. leading to partial or total disability (Blake, 1963). An industrial accident is a sudden and unexpected occurrence in an industrial undertaking causing body injury to one or more persons and interruption in the orderly progress of work. So every employer should pay due attention to industrial safety and take adequate steps to prevent industrial accidents. Safety policy, safety committee, safety education and training, etc. can be ensured to prevent and minimize industrial accidents. Physical conditions at work places are second home for employees. Hence it is an important factor in measuring QWL.

Opportunity for Continued Growth and Security

The employees have started seeking career growth recently. Job security has ceased to satisfy employees. Employees tend to drift from a job which does not promise career growth. Organisations are helping employees

in these directions by helping them draw their career paths. Not only drawing career paths, but the organisation helps employees to attain higher positions through training. The employee is prepared to take up a higher position where there is a possibility.

There must be employment which provides for continual growth, job and income security. The work should provide career opportunities for development of new abilities and expansion of existing skills on a continuous basis. QWL provides future opportunity for continued growth and security by expanding one's capabilities, knowledge and qualifications. Here the focus is on career opportunities as against the job.

Welfare Facilities

Welfare means faring or doing well. It is a comprehensive term, and refers to the physical, mental, moral, and emotional well-being of an individual. According to the Oxford dictionary, employee welfare means "the efforts to make life worth living for workmen". Labour welfare refers to taking care of the well-being of workers by employers, trade unions and governmental and non-governmental agencies.

In most organisations, welfare is the responsibility of welfare officers. The Factories Act, 1948 mandates that every industrial establishment must appoint welfare officer if the number of employees is 500 or more. Welfare officers are educated and trained in the field and are, therefore, in a better position to manage welfare well. But the problem with these officers is that they are more concerned with compliance of statutory provisions than with the genuine well-being of workers. For the employee, welfare measures help to counteract the negative effects of the factory system (Bhatt, 1992). These measures enable the employee and his family to lead a good life. Welfare facilities like housing, medical and children's education, recreation, etc. help to improve the family life of the employees. For the employer, welfare measures lead to higher morale and productivity of labour.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The study reveals that employees, irrespective of level, are least satisfied with the compensation. When employees are underpaid, it leads to a silent and cold war between the management and the employees. As the stress and strains of employees are going on one side, stagnant compensation

on the other face leads them to be discontent in their work both physically and psychologically.

The standard and cost of living are raising high at a fast pace day by day. The employees find it difficult to make both ends meet. Thus they opt for a fair return based on their work. An organisation is not an island; it needs the support and rapport of the employees. So without affecting the organisational profit, the management should take necessary action to redress the grievances relating to low remuneration.

Safe and healthy working conditions should be accorded top priority while ensuring quality of work life in the organisation. Quality of work environment is an essential element for quality of work life. The study reveals that the management is blind towards the employees with regard to safe and healthy working conditions. Lack of proper functioning of the safety committee brought out the inadequacy of the organisation regarding safety measures. No regular enquiry is being made from the part of management to foresee that whether the employees are satisfied with the safety measures.

Thus the working of safety committee should be regularized and it must be ensured that employees use the safety equipment properly and in time. The management should go through the new requirements relating to safety measures. Working atmosphere should be structured in such a way that it is user-friendly and provides a homely atmosphere. Health is an unavoidable factor for an employee. Annual medical checkups should be made compulsory for all employees, irrespective of their levels. Studies have proved that greenery and parks, fountains and art gallery within the works area are some of the new innovative measures which would have been mere fantasies in the traditional industrial environment. Such an environment frees employees from the excruciating atmosphere. Reasonable steps should be taken to examine the cause of accidents, and should implement remedial measures so as to avoid recurrence. Safe and healthy working conditions should be made adequate for the present situation.

Welfare facilities are to be counted more in the organisation where the employees are found least satisfied. Company's newsletters, magazines, suggestions schemes should be well managed. Canteen facilities are an important factor which determines company's care for an employee in the organisation. Mobile van catering services are essential for employees of scattered workplaces. Maintenance and improvement of welfare amenities are essential which add more value to quality of work life of

the organisation. Regular revision and enquiries should be conducted by the management to ensure that employees are satisfied with the welfare facilities provided to them. Welfare of the organisation and also welfare of the employees should be given equal preference for maintaining better quality of work life.

When an organisation wants to sustain its position and flourish in the most competitive and lucrative business world, it has got a very big responsibility of keeping its men under satisfactory level, because a satisfied employee is a full employee and he contributes his best to the organisation. Human resource plays the most critical and significant role in achieving organisational goals and objectives. The organisation can be successful only when the efforts of various individuals are integrated into teamwork.

Quality of work life is the outcome of relationship between the employees and their total working environment. The variables like compensation, working conditions, opportunity for growth, social integration in work force, constitutionalization, work and the total life space, superior-subordinate relationship, welfare facilities, and social relevance of work are the main dimensions of quality of work life. Human capital is recognised as the organisation's 'lifeblood' which needs to be developed continuously in keeping pace with the development in all other areas of today's dynamic world. Hence all these factors should be given due consideration by an organisation to make the employees satisfied with the work environment.

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