QUALITY OF WORK LIFE, PERSONALITY, JOB SATISFACTION, COMPETENCE, AND JOB PERFORMANCE: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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Abstract

The success of any organization is highly dependent on how it attracts recruits, motivates, and retains a high performing workforce. Explaining the factors that influence employee performance remains a fundamental question for human resources management practitioners. The expectancy theories of Vroom, Porter, and Lawler, assert that employee performance depends not only on the amount of effort exerted, but also on the intervening influences of factors such as person's abilities and traits, as well as their role perceptions. Researchers also suggest that a range of organizational and employee factors could impact employee performance. These include Quality of work life, ability, effort, motivation, attitude, personality, competence, and job satisfaction. This study looked at selected employee related factors, namely: employee personality, job satisfaction, and competence. QWL was included because organizations are known to adopt a strategy for improving employees' Quality of Work Life (QWL) with the aim of satisfying both the organizational objectives and the needs of the employee. On the other hand, successful organizations consider job satisfaction to be important for work performance. However, job satisfaction alone cannot lead to performance. Having the right competences is important for performance. This review therefore seeks to investigate the employee related factors that influence the relationship between quality of work life and employee's performance.

Keywords: QWL, employee performance, personality, employee's competence

Introduction

The competition among organizations requires them to give more attention to the operational effectiveness for competitive advantage. The effectiveness for competitive advantage mainly depends on the performance of the workforce (Dailey, 2012). However, the foregoing means that employees are valuable resources, capable of providing competitive advantage for organizations. The resource-based view maintains that human resources can meet the criteria for resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). For organizations to succeed, there is need to address the employee needs, particularly on aspects such as quality of work life and other factors which could have an impact on employees' performance. Kurt Lewin's Field Theory of employee behavior depicts a relationship between quality of work life and performance (Lewin, 1946). According to this theory, individual behavior is influenced by how one perceives and reacts to the environment, which in this research is taken to mean the quality of work life environment (Kohler & Mathieu, 1993). The two factor further point out that individual's characteristics (manifested in personality) and perceptions of the environment may influence individuals' behavior and performance.

In the expectancy theories of Vroom (1964), Porter and Lawler (1968) assert that performance depends not only on the amount of effort exerted, but also on the intervening influences of the person's abilities and traits. Thus, it also depends on their role perception. If a person lacks the right ability or personality, or has an inaccurate role perception of what is required, then the exertion of a large amount of energy may still result in a low level of performance or task accomplishment. It can therefore be inferred that organizations need to adopt a strategy for improving employees' Quality of Work Life (QWL) to satisfy both organizational objectives and employee needs (Havlovic, 1991). Every organization is interested in bringing about a superior level of performance from employees. However, a range of organizational and employee factors could have a significant impact on the successful achievement of this objective. Some of the employee related factors include ability, effort, motivation, attitude, personality, competence, and job satisfaction. This study sought to review literature on selected employee related factors, namely: employee personality, job satisfaction, and competence. Consequently, these factors were chosen because of their relationship with employee performance.

Personality was selected because studies have shown that people's personality determines how they react to the environment. Behavior is influenced by how individuals perceive and react to the environment provided by the organization (Kohler & Mathieu, 1993). Thus, in this research, it can be referred to as the quality of work life environment.

Additionally, a study by Borman and Motowidlo (1997) showed that personality and competence are related to job performance. Job satisfaction was selected because studies have shown that there is a relationship between personality and job satisfaction and that there are many different personality factors that have been correlated with job satisfaction (Ayan & kocacik, 2010; Scheider & Dachler, 1978; Judge et al., 2002; Spector, 1997). According to Jex (2002), internal disposition or personality is the basis of explaining job satisfaction. Thus, some people are inclined to be satisfied or dissatisfied with their work no matter the nature of the job or the organizational environment. Some people are genetically positive in disposition, whereas others are innately negative in disposition.

From the literature point of view, QWL is linked with job satisfaction (Wooden & Warren, 2003; Bearfield, 2003; Ganguly, 2010). The link between QWL and employee performance is unlikely to be strong in the absence of job satisfaction. However, the link between job satisfaction and performance is not clear from the various studies done. The assumption thereof is that job satisfaction leads to high performance or that high performers are necessarily satisfied with their jobs. A number of studies depicts a weak link, while others suggest a potentially strong relationship between satisfaction and performance (Skibba, 2002; Petty *et al.* (1984); Iaffaldano and Muchinsky, 1985; and Crossman and Abou-Zaki, 2003). Expectancy theorists like Vroom, Porter, and Lawler asserts that the relationship between effort and employee performance is mediated by individual abilities and characteristics (which include personality and competence).   While many studies have made attempts to explain performance through certain employee factors such as QWL, job satisfaction, and personality, few studies have examined the simultaneous role played by QWL, personality, job satisfaction, and competence in enhancing employee's performance. Therefore, this study contributes to other literatures on this subject.

Quality of Work Life
Quality of work life is essential for organizations to continually attract and retain employees. Thus, it has become critical in the last two decades due to the increasing demands of today's business environment and family structure (Akdere, 2006). Lau (2000) defined QWL as the favorable conditions and environments of a workplace that support and promote employees' satisfaction by providing them with job security and reward. QWL encompasses various aspects such as working conditions, working time, mode of wages payment, health hazards, and management behavior during the process of responding to the needs of the employees Therefore, QWL involves some financial and non-financial benefits, as well as

management behavior towards workers. Islam and Siengthai (2009) cited some key elements of QWL to include job security, better reward system, employee benefits, employee involvement, and organizational performance. QWL can also be defined as a feeling that employees have towards their jobs, colleagues, and the organization (Heskett *et al.,* 1994). Thus, if employees have good feelings towards their jobs, colleagues, and the organization, it implies that they are happy doing their work; and consequently, the QWL is good.

QWL consists of opportunities for active involvement in group working arrangements or problem solving that are of mutual benefit to employees and employers (Wilcock & Wright, 1991). Quality of work life is defined by Lawler (1982) as the employee perceptions of their physical and mental wellbeing at work. These perceptions can be favourable or unfavourable. Thus, it encompasses working conditions, working time, mode of wages payment, and health hazard issues. Therefore, quality of work life constitutes financial and non-financial benefits and management behavior towards workers.

Quality of work life gives attention to various qualities of work life factors as proposed by Walton (1975), Mishra (1996), and Ellis and Pompli (2002). In the case of Walton (1975), there are eight major conceptual categories relating to QWL, namely: adequate and fair compensation; safe and healthy working conditions; immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities; opportunity for continued growth and security; social integration in the work organization; constitutionalism in the work organization; work and total life space; and social relevance of work life. Mishra (1996) model asserts that QWL is a function of the income and educational background of the employees, whereby higher income and education levels leads to high QWL. Ellis and Pompli (2002) identified poor working environments, resident aggression, workload, inability to deliver preferred quality of care, work-family balance, shift work, involvement in decision making, recognition, relationships with supervisor/peers, and opportunity to learn new skills as factors that contributes to quality of working life in nurses. Other factors identified include attitude, nature of job, people, stress level, growth and development opportunities, risk involved, and reward. In a similar study on teachers, Hart (1994) found that psychological distress and morale contributed equally to QWL. However, this study uses the combination of models to determine factors that constitute quality of work life.

Job Satisfaction

Successful organizations consider worker's morale and job satisfaction to be important in job performance. According to Locke (1976),

job satisfaction is a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences, or the attitudes and feelings people have about their work (Armstrong, 2006). On the other hand, Schneider and Snyder (1975) defined job satisfaction as a personal evaluation of the conditions present in the job, or the outcomes that arise as a result of having a job. Furthermore, Spector (1997) asserts that job satisfaction is the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs. In addition, Spector stated variables related to job satisfaction to include achievement, advancement, job enhancement, job enrichment, and teamwork. Job satisfaction has to do with an individual's perception and evaluation of his job, and this perception is influenced by the person's unique circumstances such as needs, values, and expectations.

Generally, researchers have taken three common approaches to explain reasons for job satisfaction. These reasons include job characteristics, social information processing (organizational characteristics), and dispositional approach (worker characteristics) (Glisson & Durick, 1988; Jex, 2002). In relation to the job characteristics approach, research has revealed that the nature of an individual's job or the characteristics of the organization that the individual works for, predominantly determines job satisfaction (Jex, 2002). This is the same view adopted by Hackman and Oldham (1980) who viewed job characteristic as an aspect of a job that generates ideal conditions for high levels of motivation, satisfaction, and performance. The second approach views job satisfaction to be based on social information processing (organizational characteristics). Jex (2002) explains that during social information processing, employees look to coworkers to make sense of and develop attitudes about their work environment. In other words, if employees observe that their co-workers are positive and are satisfied, then they will most likely be satisfied. Generally, research on social information processing theory supports the idea that social environment does have an effect on employees' attitudes, behaviors, and job satisfaction (Aamondt, 2009).   The dispositional approach asserts that internal disposition is the basis of explaining job satisfaction. Hence, some people are inclined to be satisfied or dissatisfied with their work no matter the nature of the job or the organizational environment. According to Jex (2002), some people are genetically positive in disposition, whereas others are innately negative in disposition.

Furthermore, Bavendam (2000) also identified six factors that cause job satisfaction; opportunity for growth, stress, leadership, increases in relative strength, work standards, and fair reward and adequate authority. The level of job satisfaction is affected by intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors, the quality of supervision, social relationships with the work group, and the degree to which individuals succeed or fail in their work (Armstrong,

2006). Other factors according to Jennings (1998) include salary, benefits, job security, and the ability to retire within the organization.

Employee Personality

Employee personality is defined as the individual pattern of psychological processes arising from individual characteristics such as patterns of thought, emotion, behavior, motives, and feeling (Mayer, 2005). It can also be defined as a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that uniquely influences his or her cognitions, motivations, and behaviors in various situations (Ryckman, 2004). Personality is an individual's characteristic patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior, together with the psychological mechanisms (hidden or not) behind those patterns (Funder, 2001). "Personality is the entire mental organization of a human being at any stage of his development. It embraces every phase of human character including: intellect, temperament, skill, morality, and every attitude that has been built up in the course of one's life" (Warren & Carmichael, 1930, pg. 333). However, personality is influenced by the inherited characteristics of individuals and the environment they live in. They include dimensions such as talent, intelligence, education, friendship, responsibility, and nervousness.

Different personality theorists present their own definitions of personality based on their theoretical positions. According to Ryckman (2004), the psychoanalytics defines personality from a biological perspective, while other theorists use the trait perspective which assumes that there are no dispositional factors that are regular and persistent in individuals. The cognitive perspective assumes that people's personality changes with individual dispositions. Alternately, the existential perspective postulates the existence of an innate need that moves individuals toward the realization of their potentialities. Therefore, this occurs especially if the environmental conditions are right. Lastly, the social behavioristic perspective assumes that most of human behaviors are learned and guided by our motives.

Employee Competence

Competence is the ability to meet a complex demand successfully or carry out a complex activity or task (Rychen & Salganik, 2002). It refers to the necessary or desirable prerequisites required to fulfill the demands of a particular professional position, a social role, or a personal project. Using this definition, the structure of competence is derived from the demands encountered in the context of work and in everyday life (Weinert, 2001). Competence can be attributed to individuals, social groups, or institutions, when they possess or acquire the conditions for achieving specific

developmental goals, and when they meet important demands presented by the external environment.

Competence can be attributed to an individual when he/she possess the conditions necessary for achieving specific work related goals. Competencies may be thought of as capacities or dispositions embedded in the individual and are manifested by action (which implies intentions, reasons, and goals). Therefore, this statements shows that the conceptualization of competence reflects a holistic approach, to the extent that it integrates and relates to the demands for a particular position, attributes (including ethics and values), and context as the essential elements of competent performance. However, one can only infer competencies from the performance of complex and demanding actions. In addition, performance can be measured or systematically observed, from which an underlying competence may be inferred (Oates, 2001).

Employee Job Performance

Employee performance can be defined from the perspective of behavior or outcomes. Hence, it can be regarded as a multi-dimensional concept. Campbell (1990) describes job performance as an individual level variable which differentiates employee performance from organizational performance. When conceptualizing employee performance, one has to differentiate between an action behavioral aspect and an outcome aspect of performance. The behavioral aspect refers to what an individual does in the work situation and its relevant to the organizational goals (Campbell et al., 1993), while outcome aspect refers to the consequence and results of the individual's behavior and can be influenced by environmental factors.

Borman and Motowidlo (1997) distinguished between task and contextual performance and referred to task performance as an individual's proficiency with which he or she performs activities which contribute directly or indirectly to the organization's technical areas. However, contextual performance refers to activities which do not contribute to the technical core, but which supports the organizational, social, and psychological environment by which organizational goals are pursued. Task performance differs from contextual performance in three ways. First, in task performance, activities vary between jobs, whereas under contextual performance, activities are similar. Secondly, task performance is related to ability, while contextual performance is related to personality and motivation. Thirdly, task performance is more prescribed and constitutes of in-role behavior, whereas contextual performance is more discretionary with extra-role behavior (Motowidlo & Schmit, 1999).

Campbell (1990) proposed an eight factor model of job performance. Among these eight performance components proposed, five factors refer to

task performance including job-specific task proficiency, non-job-specific task proficiency, written and oral communication task proficiency, supervision in the case of a supervisory or leadership position, and partly management/administration. Furthermore, the other three factors are contextual factors such as demonstrating effort, maintaining personal discipline, and facilitating peer and team performance. On a very general level, one can differentiate between two types of contextual performance: behaviors which primarily involve the smooth functioning of the organization as it is at this present moment, and proactive behaviors which aim at changing and improving work procedures and organizational processes. However, there is also stabilizing contextual performance behaviors which include organizational citizenship behavior with its five components, namely: altruism, conscientiousness, civic virtue, courtesy, and sportsmanship (Organ, 1988).

Theoretical Foundation of the Study

Since employees' performance is a behavior, the theoretical underpinning of this research can best be explained using employee behavior theories found in the field of organizational behavior. Organizational behavior addresses employee's behavior at the individual, group, and organizational levels. Employee behavior is influenced by factors such as motivation, attitudes, job satisfaction, personality, stress, leadership, and group dynamics (Luthans, 2005). However, this study makes use of some of these factors including job satisfaction, personality factors, and competence as the intervening variables. The study was guided by expectancy theory, the Big Five personality theory, Hackman and Oldham job characteristic model, and the organic model of employee competence.

One of the organizational behavior theories which accounts for performance is the expectancy theory. In addition, there are a number of studies over the past several years that have demonstrated that expectancy theory has potentially been useful for predicting job performance (Galbraith and Cummings, 1967). According to this theory, expectancy, valence, and instrumentality combines together to determine effort and hence performance. Expectancy shows that there will be intrinsic or extrinsic reward, and the value of those rewards determines the effort. As defined earlier, QWL includes adequate and fair compensation, work conditions, opportunity for development and growth, job security, social integration, work life balance, involvement and recognition, and workload. Thus, most of these are either intrinsic or extrinsic rewards and therefore could form the basis of expectancy. This was confirmed by Kurt Lewin's Field theory of employee's behavior which shows the relationship between QWL and performance. According to this theory, individual behavior is influenced by

how one perceives and reacts to the environment provided by the organization (Kohler & Mathieu, 1993). Furthermore, in this research, it can mean the quality of work life environment.

The theory goes on to state that the relationship between effort and performance is mediated by individual abilities and characteristics (which include personality and competence) and role perception. Such personality characteristics include locus of control. Therefore, as Lawler (1982) postulates, the more a person is oriented toward internal control, the more he will feel that his performance will lead to desired outcomes and vice versa. Competence is also deemed important for performance; thus, it refers to the ability to display a particular performance-relevant behavior which is portrayed by accurate understanding of what the job requirements are (Lawler and Porter, 1968). In conclusion, the expectancy theory shows that various performance antecedents which include expectancy of intrinsic or extrinsic reward being offered by the organization, cognitive ability, personality traits, competence, and role perception, combines to determine the employee's level of job performance.

QWL and Employee Job Performance

Literature exist which shows that there is a relationship between QWL and job performance. Azril et al. (2010) in their study on QWL and the job performance of agricultural extension workers in Malaysia concluded that the aspect of individual and family life is the highest contributor to work performance. Similarly, Mazerolleet et al. (2008) in their study of work life conflict found out that individual and family life is an important driver for employee work performance. Their study concluded that stable individual and family life will produce higher work performance among employee. Similarly, unstable individual and family life were found to have a negative impact on work performance. Remuneration aspects such as salary, salary increment, bonuses, allowances, pension, and medical benefits have been shown to encourage employees to give their best to their employer as shown by a study conducted by Martzler and Renzl (2007).

Work environment including ergonomic, ICT availability, and safe working environment have been seen to affect job performance as shown in the study by Borman et al. (1991). However, the study concluded that working environment such as physical environment, office colleagues, job satisfaction, and management supervision can have an effect on work performance. Job security and safety aspects can produce higher motivation among the employees which in turn increases job performance. A study by Luchak and Gellatly (2002) on how pension affects job satisfaction noted that systematic and established pension scheme can enhance employees' work performance. Kim et al. (1999) also noted that safe and secured work

place is indeed an important and positive contributor to employees work performance.

QWL and Job Satisfaction

Winter et al. (2000) viewed QWL for academicians as an attitudinal response to the prevailing work environment. Therefore, they posited five work environment domains which include role stress, job, supervisory, structural, and sectoral characteristics to directly and indirectly shape academicians' experiences, attitudes, and behavior. According to Wooden and Warren (2003), research suggests that job satisfaction is closely related to QWL. Employees are more satisfied when they enjoy the environment in which they work (Berry, 1997). In addition, job satisfaction exhibits strong associations in expected directions with measures of a large number of work attributes. Hence, this attributes include diverse aspects of work contents (as variety, task significance and skill use), pay and other benefits, job security, promotion opportunities, recognition, work conditions, relations with coworkers and supervisors, effective communication structures in the firms, and participation in managerial decision making.

Bearfield (2003) examined QWL among Australian employees. He distinguished between the causes of dissatisfaction in professionals, intermediate clerical, and sales and service workers. The study shows different concerns that might have to be addressed for different groups. He found the level of job satisfaction to be different in aspects like salary, work load, work pressure, the type of job, relations among coworkers, and other aspects among different groups. In their study on Employee affective reactions to organizational quality efforts, Gardner and Carlopio (1996) found out that employee perceptions of their firm's quality efforts are related to employee affective reactions, with those perceiving greater organizational quality efforts exhibiting more positive affective reactions. Consequently, it also shows that the perceptions of autonomy can account for the relationship between perceptions of organizational quality efforts and affective reactions. Ganguly (2010) in a study of quality of work life and job satisfaction of university employees in India concluded that quality of work life significantly contribute towards increasing satisfaction or dissatisfaction as experienced by the employees in their concerned job. Also, it depends largely on the perceived positivity or negativity of the relevant dimensions.

Personality and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction shows significant differences in terms of characteristics such as competence, being ambitious in the social area and occupation, getting angry easily, and hiding their feelings (Ayan & kocacik, 2010). In their study on teachers, the two scholars concluded that teachers

with extrovert personality characteristics have significantly higher levels of job satisfaction as compared to teachers with introvert personality. Scheider & Dachler (1978) writing on stability of Job Descriptive Index asserts that that over time, satisfaction with a job remains usually stable. Therefore, it was the people's personality that causes satisfaction with their job, rather than other variables. Some personality factors could have more effect on job satisfaction than others. In a meta-analysis focusing on personality and job satisfaction, Judge et al. (2002) concluded that neuroticism, conscientiousness, and extraversion were more strongly associated with job satisfaction. People who are high on neuroticism are more likely to be dissatisfied than others with low neuroticism, while people who are conscientious are more likely to be satisfied.

Spector (1997) asserts that there are many different personality factors that have been correlated with job satisfaction. Overall, there seem to be two traits that have significant correlations: Locus of Control (LOC) and negative affectivity. LOC has been correlated with job performance as well as job satisfaction. Judge and Bono (2001) in a meta-analysis study of the relationship between core self evaluation traits with job satisfaction and performance, asserts that internal LOC relates positively with both job satisfaction and job performance. In a study of internal auditors' job satisfaction and performance, Patten (2005) found that internal LOC employees out-performed those with external LOC. Also, negative affectivity is correlated with job dissatisfaction because if people feel negative overall, they will be negative about their job as well (Spector, 1997).

Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance

The relationship between job satisfaction and performance is not clear from the various studies done. As such, we cannot assume that job satisfaction leads to high performance or that high performers are necessarily satisfied with their jobs. A number of studies indicate a weak link, while others suggest a potential relationship between satisfaction and performance. Skibba (2002) in a study of personality and job satisfaction of firefighters in Wisconsin, found varying relationship between job satisfaction, personality factors, and job performance. Work on present job was negatively correlated with anxiety, while rule consciousness was positively correlated to pay and opportunities for promotion. In addition, supervision was negatively correlated with dominance, independence, and social control. Furthermore, Petty *et al.* (1984), in a meta-analysis of the relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance found that the relationship between satisfaction and performance may operate differently among different types or levels of employees, while another meta-analysis on the same relationship

by Iaffaldano and Muchinsky (1985) discovered a weak relationship. Crossman and Abou-Zaki (2003) in their study of Lebanese bank staff found no significant relationship between job satisfaction and performance. Judge et al. (2001) in an analysis of various studies on this relationship cited some studies which showed some relationship, while others showed little or no relationship. Locke (1976) writing on the nature and cause of job satisfaction shows that there is at least some relationship between these variables. According to another study by Syptak, Marsland, and Ulmer (1999), satisfied employees tend to be more productive, creative, and committed to their employers.

Jin (2007) in a study of the factors influencing employee service performance from a multi-dimension perspective in Chinese service organizations, found that appropriate personality traits (agreeableness and conscientiousness) and good employee job satisfaction are related positively to the employee service performance. Additionally, team work cohesiveness was positively linked to the employee performance. Thus, a positive relationship has been found between training and the employee performance.

Competence and Employee Performance
        Competence and performance have been seen to be related. Vroom (1964) indicated that employee performance is a function of individual ability and motivation. On the other hand, Dawis et al. (1968) suggest that employee performance is determined primarily by their abilities and the job. According to Borman &Motowidlo (1997), abilities and skills tend to predict task performance, while personality and related factors tend to predict contextual performance. There are specific aspects of contextual performance such as personal initiative that is said to be predicted by ability and job satisfaction factors. Differences in performance between individuals can be explained by individual differences in abilities, personality, and/or motivation. Jayan (2006) in a study of middle level managers found that competence, personality, and job attitude are significant predictors of the manager's performance. Campbell (1990) in modeling the performance prediction problem in industrial and organizational psychology, presented performance components as a function of three determinants, namely: declarative knowledge (knowledge on facts and principles), procedural knowledge and skills (cognitive, physical, and psychomotor skills), and motivation. Spencer and Spencer (1993) in their article on job satisfaction causes and consequences, asserts that superior performance at work is a result of specific sets of competencies combined in a particular way.

The Conceptual Framework

Based on the discussion of the literature review, previous studies have established the relationship between QWL and performance. Quality of work life programs should be associated with such affective outcomes such as increased job satisfaction, improved employee performance to the extent that they enhance employee participation, and involvement and responsibility. Studies have also shown that there is a relationship between personality and job satisfaction and that there are many different personality factors correlated with job satisfaction. Again, extensive research has proven that job satisfaction does not occur in isolation, as it is dependent on organizational variables such as structure, size, pay, working conditions, and leadership, which constitutes the organizational climate (Schneider & Snyder, 1975; Kerego & Mthupha, 1997; Boeyens, 1985).

The relationship between job satisfaction and job performance still remains a subject under debate. Thus, authors remain rather cautious that it is unwise to assume that high job satisfaction leads to high performance or that high performers are satisfied with their jobs. Employees' performance is the product of their competence, the support to adequately perform their job, and the motivation to perform their job at high levels. A question thus arises as to whether successful performing employees tend to display similar competencies or their competencies are unique to a specific situation. The conceptual model in figure 1 depicts the envisoned relationship between QWL and performance with personality, job satisfaction, and competence moderating and intervening in this relationship.
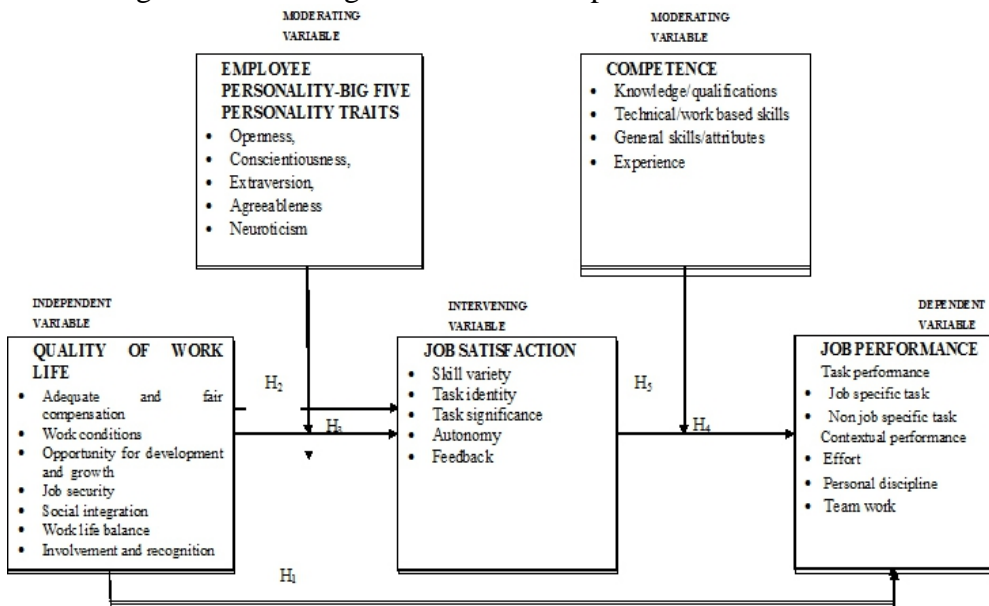

Figure 2. Conceptual Model

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