

An Investigation of Factors Affecting the Employees' Quality of Work Life and Assessment of the Status of These Factors

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Abstract

The present study investigated the factors affecting the quality of work life of employees and assessed the status of these components in Mazandaran Gas Company. The population of this study included the employees of this company, and statistical sample involved 329 employees. Walton model was used to study the quality of work life components. To analyze data, test research hypotheses, and assess the status of components, the Chi-square test, Wilcoxon, Friedman, and confirmatory factor analysis were used. The results revealed that fair and appropriate compensation, providing opportunities for continued growth and safety, social relevance of work life, and development of human capacities were at a good status, and healthy and safe environment as well as social cohesion and integration were at an average status, and total space of life and constitutionalism were at an adverse status.

Keywords: quality of work life, adequate and fair compensation, providing opportunities for continued growth and safety, social relevance of work life, development of human capacities

1. Introduction

The efficient human capital is the most important capital within organizations (Troshani et al, 2011, p.470; Roos & Roos, 1997, p.418), and the higher and more optimal the quality, the greater the possibility of organization's success, survival, and promotion would be. Therefore, great attempt must be made to improve human resources qualitatively since this will be of benefit to both organizations and employees. Optimal use of human resources relies on measures taken to preserve and protect the body and soul of organization's employees. These measures include leisure amenities and health services, incentive plans, job safety, the importance of the role and position of the individuals within organization, providing the grounds for employees' growth and development, and so on which are called "the quality of working life (QWL)" (Filipo, 1988, p.412).

In recent decades, the increasing impact of factors such as globalization, information technology, corporate competition, and limited natural resources have changed individuals' perspectives regarding the definition of a successful company. In the past, financial resources were the most crucial factors in the definition of a successful company. Financial benefits that employees receive are very important to drive his or her QWL level (Sinha, 2012, pp.31-40).

Explaining balanced scorecard model, Kaplan and Norton (1996, p.78) emphasized the financial aspects as well as the development and learning, customer, and internal processes to measure the overall performance of the organizations. Balanced scorecard is a method using which both financial measures and nonfinancial measures -staff training, participation, expertise, and quality of information systems etc.- are evaluated.

Since the mid-1980s, approaches to human resources have changed from organizational factors to human resource factors (Maxwell, 2005, pp.189-179).

In recent years, ethics, QWL, and job satisfaction were increasingly considered the essential factors for the success and

stability of the organizations. Along with the importance of ethics, QWL and job outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment are deemed the important issues in human resources and organizational development. Most writers and researchers in human resources management and organizational development associate the QWL and job outcomes with ethics, efficiency, social responsibility of corporate and organizational performance (Koonme & Singhapakdi, 2009).

One of the most important issues in any organization is the quality of working life, which is the best index/indicator to attract and retain employees, leads to job satisfaction, and has in turn a significant effect (Mohammad Noor & Abdullah, 2011, pp.745-739).

In some organizations, quality of working life programs intend to increase the employees' trust, involvement/engagement, and problem solving ability, and consequently increase satisfaction and effectiveness of the organization (Akder, 2006, p.173)

Maintenance of organizations' employees- specially managers' maintenance is more broader than associating individuals with the rights and received benefits or providing health or safety in the workplace. By the way, it should not be assumed that employees' expectations of their organizations are similar anywhere and in any working place, and that these expectations are easily recognized. Any cultural environment image of QWL is a special image of which managers should try to understand, organizations should pay attention to QWL for four reasons:

- As a culture, QWL creates a high level of mutual commitment between individuals and organization; that is, individuals should be committed to the organization's goals and development, and organizations should also be committed to individuals' needs and growth.
- As a goal, QWL improves organizational performance through creating jobs and more challenging, satisfying, and effective working environments for individuals at all organizational levels.
- As a process, QWL provides the opportunities to achieve the goals through involvement and participation of all people within organization.
- QWL is a phenomenon transcending organization borders, the effects of which can be found in the personal life of individuals and outside the organization.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine and assess factors affecting employees' QWL in Mazandaran gas company, Iran, based on Walton model.

As a key factor in economic and social development, Gas Company plays a vital role in increasing the citizens' social welfare and the development of industrial infrastructure through the continuous provision of clean and safe energy supplies. Lack of attention to the employees' quality of working life in Gas Company can seriously hinder the provision of safe gas energy to citizens and consumers, as well as affecting their private lives outside the workplace. At the same time, the high quality of working life positively influences both work and non-work lives. So, a field study was conducted in the company under investigation in order to evaluate the factors affecting the quality of employees' working life, using which the company's managers be able to apply more effective approaches and policies to improve the level of the factors which influence the quality of working life, which ultimately leads to employees' job satisfaction and improvement of company's performance.

2. Literature of Review

The purpose of Quality of Work Life management is to create an atmosphere of freedom, participation and autonomy in which the worker is a partner in sharing a common objective and subjective indicators (Susan & Jayan, 2013, p.91).

Measuring and assessment of the quality of working life began in the late 1960s, which was related to individual aspects of working, and focused on the relationship between the worker and the working environment.

The Companies have applied quality of life at work (QWL) as a strategy to improve performance, workers' productivity and competitively, the quality of life at work, simultaneously reducing absenteeism, employee turnover, without raising the cost of management and providing a healthy environment, as well as increasing the affective commitment and the insertion of the worker in the company, pride and the satisfaction of workers (Zhao et al. 2013, Quick et al. 2013).

Quality of Work Life can be defined with regard to the employees' satisfaction, work related behaviours (Bagtasos, 2011, pp.1-8), Reward, Job Security, Social activities, Balance of work and Family (Kanten & Sadulhah, 2012, pp.360-361).

In order to give organizations a wider view of the factors that influence the working experience, the concept of "work-related quality of life" was created. It involves factors such as working conditions, but also broader non-work factors that affect the employees' relationship with work, including general life satisfaction and work-home interface (Alfonso et al, 2016, p.110).

Robbins (1989) defined QWL as "a process by which an organization responds to employee needs by developing mechanisms to allow them to share fully in making the decisions that design their lives at work".

Quality of work life has different meanings to different people. Terms like "Work improvement", "Job enrichment", "Worker's participation", "Industrial democracy" have been widely used to mean quality of working life programme implemented (Teryima et al, 2016, p.269).

According to Lau and Bruce (1998), QWL is a dynamic multidimensional construct that currently includes such concepts as job security, reward systems, training and career advancements opportunities, and participation in decision making.

Wyatt and Wah (2001) believe that QWL demands a working environment in which employees' activities are considered valuable. It means that by adopting policies and strategies, work is planned in a way that leads to reduced monotony and increased variety and agility for employee.

A workplace contains quality in which individuals are considered as the main member and element of organization, individuals' mind is confronted with intellectual challenge, environmental condition develops and nurtures their capability, and everything can be done well in those environments (Belcher, 1987).

Almarsh (2015) listed the most important benefits of the employees' quality of working life as following:

- The degree to which superiors treat employees with respect.
- Diversity in the daily work schedule.
- Work challenge.
- The feeling that proven work opens future opportunities for advancement.
- Self respect.
- Degree to which the life outside of work affects the life at work and the degree to which completed work contributes to society.

Stone (1998) states QWL components under the title of QWL criteria. He enumerates the major criterion for QWL as follow:

- Fair and adequate compensation: To what extent payments and interests are done to contribute to the maintenance of staff with an acceptable life standard?
- Safe and healthy environment: Is the physical condition of work dangerous? Which conditions affect the mental and physical health of employees?
- Development of human capacities: to what extent a job enables employees to apply and develop their skills, knowledge, and abilities, and to what extent the duties are satisfactory?
- Growth and safety: is there a potential career in job leading to growth and safety?
- Social cohesion: is there an opportunity to communicate with other people? Is progress based on merit? Is there equal chances?
- Respecting the fundamental rights of employees: is there any respect for employees' rights? Can employees express their thoughts and ideas freely? Are they treated like an adult? What are employees' rights and how they are protected?
- Total life space: is there any balance between work and life? Is there a high level of job stress?
- Social relations: do employees view the organization as a social responsibility? Does organization rates social values highly, especially when the policies are formulated and implemented, and measures are taken in line with employees, costumers, competitors, and society?

Tuttle (1983) states QWL in four characteristics as follows:

- Safety and safety, which includes job, mental, and physical safety
- Equitability and fairness of wages and compensations
- Providing grounds for growth and development of skills as well as continued learning
- Democracy and involvement in decision-making.

In order to measure the quality of working life in private and public banks, Reddy and Reddy (2014) considered the following 9 dimensions: Like, Emoluments, Safe and Healthy working conditions, Social integration, Social relevance of work, Constitutionalism, Opportunities to develop human capabilities, Career planning, Growth development, Work with job enrichment, and organization structure .

Moreover, the QWL was inversely related primarily to the lack of recognition, the lack of time, the poor consideration for patients and their families, the lack of training and the lack of collaboration, and also positively related to job characteristics, organizational climate, organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Giang & Tung, 2016, p.195).

Table 1. Results of research on QWL components

Researchers	QWL indicators
Stein(1983)	1. Independence and autonomy, 2. Identification and importance, 3. Property and belongings, 4. Growth and development, 5. Outside incentives
Levine & Taylor & Davis(1984)	1. Respected by supervisor and trusting employees' capabilities, 2. Change of work, 3. Work challenges, 4. The opportunity for growth in the future resulting from the existing work, 5. Self-esteem, 6. The degree of cohesion and interference between work and life, 7. Contribution of work in society promoting.
Rethinam & Maimunah (2008)	1. Health and well-being, 2. Job security, 3. Job satisfaction, 4. Competence development, 5. The balance between work non work life
Martel & Dupuis(2006)	1.life quality: compensation of services, welfare, work security, work support, 2. Social quality: rapport with the superior, coworkers, and customers, 3. Growth quality: collaborative management, individual growth improvement, self-esteem, and work characteristics
Mitchell(2012)	1.Communication, 2.Supervision, 3.learning, 4.Involvement
Che Rose & Beh & Uli & Idris(2006)	1. Task, 2. Physical work environment, 3. Social environment within the organization, 4. Administrative system, 5. relationship between life on and off the job
Jia Haiwei(2005)	1. Need for survival, 2. Need for passion, 3. Need for belongings, 4. Need oneself
Almalki & Fitzgerald & Clark (2012)	1.Work life/home life, 2.work design, 3.work context, 4.work world
Lee & Singhapakdi(2007)	1. Workplace, 2. Wages and benefits, 3. Welfare, 4. Promotion, 5. Nature of work, 6. Education and development, 7. Superior leadership style, 8. Collaboration among coworkers, 9.Organization mien, 10. Communications, 11. Organizational regulations, 12. Organizational climate and culture, 13. Working time and working pressure
Stephen (2012)	1. Adequate and fair compensation, 2. Fringe benefits and welfare measures, 3. Job security, 4. Physical work environment, 5. Work load and job stress, 6. Opportunity to use and develop human capacity, 7. Opportunity for continued growth, 8. Human relations and social aspect of work life, 9. Participation in decision making, 10. Reward and penalty system, 11. Equity, justice and grievance handling, 12. Work and total life space, 13. Image of organization

3. Research Methods

Regarding the nature and goal, the present study is applied, and given the data-gathering method, it is a survey of descriptive (non-experimental) type.

And the most important advantage of surveys is generalizability of their findings. In other words, the method of this study is quantitative in that the dimensions of Walton's (1973) quality of life model will be tested in the studied company

To gather the data, two methods were used as follows:

1. Library method: To collect the data for laying the basic foundation of this research such as definition of key concepts, proposing requirements, expressing the application, and explaining its importance, library studies including studying articles, Persian and Latin books about QWL, similar thesis dissertations in this field, internet resources, and seminars were used.

2. Survey method: In order to collect the data for analysis, the questionnaire was used. QWL questionnaire consists of 29 items examining QWL based on Walton model.

To measure the items of the questionnaire, Likert scale has been used which is one of the most useful scales, especially in behavioral science research.

Table – the scales to measure the items

Very much	much	average	low	Very low
5	4	3	2	1

The statistical population of this study includes 459 formal employees of Gas company, And the form of probability sampling used in the study was stratified sampling.

and the size of required sample is determined based on Cohen, Morgan, and Krejcy table,

and the sample size was calculated to be 210 (n=210).

Table 2. Statistical size of society and statistical sample size

department	Employees' No	Sample No
operation	242	211
Financial and administrative	80	37
engineering	75	34
Staff units	62	28

The validity of questionnaire items was determined through different interviews and opinions of professors and experts in the field of human resources of company, and thereby, it was made certain that the questionnaire tests the same attribute as intended by the researcher. To measure the reliability of questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was utilized. Therefore, first, a preliminary sample involving 30 questionnaires were pretested, then, using the data derived from the questionnaire, and applying SPSS statistical software, the reliability coefficient was measured through Cronbach's alpha.

Table 3. Reliability of items in terms of each component

component	alpha level
Fair and adequate compensation	0.81
Healthy and safe environment	0.85
Providing opportunities for continued growth and safety	0.82
constitutionalism	0.86
Social relevance of work life	0.83
Total space of life	0.82
Social cohesion and integration	0.85
Development of human capacities	0.81
Total score of employees' QWL	0.83

The function of exploratory studies is to broaden the analytical perspectives and make the researcher familiar with the experts and theoreticians' thoughts whose research and thoughts may inspire the researchers in their research, and disclose different aspects of research problem. Analytical model is like a hinge linking the theoretical plan of research problem with its subsequent work which is observation and analysis of information. The conceptual statement of research topic phenomena is called conceptualization which is one of the main aspects of analytical model structure without which constructing an analytical model will not have a strong, solid, and accurate foundation.

4. Research Methods

The theoretical framework is a basis on which the whole research is established. This framework is a logical, descriptive, and cultured network involving the relationships among variables seeking to conduct such processes as interview, observation, and review of literature. These variables are inevitably associated with research problems. The theoretical framework of this study is based on the eight constituent components of Walton (1975) model based on which the impact of these eight variables on QWL of employees in Mazandaran Gas Company is investigated.

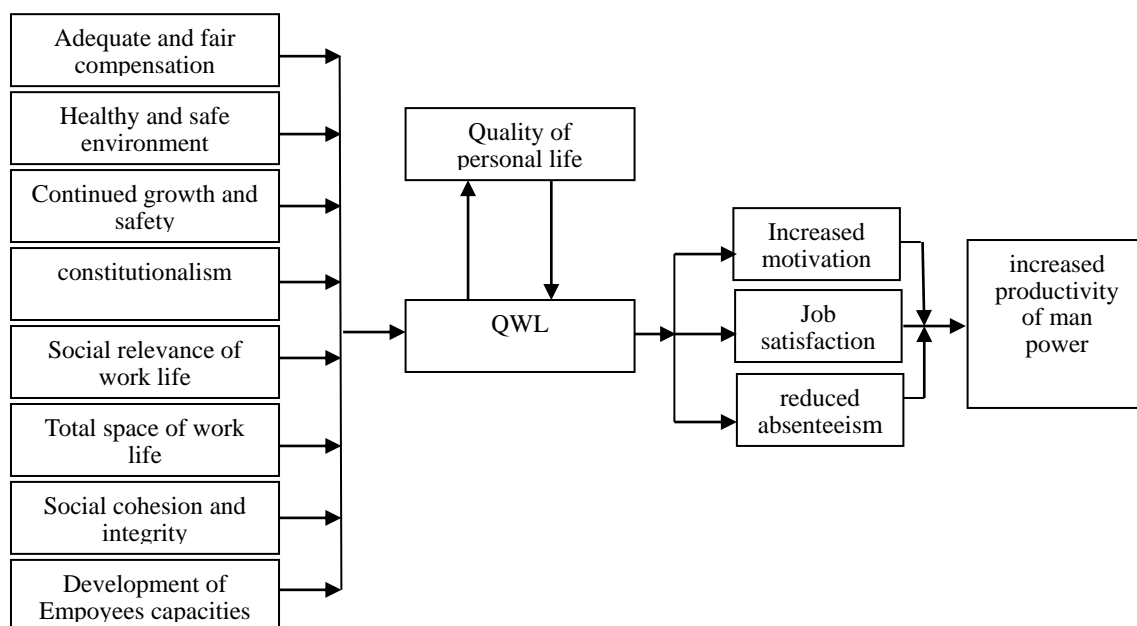


Figure.1. Theoretical framework of study

Table 4. Analytical model of study

concept	dimension	indicator	Supporting theories
QWL	Fair and adequate payment	Consistency between payment system of jobs with each other	Walton(1975) Stein(1983) Levine, Taylor, & Davis(1984) Ci Hui-ru(1994) Chen jian-shenf & Fangang-li (2000) Belcher (1987) Tuttle (1983) Chang & Tang (2009) Stone (1998) Nadler & Lawler(1983)
		Timely payment of wages	
		Compliance between received salaries and employees' intended criteria	
	Health and safe environment	Health of physical workplace	
		Safety of physical workplace	
		Reasonable working hours	
	Providing opportunities for continued growth and safety	Possibility of the growth of potential capacities and abilities through work	
		Possibility of applying learned skills	
		Jog security	
		Timely received wages and compensation	
	Constitutionalism in organization	The fair behavior of managers	
		Possibility of freedom of expressing ideas without fear	
		Relaxed workplace	
		Presence of a systematic method for expressing comments	
	Social relevance of work life	Company's sense of responsibility for society-related problems	
		Respect for the laws dominating society	
	Total space of life	Work prevents individuals from doing family responsibilities	
		Playing social roles in life	
		Leisure time at workplace and possibility of continuing education	
	Social cohesion and integration	Observing administrative hierarchy	
Trust among employees			
Job promotion			
Being supported by coworkers			
Development of human capacities	Grounds for job planning and designing		
	Individuals' work outcomes help the organization's outcome		
	The possibility of applying skills		
	Decision-making in terms of work area		
	The possibility of access to job information		

5. Analysis

In order to specify the type of test utilized for research hypotheses, first, we examined the normality and non-normality of data related to the hypotheses through Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, then non-parametric statistical methods were used by using the results of the study. Chi-square test was applied to examine the degree of individuals' answer to each component's questions.

Null hypothesis: Individuals do not agree with each other in answering questionnaire items.

Alternative hypothesis: Individuals agree with each other in answering questionnaire items.

Table 5. Examining the degree of respondents' answer to each component questions

P-Value	critical chi-square	DF	Computational chi-square	component
0.000	9.487	4	172.049	Fair and adequate compensation
0.000	9.487	4	353.099	Healthy and safe environment
0.000	9.487	4	356.352	Providing opportunities for continued growth and safety
0.000	9.487	4	264.628	Constitutionalism in organization
0.000	9.487	4	154.215	Social relevance of work life
0.000	9.487	4	223.121	Total space of life
0.000	9.487	4	371.523	Social cohesion and integration
0.000	9.487	4	516.055	Development of human capacities
0.000	9.487	4	2075.543	Total score

If individuals do not agree with each other in answering this question, they equally choose "very low", "low", "average", "high", and "very high" answers. Conversely, if they agree, most respondents will agree on choosing a certain option. In the above table, the Chi-square calculated in all tests is higher than critical Chi-square (9.487) with 4 degree of freedom and 0.05 significant level. On the other hand, the probability level (P-Value) is less than significance level (0.05). Therefore, it can be stated that at 0.05 significant level with 95 % confidence, individuals agree with each other in answering each component questions. In what follows, it will be investigated whether, in spite of consensus on a special item, the median of answer in each component is higher than 3 or not?

Accordingly, Wilcoxon test will be applied to examine the status of each component.

Null hypothesis: The median of individuals' answer in each component equals to 3.

Alternative hypothesis: The median of individuals' answer in each component is greater than 3.

Table 6. Studying the median of answer in each component

component	No	Wilcoxon-statistics	Median value	P-value	status
Fair and adequate compensation	219	9591.5	3.165	0.001	appropriate
Healthy and safe environment	219	8043.5	3.000	0.178	average
Providing opportunities for continued growth and safety	219	10077.5	3.125	0.005	appropriate
Constitutionalism in organization	219	5539.0	2.275	1.000	inappropriate
Social relevance of work life	219	10339.5	3.250	0.000	appropriate
Total space of life	219	2192.0	2.500	1.000	inappropriate
Social cohesion and integration	219	7331.5	3.000	0.878	average
Development of human capacities	219	13073.0	3.200	0.000	appropriate
Total score	219	11766.0	2.990	0.617	

According to results of Table 6, it can be observed that in safe and adequate compensation, providing opportunity for continued growth and safety, social relevance of work life, and development of human capacities, median is higher than 3, and test is significant. However, in the health and secure environment as well as social cohesion and integrity, the median exactly equals to 3, which shows an average amount. Furthermore, in constitutionalism in organization and total space of life, the median is less than 3 suggesting that more attention is needed to be paid to meeting the needs in these fields. Totally, the overall obtained score is relatively average, and the hypothesis for its higher amount is not confirmed.

Friedman test was used to compare the status of QWL components, and the degree of the status of intended components is compared with each other in employees' QWL.

Null hypothesis: The status of components is not the same.

Table 7. Comparing the status of QWL components

No	Computational Chi-square	Degree of freedom	Critical chi-square	Probability level
219	231.174	7	14.067	0.000

With respect to Table 7, the values of computational chi-square statistics was about 231.174 higher than critical chi-square equaling 14.067 with 7 degrees of freedom and 0.05 significant level, and the values of corresponding likelihood was also less than significant level ($\alpha= 0.05$). The null hypothesis was, therefore, rejected, and it can be stated that the status of employees’ QWL components is not similar. In other words, there is prioritization in assessing the status of components.

Table 8. Prioritizing the employees’ QWL components in terms of mean of rank

Priority	Components	Mean of ranks
1	Social relevance of work life	5.47
2	Development of human capacities	5.24
3	Fair and adequate compensation	5.00
4	Providing opportunities for continued growth and safety	5.00
5	Healthy and safe environment	4.74
6	Social cohesion and integration	4.31
7	Constitutionalism in organization	3.42
8	Total space of life	2.80

Radar diagram with a polygon has helped the researcher to detect the dominant variable (s) for a series of observations. In studying the diagram, ‘social relevance of work life’ is in the highest place with ‘the total space of life’ and ‘constitutionalism’ in the lowest place, respectively.

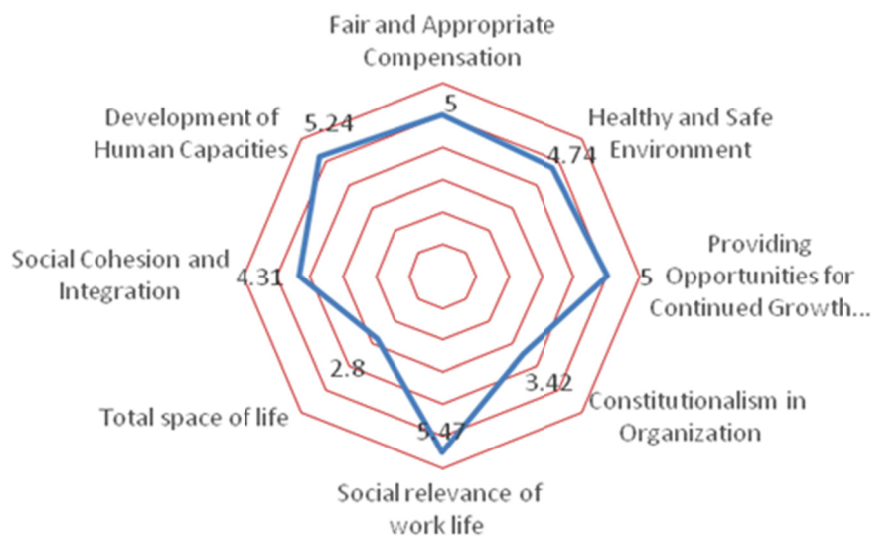


Figure 2. Spider diagram for components

Table 9 shows reliability and validity of the different items as calculated by PLS-SEM. As can be see, for all components, Cronbach's alpha values and Composite reliability (CR) are higher than 0.7 and shared values are higher than 0.5; therefore the measurement model is reliable (Hair et al.,2006). The Loading (factor) for all the indices is greater than 0.7, and since the t-value coefficients for all indices are outside [-2/58, 2/58], so it is highly possible that all the loading factors are significant. The average variance extracted (AVE) values for all the components are higher than 0.5, and all the CR values of the indices are higher than their corresponding AVE values (Hair et al.,2006). So the convergent validity of the model is guaranteed. In order to examine the validity of the model, the AVE and the correlation coefficient between latent variables were used using Fornell and Larcker’s method (1981). As shown in Table 10, since the square root of the AVE of each component is greater than its correlation with other components, so the divergent validity of the model is established.

Table 9. The summarized results of the measured model

Latent variable	Indicators	Loading	t-value	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Communality	AVE
Fair payment	AQ1	0.871600	17.867390	0.834373	0.898961	0.747960	0.747960
	AQ2	0.834926	11.437490				
	AQ3	0.887181	33.655747				
Safe working environment	BQ1	0.840462	31.538705	0.728575	0.845793	0.646719	0.646719
	BQ2	0.770175	19.865709				
	BQ3	0.800381	30.007899				
Growth supply opportunities	CQ1	0.890306	60.289899	0.856695	0.902877	0.699654	0.699654
	CQ2	0.857379	47.051076				
	CQ3	0.790031	32.919322				
	CQ4	0.804191	29.172933				
Rule obedience in organization	DQ1	0.811393	32.168300	0.836758	0.891013	0.671592	0.671592
	DQ2	0.844392	45.036472				
	DQ3	0.792343	30.590515				
	DQ4	0.828979	36.040414				
Social dependency	EQ1	0.907205	65.955744	0.787496	0.903951	0.824736	0.824736
	EQ2	0.909094	80.309424				
General life space	FQ1	0.712873	8.169146	0.809103	0.856180	0.600365	0.600366
	FQ2	0.885923	24.558896				
	FQ3	0.697015	7.364222				
	FQ4	0.789041	10.516606				
Social solidarity	GQ1	0.730428	21.100958	0.823375	0.882520	0.653295	0.653295
	GQ2	0.811549	32.100606				
	GQ3	0.853848	48.017424				
	GQ4	0.831857	31.201004				
The development of human capabilities	HQ1	0.868864	55.565539	0.864290	0.901667	0.647608	0.647608
	HQ2	0.805531	30.479145				
	HQ3	0.756701	22.172082				
	HQ4	0.802653	30.554287				
	HQ5	0.785741	26.807735				

Table 10. Fornell-Larcker standard analysis to check the divergent validity

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8
#1 Fair payment	0.8648 46807							
#2 Safe working environment	0.4303 60	0.8041884 11						
#3 Growth supply opportunities	0.4294 28	0.360855	0.8364532 26					
#4 Rule obedience in organization	0.0387 39	0.251641	0.507559	0.8195071 69				
#5 Social dependency	-0.007 231	0.149155	0.352216	0.589154	0.9081497 67			
#6 General life space	0.1270 19	0.342275	0.291477	0.269332	0.118330	0.7748328 85		
#7 Social solidarity	0.0762 34	0.218516	0.468989	0.658586	0.507207	0.170399	0.8082666 64	
#8 The development of human capabilities	0.2385 76	0.218124	0.535481	0.511784	0.562202	0.256452	0.532080	0.8047409 52

In table 11, the criteria for the evaluation of the structural model have been reported. As it can be seen, the t-value for all the components is outside [-2/58, 2/58], therefore all the components can explain the employees' quality of working life. R2 and CV Redundancy values for the variables of Growth supply opportunities, Rule obedience in organization, Social dependency, Social solidarity, and the development of human capabilities were high, for the variable of Safe working environment they were average, and these values were low to average for the variables of General life space and Fair payment. In addition, GoF (The goodness-of-fit) criterion was used to determine the overall quality of the model, which

was 0.54. This value is much more higher than the threshold value of 0.35 (Wetzels, Odekeken-schoroder, & Van Oppen, 2009). This shows that the overall quality of our model is very high.

Table 11. The results of the structural model

	t-value	R ²	CV Redundancy
#1 Fair payment	3.600310	0.120747	0.083527
#2 Safe working environment	6.298034	0.213384	0.135152
#3 Growth supply opportunities	23.175433	0.610071	0.423752
#4 Rule obedience in organization	22.449201	0.637535	0.427208
#5 Social dependency	11.950242	0.440341	0.363860
#6 General life space	6.764435	0.172074	0.072776
#7 Social solidarity	21.756772	0.588544	0.375149
#8 The development of human capabilities	34.344075	0.651023	0.411808

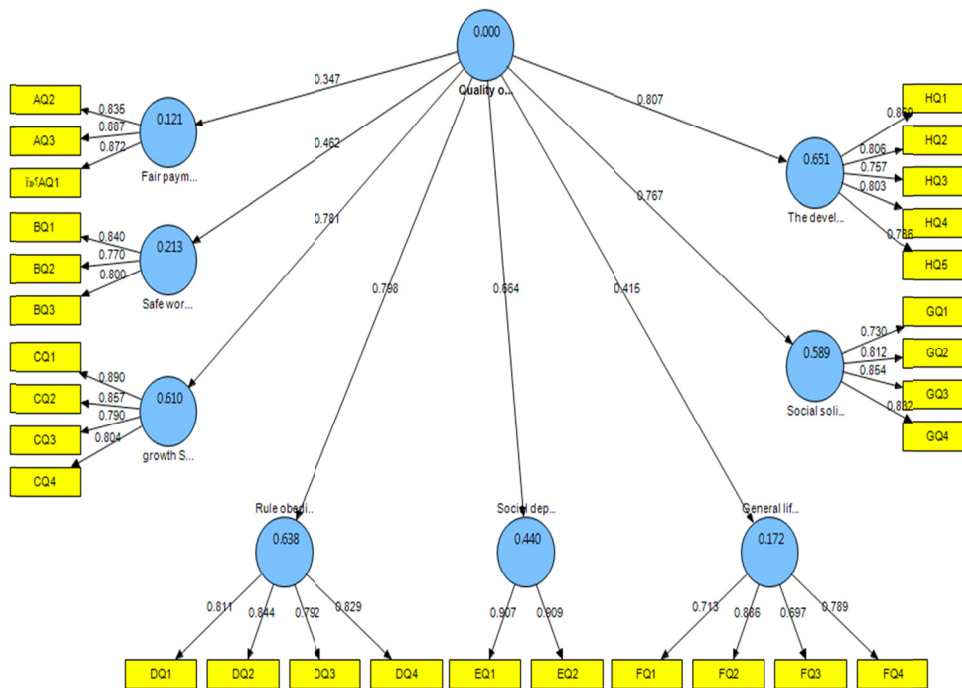


Figure 3. Direction model and the results of PLS-SEM

The main objective of this study was to investigate factors affecting employees’ QWL and assess the status of these factors in the company under study. In this regard, first, a main hypothesis and eight sub-hypotheses were proposed to achieve the intended goals.

The results of “one-series Wilcoxon test” suggest that:

- The test is significant in ‘fair and adequate compensation’, ‘providing opportunities for continued growth and safety’, ‘social relevance of work life’, and ‘development of human capacities’.
- ‘Healthy and safe environment’ and ‘social cohesion and integrity’ are average.
- ‘Constitutionalism in organization’ and ‘total space of life’ are low, and more attention is needed to be paid to the needs and expectation in these components.

Overall, the total score obtained is average, and the hypothesis for its greater value is not approved. In other words, the status of employees’ QWL is average in the company under study.

The results of “Friedman test” reveal that:

The status of employees’ QWL components is not equal. In other words, there is priority in assessing the status of components. Given the prioritization, the status of ‘social relevance of work life’ is of utmost importance; and in the same vein, ‘constitutionalism in organization’ and ‘total space of life’ are of the least importance.

In general, the sub-hypotheses related to ‘adequate and safe compensation’, ‘providing opportunities for continued

growth and safety', 'social relevance of work life', and 'development of human capacities' are confirmed as the probability value is less than 0.05.

6. Discussion

The importance of the present study done in the studied organization is based on the assumption that the quality of working life and the measurement of its components can help the management of human resources of the organization to identify the obstacles and problems which employees are facing, and then to implement the appropriate policies to increase the employees' job satisfaction and to improve their level of involvement, a high level of mutual commitment between employees and the organization, and finally the organization's effectiveness. Therefore, there seemed to be a research gap in the employees' quality of working life in the studied organization.

The findings of first sub-hypotheses: The first research sub-hypothesis is that fair and adequate compensation is at an appropriate level in the intended company. The results revealed that fair and adequate compensation is at an appropriate level at 5% significant level with 0.001 probability value and 3.165 median value. Therefore, the above hypothesis is confirmed. Studies have been emphasized by Huang, Lawler, and Lee (2007), Sinha (2012), Gayathiri, and Lalitha (2013).

The company which was studied in the present survey is a public company, and according to Daley (2005) the structure of payments (bonuses, salaries and wages) in public organizations imposes serious limitations on the purposes of judgment regarding the evaluation of performance in areas such as promotion and merit pay, and especially merit pay is used as a tool both to increase productivity and to reduce costs in many public organizations. Although this factor is in a good condition in the present company, the results of some research (Shahbazi et al, 2010) show that improving the quality of working life in Iran depends on improving the economic situation, and choosing long-term strategies by the government, and their implementation and evaluation they can have a significant impact on quality of life and work in the future. Hence, the company managers are recommended to pay more attention to compensation and reward systems in order to improve the employees' quality of working life, and be able to improve the company's working life using effective policies such as adaptation of the salaries and benefits of the employees to their expectations, timely payment of wages and benefits, on time payment, rewards to motivate employees to improve innovation and creativity in providing services, and so on.

The findings of second sub-hypotheses: The second research sub-hypothesis is that healthy and safe environment is at an appropriate level in the intended company. The results displayed that healthy and safe environment is at an average level at 5 % significant level with 0.178 probability value and 3.000 median value. Hence, the above hypothesis is rejected. Based on this studies have been reported by Niosh (2010), Adhikari & Gautam (2010), Gayathiri & Lalitha (2013).

The results of Seidler et al. (2014) and Pollock's (1993) studies suggest that the psychological needs of employees in organizations are fulfilled through the application of working life quality techniques. Thus, regarding the fact that human resources are the most important and most essential element of any organization, and success of any organization in achieving its goals heavily depends on human resources, attending to employees' physical and psychological needs is essential, and constant effort should be made to meet these needs. The results of Arsalani et al's (2014) study indicate that one fourth of Iranian nurses suffer from physical damages due to work, and one out of three people gets backache related to their job. In addition, Bernal et al. (2015) maintain that every week, 7.4% of the nurses will be absent from work because of work-related mental or physical fatigue, which is 80% higher than that of other professional groups. These factors are closely connected to the quality of their working life, and can also cause disruption to their personal lives. If continued, these disruptions lead to many social, personal, economical, and psychological problems, and can cause sexual disorders and impair their performance.

The findings of third sub-hypotheses: The third research sub-hypothesis is that providing opportunities for continued growth and safety is at an appropriate level in the intended company. The results suggested that providing opportunities for continued growth and safety is at an appropriate level at 5 % significant level with 0.005 probability value and 3.125 median value. Hence, the above hypothesis is confirmed.

Filipo (1998) believed that quality of working life programs include any improvement in the organizational management which brings about success and development. Almalki et al (2012) and Dolan et al (2008) maintained that development opportunities and job promotions have a positive effect on the quality of working life. Deutsch and Schurman (1993) suggested that quality of working life programs applied in the United States of America increase employees' participation in making decisions about new technologies, workplace environment, and skills training. Chaipol (1990) examined middle managers perception of their quality of work life in three American, Japanese, and Thai companies, and found out that compared to Japanese companies, American companies had a higher quality of work life in payment, opportunity promotion, and training opportunities, while the Thai company had a higher quality

than the Japanese ones with regard to opportunity training. Although the studied company is in a good condition with regard to this factor, the company's managers are recommended to attempt to make the workplace ergonomic in order to improve their employees' physical health, and encourage them to exercise to improve their psychological condition

The findings of fourth sub-hypotheses: The fourth research sub-hypothesis is that constitutionalism in organization is at an appropriate level in the intended company. The results indicated that constitutionalism in organization is not at an appropriate level at 5 % significant level with 1.000 probability value and 2.275 median value. Therefore, the above hypothesis is rejected.

The component of rule observation refers to fair, indiscriminate, and respectful behavior towards employees, and is expected to be a significant factor in employees' tendency to change their jobs. Stapenhurst and Langseth (1997) believed that authority of law can improve the quality of life. The results of the studies done by Almalki et al. (2012) and Dolan et al. (2008) revealed that rule observation has a positive effect on quality of working life. Rosenbloom and Rene (2010) claimed that rules and principles regulate people's behavior and their interaction with each other; ensure accountability, equality, and ethical behavior; and form the foundation of any organization. Chimwaza et al. (2014) maintained that lack of support by managers and their unfair behavior towards employees were a significant factor in health service staff members' tendency to leave their jobs. The findings of Gordon's study (1993) showed that paying attention to rule observation and quality of working life programs reduces staff members' complaints, absenteeism, and disciplinary actions, and at the same time increases participation and staff members' positive attitudes. Regarding the fact that the component of rule observation in the studied company is in a poor condition, the company's managers, and especially its board of directors should adopt effective policies to improve rule observation. So, it is recommended that the managers of the company attempt to improve the organizational justice in distributive dimension (allocation of reward based on employee's performance), procedural dimension (managers' attention to observing the fair procedure of employees' annual evaluation system solely based on performance), and interactive dimension (appropriate behavior towards employees). In addition, Cole and Parston (2006) are of the opinion that when there is a democratic atmosphere in a company, staff members are able to freely express their ideas, attitudes, and expectations, which helps company's managers adopt effective policies, make key decisions and find out the facts. So, the company's managers should attempt to create a supportive organizational culture and a democratic atmosphere in order to improve the quality of work life.

The findings of fifth sub-hypotheses: The fifth research sub-hypothesis is that social relevance of work life is at an appropriate level in the intended company. The results revealed that social relevance of work life is at an appropriate level at 5 % significant level with 0.000 probability value and 3.250 median value. Therefore, the above hypothesis is confirmed. Based on this studies have been reported by Boutin-Dufresne, and Savaria(2004), Porter & Kramer(2002).

The results of Rubel and Kee's study (2014) indicated that the quality of work life affects the employees' performance and organizational efficiency by influencing their job satisfaction. Therefore, workplace is of high quality, when its staff members are assumed as the main component of the organization; they encounter intellectual challenges; the workplace brings about its members' success and personal capability; and everything is done perfectly.

Since the studied company is a project-oriented company in the field of gas delivery to citizens, the senior managers of the company are recommended to protect the environment as a national asset while running gas-delivery projects, and the studied company should be more responsible towards society affairs. Respecting the Constitution of the country and other authorities, this company is expected to improve its quality of work life. As the results of the studies done by Almalki et al. (2012), Stapenhurst and Langseth (1997), and Dolan et al. (2008) showed, law making and the authority of law can positively affect the quality of work life.

The findings of sixth sub-hypotheses: The sixth research sub-hypothesis is that total space of work life is at an appropriate level in the intended company. The results indicated that total space of work life is not at an appropriate level at 5 % significant level with 1.000 probability value and 2.500 median value. Therefore, the above hypothesis is rejected.

Findings of Narehan et al.'s study (2014) on multi-national companies in Malaysia indicated that quality of work life (QWL) has a significant effect on employees' quality of life (QOL). Beasley et al. (2005) believed that most of the factors affecting the quality of work life depend on employees' ability to keep a balance between home and work. The results of the study by Zhao et al. (2013) showed that the quality of work life affects other aspects of life such as family life, social life, and other psychological aspects of life which are not related to the job.

The findings of seventh sub-hypotheses: The seventh research sub-hypothesis is that social cohesion and integration is at an appropriate level in the intended company. The results revealed that social cohesion and integration is at an average level at 5 % significant level with 0.878 probability value and 3.000 median value. Therefore, the above hypothesis is rejected. Based on this studies have been reported by Lee et al (2015).

The findings of Marginean et al.'s (2006) study revealed that quality of work life is a process by which the staff members of an organization can influence major decisions through appropriate communication channels (organizational hierarchies) designed for such purposes, and this plays a key role in social integration of the workplace. Zhao et al. (2013) claimed that quality of work life has a positive effect on the improvement of job attitudes such as organizational commitment, job dependence, job attachment, and joy in the workplace. Based on the findings of Zhao et al.'s study, it can be concluded that the improvement of job attitudes leads to social integrity and solidarity in the organization.

Therefore, the findings of the studies done by Marginean et al. (2006) and Zhao et al. (2013) can be used to help senior managers of Gas Company to adopt effective policies in order to maintain social integrity and improve the quality of working life.

The findings of eighth sub-hypotheses: The eighth research sub-hypothesis is that development of human capacities is at an appropriate level in the intended company. The results indicated that development of human capacities is at an appropriate level at 5 % significant level with 0.000 probability value and 3.200 median value. Therefore, the above hypothesis is confirmed.

7. Suggestions for Further Research

Regarding the topic of the paper, other research projects related to the employees' quality of life in the studied organization have been proposed as follows:

1. The relationship between the quality of working life and work-life balance, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, conflict, job satisfaction.
2. The impact of the employees' quality of working life on the quality of the customer service.
3. Designing an effective model for measuring the employees' quality of working life.

8. Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was the presence of uncontrollable factors, such as different life schedules, individual habits and work schedules, which could affect the resting time of nurses before working shifts or during the day after shifts, ultimately diminishing their quality of sleep and general health.

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