A Study on the Quality of Work Life (QWL) among faculty members of University of Tehran (UT) and Sharif University of Technology (SUT)

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to determine the Quality of Work Life (QWL) among faculty members of University of Tehran and Sharif University of Technology. Utilizing correlation research method, 150 faculty members, according to their academic ranks were selected based on classifying and relative methods. Construct and discriminant validity were conducted on the instrument. The collected data was analyzed using T Test. Results indicate that: a) Faculty members of both UT and SUT are in a relatively unfavorable QWL condition; b) There is no significant difference in the level of QWL among faculty members of the two universities, however, there is a small difference in social integrity and cohesiveness between the two populations. Put differently, the members of SUT hold an upper level of social integration and cohesiveness in comparison with the UT faculty.

Keywords: Quality of Work Life; Faculty Members; universities

1. Introduction

Universities, as key factors in social, economic, cultural, and political development, play a vital role in educating human capital. Analyzing the influential factors of growth and development in all developed or developing societies indicate that the efficiency and efficacy of educational systems in any country promotes its inclusive development and growth. Faculty members as one of the greatest resources of any

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society, and one of the most crucial factors of educational systems play a critical role in training specialized forces. Ultimately, the result of their efforts is social development and growth in human societies.

Considering the human factor in organizations, especially in educational organizations is an option that was recently considered in human resource management. In recent efforts of Hawthorns and other scholars, the researchers attended to the problems arising from the complex human factor as QWL (Luthans, 1998), which examines the actual conditions related to work and work environment in a given organization.

While in the last decade, emphasis was only on personal life (out of work), nowadays the concept of QWL has emerged as a main social subject in contemporary management on a global scale. The term “quality of work life” (QWL) originated from the concept of the open socio-technical system designed in the 1970s that helps to ensure autonomy in work, interdependence, and self-involvement with the idea of “best fit” between technology and social organizations. Although the open socio-technical system is a traditional concept for practice, it assumes that optimal system performance and the “right” technical organization coincide with those job conditions under which, the social and psychological needs of the workers are satisfied (Bolweg, 1976). A better QWL initiative supports to fulfill technical and social requirements of job in our organizations (Adhikari and Gautam, 2010).

QWL is a comprehensive and expanded program that increases member satisfaction, reinforces their learning with the environment, and helps them to manage change. Member dissatisfaction of QWL is a problem that harms all employees — without considering rank and situation. The aim of many organizations is increasing members’ satisfaction in all levels. However, this is a complex problem, because the separation and determination that what factors relate to QWL is difficult (Seraji, 2006).

Studies on QWL in Iran and especially in universities are somewhat limited and require research that is more inclusive. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to fill this vacuum currently existing in the areas of QWL research.

2. Purpose, research questions and significance of the study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influential factors of QWL. It aimed to investigate the perception of faculty members in Tehran and Sharif universities regarding QWL. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to achieve the following:

1) To identify and determine the extent of quality of work life of faculties at Tehran and Sharif universities; and

2) To examine the difference between the level of QWL among UT and SUT faculties.

The results of the survey were considered significant, because they intended to assist decision makers in identifying key workplace issues in order to develop strategies to address and improve the quality of working conditions (Normala, Daud, 2010) at universities.

3. Literature review

Ever since the concept of Quality of Work Life (QWL) was first used over 30 years ago, ranges of definitions and theoretical constructs have succeeded each other with the aim of mitigating the many problems facing the concept (Martel and Dupuis, 2006). QWL has a dynamic multiple structure which involves concepts such as job security, reward systems, workflows, opportunities for educational and job development, as well as participation in decision-making. During the last decades, QWL has been viewed differently as: 1) a variable; 2) an approach; 3) a series of methods; 4) a movement; 5) everything; and 6) an ethical subject. Robbins 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 decision that determines their lives at work (Kheradmand et al, 2010). Rethinam and Ismail (2008) define QWL as the effectiveness of the work environment that transmits to meaningful organization, and personal needs in shaping the values of employees that support and promote better health and wellbeing; job security, job satisfaction, competency development, and balance between work and personal life. In another definition, QWL is defined as in terms of employees’ perceptions of their physical and mental well-being (Casio, 1992). This review on the definitions of QWL indicates that QWL is a multi-dimensional construct. It is difficult to best conceptualize the quality of work life elements. For example, Casio (1992) determined that components of the quality of work life consist of employees’ participation, job development, conflict resolution, communication, health, job security, equal compensation, safe environment, and sense of honor. Walton (1975) proposed eight major conceptual categories relating to QWL: 1) Adequate and fair compensation; 2) Safe and healthy working conditions; 3) Immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities; (4) Opportunity for continued growth and security; (5) Social integration in the work organization; (6) Constitutionalism in the work organization; (7) Work and total life space; and (8) Social relevance of work life. In this paper, Walton’s theoretical framework is used for measuring faculty perception of QWL.

Many researches have been carried out during the 1980s to 2011 within the subject of QWL. Rahimi, Rajaeipour and Salami (2007) in their research on “The quality of work life of faculty members of Isfahan public universities” conclude that: “There was no significant difference between faculty members’ quality of work life considering the variables of age, gender, academic field, and university of service location.

Yavari Y., Amirtash and Tondnevis (2009) also carried out a study to evaluate the Quality of Work Life in physical education faculties and departments. They stated that there was no significant difference in quality of work life among faculties and departments except in the developing human and personal skills and abilities aspect of QWL, and there was significant relation between QWL and some of its aspects with age and the number of teaching years of faculty members. They stated that there was significant difference in the social relevance of work life aspect of QWL among male and female faculty members.

In summary, faculty members are very important to universities, therefore it has high value to pay more attention to their QWL, and their work conditions. In addition, it is recommended to use QWL improvement programs to take advantage of their benefits. Few studies have examined the QWL dimensions among faculty members in Iran. This study was an attempt to delve into QWL research in Iranian universities.
4. Methodology

4.1. Sample

The statistical group in the present research includes the faculty members of UT and SUT who are teaching in 2010-2011.

There are about 2526 faculty members at university of Tehran and 418 faculty members at Sharif University of Technology. Collectively they form 2944 persons participating in the statistical group of this research. Table 1 depicts faculty distribution based categorized by university.

Table 1. Statistical sample population categorized by university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Sharif University of Technology (SUT)</th>
<th>University of Tehran (UT)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1253</td>
<td>1455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>2526</td>
<td>2944</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering that the studied statistical group (faculty members) in this research was distributed in numerous faculties, therefore, classification or relative sampling method has been utilized for selecting the statistical sample for each university.

The Kukrun formula was employed to determine bulk of the considered sample with regard to the population of the statistical group (faculty members).

\[
n = \frac{N \bar{r}^2 s^2}{Nd^2 + \bar{r}^2 s^2} = \frac{2944(1.96)^2 (0 / 5)^2}{2944(0 / 08)^2 + (1.96)^2 (0 / 5)^2} = \frac{2827.41}{19.8} = 142.78 \approx 144
\]

For more confidence, the researchers were selected 130 faculty member from University of Tehran (based on the total number 2526) and 30 professors out of 418 professors of SUT, summing up to 150 selected persons.

4.2. QWL measure

The chosen sample in this research answered the QWL questionnaire. This questionnaire was based on Walton’s factors (1975), and has been used by many researchers.

This questionnaire with little change has been re-written by researchers for the faculties. This questionnaire comprises the following aspects:

1. Adequate and fair compensation (questions 1-5)
2. Safe and healthy working (questions 6-8)
3. Opportunities for continued growth and security (questions 9-11)
4. Constitutionalism in the work organization (questions 12-17)
5. The social relevance in work life (questions 18-20)
6. Overall life space (questions 21-25)
7. Social integration and cohesiveness (questions 26-29)
8. Human progress capabilities (questions 30-32).

This questionnaire contains 32 questions and evaluates QWL in a separate format and on the basis of Likert’s 5 degree scale. The reliability of mentioned questionnaire has been reported \( \alpha = 0.926 \).

5. Results

The findings of the present research are examined in frame of propounded objectives.
1. To identify and determine the extent of quality of work life of faculties at UT and SUT

Table 2 illustrates the related factors of QWL in UT and SUT.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work life quality</th>
<th>Number (N)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Standard errors average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adequate and fair compensation</td>
<td>UT 120</td>
<td>14.96</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUT 30</td>
<td>14.90</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe and healthy working</td>
<td>UT 120</td>
<td>9.38</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUT 30</td>
<td>9.54</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for continued growth and security</td>
<td>UT 120</td>
<td>9.91</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUT 30</td>
<td>10.81</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitutionalism in the work organization</td>
<td>UT 120</td>
<td>17.40</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUT 30</td>
<td>18.94</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The social relevance in work life</td>
<td>UT 120</td>
<td>9.43</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUT 30</td>
<td>9.47</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall life-space</td>
<td>UT 120</td>
<td>14.81</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUT 30</td>
<td>14.95</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social integration and cohesiveness</td>
<td>UT 120</td>
<td>12.38</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUT 30</td>
<td>13.77</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human progress capabilities</td>
<td>UT 120</td>
<td>9.47</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Categorizing the QWL value among UT and SUT university faculties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Unfavorable</th>
<th>Fairly unfavorable</th>
<th>Fairly favorable</th>
<th>Favorable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QWL</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to table 3, mean values of QWL marks among faculties of UT and SUT are 97/66 and 104/20 respectively, and standard deviation values are 16/69 and 10/93 respectively.

According to the classification of QWL grades in table 4, results show that the levels of QWL among faculties of the mentioned universities are as follow: 3.5 percent favorable; 28.5 percent of cases fairly favorable; 36.1 percent of cases fairly unfavorable, and finally in 11.1 percent of all studied cases stand in the unfavorable level.

Obtained results from the studied sample show that QWL among the faculties of UT and SUT universities, stands in fairly unfavorable level.

According to gained mean of the studied sample and on the basis of the formula calculating the mean of society, it is inferred that the mean of QWL among the faculties of UT and SUT, stands between 101/03-96/06 with 95 percent confident.

2. To examine difference between the level of QWL among the faculties of UT and SUT

Table 4. Statistical T test results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistical quality tests of work life factors</th>
<th>Leving's testing</th>
<th>T testing</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adequate and fair compensation</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.923</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe and healthy working</td>
<td>5.78</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for continued growth and security</td>
<td>1.762</td>
<td>0.187</td>
<td>1.700</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational constitutionism</td>
<td>3.490</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>1.390</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social relevance in work life</td>
<td>3.427</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>1.018</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall life space</td>
<td>1.883</td>
<td>0.172</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social integration and cohesiveness</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.867</td>
<td>2.006</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 shows the factors of QWL comparatively between UT and SUT universities.

In Table 4, the factors of QWL are compared between UT and SUT universities. The table shows the level of satisfaction for various factors such as Human progress capabilities and Quality of work life. The values in the table indicate the level of dissatisfaction for each factor, with higher values indicating lower levels of satisfaction.

Quality of work life is further analyzed to determine if there is a significant difference between UT and SUT. The obtained quantities of T for QWL factors at 0.05 α level are compared with the table value of 1.98. Since the obtained quantities are smaller than the table value, it is concluded that there is no significant difference between QWL in the faculties of UT and SUT.

As the obtained quantities of significant level (sig 2-tailed) show, for seven factors of QWL including fair and adequate compensation, safe and healthy working, opportunity for continued growth and security, constitutionalism in the work organization, social relevance of work life, overall life space, human progress capabilities, there is no significant difference between UT and SUT faculties.

Therefore, the QWL difference between UT and SUT faculties is rejected with 0.95 percent confidence, while there is significant difference, as the eight factors show, in social integration and cohesiveness between UT and SUT faculties.

The faculty of SUT has a higher level of social integration and cohesiveness than those of the UT faculty. The reason for this is that the acquired "t" (2.006) on the 0.05 α level is bigger than the value of "t" (1.98).

6. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of the current research is comparatively study QWL among faculties of UT and SUT. Identifying the factors related to faculty QWL is of great importance, because it has positive and significant relation with job satisfaction. Therefore, we can improve job satisfaction (JS) by changing and manipulating QWL factors, and thus move toward the development of the organization. The main aim of this research is specifying the condition of QWL among the faculties of UT and SUT. The results show that professors in the mentioned universities have a fairly unfavorable QWL. The second aim of this study is to examine the difference between the level of QWL among the faculties of UT and SUT. Results show that there is no significant difference between the levels of QWL. Of the eight factors of QWL, a noticeable difference can be seen only between social integration and cohesiveness among the professors of the mentioned universities.

From social cohesiveness point of view, the faculties of SUT possess a higher position.

In summary, the results of the present research show that:
A) The faculties of UT and SUT are on a fairly unfavorable level of QWL
B) There is no significant difference in QWL among the faculties of UT and SUT universities.

7. Suggestions

In order to improve the QWL of faculty members, more than anything else, universities need to participate them in all affairs. The following suggestions are the conditions required for the improvement of QWL factors, and hence, to prevent faculty dissatisfaction:

- Deans of universities should be aware of the non-material effects of awards.
To encourage the faculties, they should use motivators other than compensation and salary such as, providing adequate conditions for work, perfect appreciation of their work; develop a sense of belonging and collaboration to do duty, sympathetic understanding etc. These should be considered as satisfying motivators.

Consideration of psychological problems – job satisfaction being the most obvious – lead to increased J.S, because job secured employees spend their strength in doing their jobs, rather than losing it under psychological pressure and stress.

Organizational climate should be designed in a way that provides the essential conditions for the creation of collaboration and morale of collective work in all levels of the organizational structure.

Effective factors in increasing overall life space should be studied and reinforced, and trans-organizational factors that affect the improvement of faculty J.S, should be recognized and considered.

It is better, if university principals and authorities provide member access to information, and opportunity in designing and planning, authority for decision making in related areas of operation, so that they can develop their capabilities.

8. Study limitations and directions of future research

The statistical group of this research is limited to UT and SUT. Therefore, obtained results can be popularized to the mentioned universities, because every university has its own specific characteristics.

- Lack of Farsi (Persian) literature related to examining the QWL factors.
- Lack of cooperation from the universities’ faculty side
- Lack of standardized and valid questionnaire for QWL

8.1. Research recommendations

In order to further complete findings and add to the wealth of this scientific context, the following recommendations are given to future scholars of this subject:

- Considering the importance of every QWL components, and the need to identify each of them separately, it is recommended that the relation and effect of each component with other organizational aspects and concepts including performance, effectiveness, efficiency etc. be evaluated and analyzed.
- Considering that the organizational QWL model depends on the organization’s culture, therefore conducting research on the relation between different organizational culture and QWL is recommended.
- As mentioned before, the current statistical group is limited to UT and SUT universities. Therefore, researchers are advised to conduct their study on a more expanded scale.
- Scholars are advised to study on the relation and effect of QWL on other human factors of the organization.
- Based on the obtained results of this study, universities are advised to pay more attention to important QWL factors of faculty such as fair and sufficient pay, providing opportunity for growth and security, obeying organizational regulations, social dependence of work life, social solidarity of work life, and developing human capability. As a result, they will clearly touch the outcome of this action in their faculty, which will result in better performance and higher efficiency in the organization.
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