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**QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AMONG EMPLOYEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
THE GAMBIA**

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Abstract

Quality of work life (QWL) is concerned with the welfare and satisfaction of employees on the job as well as off the job. The purpose of this research is to undertake a combination of descriptive study - to ascertain and explain the level of QWL among the employees of University of the Gambia – and hypothesis testing - to establish the relationship between QWL and demographic factors of the respondents. To fulfill the objectives of the study, a cross-sectional survey design is used to collect primary data from a sample of 402 respondents through completing an online questionnaire which is adopted from the study of Swamy, Nanjundeswaraswamy and Rashmi (2015). The data will be analyzed with the help of SPSS 24 using descriptive statistics, independent t-test and one-way ANOVA.

Keywords: *Quality of work life, University of the Gambia, Dimensions, Demographic factors, and Organisation.*

Özet

Çalışma yaşamı kalitesi, çalışanların iş içinde ve iş dışındaki refahı ve tatmini ile ilgilenmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı Gambia Üniversitesi çalışanlarının çalışma yaşamı kalitesinin betimlenmesi ve ölçülmesidir. Bu amaçla öncelikli olarak betimsel analizlerle çalışanların çalışma yaşamı kalite seviyelerinin ne olduğu ortaya konacak sonrasında da hipotezlerle çalışma yaşamı kalitesi ve çalışanların demografik özellikleri arasında bir ilişki olup olmadığı araştırılacaktır. Araştırma hedeflerini gerçekleştirmek üzere Gambia Üniversitesi'nin 402 çalışanına online anketi doldurmaları yönünde bir çağrı yapılmıştır. Araştırmada Swamy, Nanjundeswaraswamy and Rashmi (2015)'in geliştirdiği çalışma yaşamı kalitesi ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Toplanan veriler SPSS paket programı yardımıyla betimsel analiz, bağımsız t testi ve tek taraflı ANOVA analizine tabi tutularak analiz edilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Çalışma Yaşamı Kalitesi, Gambia Üniversitesi, Demografik faktörler, ve Organizasyon.*

INTRODUCTION

Every organization wants to perform to the highest level possible and to be as productive as possible. However, the performance and productivity of an organization depends on how effective and efficient it manages its resources and the most important resource of any organization is its workforce or human resources. Thus, the performance and success of every organization depends on the viability of its employees. Therefore, the human resources need to be properly motivated to ensure their satisfaction, happiness and thus their commitment and to ultimately achieve high productivity. Swamy, Nanjundeswaraswamy and Rashmi (2015) argues that human resource is an asset to the organization and when they are an unsatisfied, they become the organization's first enemy. They argue further that to sustain in the competitive market, organizations have to maintain skilled employees and thus they have to be treated as an asset not liability which is only possible through the humanized job design process, known as quality of work life (QWL).

“QWL is a philosophy, a set of principles, which holds that people are the most important resource in the organization as they are trustworthy, responsible and capable of making valuable contributions and they should be treated with dignity and respect” (Lokanadha & Mohan, 2010). It encompasses factors such as adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, opportunity to use and develop human capacities, opportunity for career growth, social integration in the work force, work-life balance, participative management style, reward and recognition (Bhavani & Jegadeeshwaran, 2014). People spend almost half of their “adult waking time” in the world of work and hence putting work at the very core of their lives. This makes their lives to be intimately and largely organised around their work and thus making their quality of life hugely influenced by and dependent on the quality of their work life. In fact “few things can contribute more to the quality of life than work itself” (Carlson, 1981) because it serve as a source of earnings for one and one's families livelihood as well as providing the opportunity for self-realisation (Xhakollari, 2011).

It is important to note that the success and development of any society depends on the efficiency of its educational system which makes education the backbone of any country. In any educational system, primary education serve as the foundation stone. However, the career building and advancement stone is higher education and hence making higher education especially university education very important as the productive capacities of a country and

thus its level of development and ability to compete in the global economy directly influenced by it (Taher, 2013; Singh & Singh, 2015). Universities play a very important role in training human capital thereby making them a very key factor in the social, economic, cultural and political growth and development of any nation (Mirkamali & Thani, 2011). They contribute to nurturing, educating and developing young brains through teaching and research that help to provide manpower for industries, develop entrepreneurs, and lead to innovation and invention by motivating these young minds to engage in research and development.

The efficiency and effectiveness of a university however depends directly on its employees (Singh & Singh, 2015) whose job is becoming more and more demanding by not only giving lectures, but by also having to hold supervisory role in students research, attend conferences, publish research works and other additional responsibilities (Daud, Yaakob & Ghazali, 2015). The increase in their workload couple with inadequate resources increase their work related pressure and stress and thus reducing their level of satisfaction (Letoane, 2013). It is imperative to mention that when these employees are dissatisfied they don't contribute positively towards students' growth but they instead become a great source of tension for the country. So we have to find out the factors that affect their satisfaction, motivate them to perform to the highest level and also encourage them to be committed to the university and one of the most important factors in achieving these goals is QWL (Darling, 2003 cited by Gupta & Gupta, 2013). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out how satisfied the staff of the University of the Gambia (UTG) are with their QWL and its dimensions.

UTG is the first university and the only public university in the Gambia. It has been established 18 years ago (in 1999) and since then it has graduated thousands of people from diverse fields of study. However, the university's development and growth has been very slow for the fact that it is still confined to running almost only undergraduate programs. It is still unable to run masters programs due mainly to shortage of qualified workforce as majority of UTG lecturers only have master's degree as their highest level of academic qualification. Only few are with PhD and beyond. This might be due to the fact that UTG is unable to attract highly qualified people. Moreover, employee retention has always been an issue at UTG as employees are always complaining about the working conditions and the low level of motivation from the university especially with their rewards and compensations. All these has to do with QWL. Therefore, this study is set out to provide policy recommendations for the management of the university to improve the QWL of its staff which might help to remedy

the situation as improving QWL will help UTG to attract, recruit, motivate and retain highly qualified staff that is very much need for its expansion and growth. Besides, even though QWL is a widely research topic in literature, to our knowledge no study of any kind have been conducted on the area in the Gambia. Therefore, huge research gap exists in the area which the present study wish to fill or at least reduce.

1. THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

The origin of QWL can be traced back to the industrial revolution (Bindu & Yashika, 2014) when “employees were considered as machines who were ready to work from dawn to dusk under whatever conditions” with money being their only motivating factor (Ganguly, 2010). However, it did not take long before the negative outcomes of this practice such as absenteeism, employee turnover, poor morale and occasional sabotage, boredom, fatigue, accidents resulting from inattention, alcoholism, drug addiction, etc. became prevalent (Bindu & Yashika, 2014). From then onwards, in order to mitigate these negative results, researches and experiments including but not limited to the “Hawthorne studies” were undertaken to understand people’s behavior at work and the ways to improve their job satisfaction without sacrificing the overall objectives of firms. The goals of the investigations were to ensure that the twin benefits of improved productivity and employee satisfaction are simultaneously achieved (Ganguly, 2010).

The continuous research consequently gave birth to the concept of QWL in the 1960s when the then General Motors employee, Irving Bluestone, used the expression "Quality of work life" for the first time (Goode, 1989 cited by Martel & Dupuis, 2006). However, the use of the term QWL became much more prevalent after the international conference on QWL, held in Arden House, New York in 1972 that led to the formation of International Centre for QWL in 1973 to promote research and the exchange of information concerning mental health at work (Martel & Dupuis, 2006; Gani & Ahmad, 1995).

Since the introduction of QWL and despite the substantial body of research on the concept in recent years, there have not been any universally or generally accepted definition of term. Different views exist as to what really is QWL. It has become an umbrella term for a multitude of activities and has been defined differently by different people at different times (Ganguly, 2010). Moreover, QWL may be addressed and analyzed by way of a number of disciplines (Newton & Leckie, 1977). For instance it may be considered as: 1) a “goal” by focusing on

work improvement through creating more involving and satisfying jobs and work environment for employees 2) a “process” by seeking the active involvement of all employees at all levels of the organization in the efforts to achieve this goal and 3) a “philosophy” because the organization has to recognize the fundamental human dignity of all its members by seeing its employees as assets to be realized and developed rather than as a cost to be controlled (Carlson, 1981) and hence making attempts to precisely define the boundaries and subject matter of QWL extremely difficult, if not impossible. This is well articulated in literature as Newton & Leckie, (1977) points out that the “complex business of defining the term is a study in itself”.

However, it is clear from the literature that even though there is no universally or generally accepted definition of the term, QWL is concerned with the welfare and satisfaction of employees on the job as well as off the job. Therefore, the present study defines QWL as a comprehensive multidimensional concept that encompasses all activities undertaken by parties involved (employees, the organization, labour unions and the society etc.) to enhance employees’ welfare both on the job and off the job in order to simultaneously achieve the twin benefits of improved productivity and employee satisfaction.

2. DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

The disagreement among researchers about QWL does not only stop at the definition of the term but it extends to its dimensions as well. To unions it may mean fair wages and good working conditions (Wurf 1982), to a worker on the assembly line it may simply mean a fair day's work, safe working conditions, and a supervisor who treats him/her with dignity. To the young professional it may mean opportunity for advancement, career growth, being able to utilize one's talents, etc., to an academician it may mean being able to satisfy important personal needs, etc. (Joshi 2007). Thus, it is understood that many factors contribute to QWL and as such different authors proposed different dimensions ranging from subjective to objective dimensions, financial to non-financial dimensions (Dahl, Nesheim & Olsen 2009) and extrinsic to intrinsic dimensions (Lewis, Brazil, Krueger, Lohfeld & Tjam, 2001). For instance, Newton, Leckie and Pettman, (1979) in their paper "The quality of working life" proposed five broad components or topic areas which they argue together constitute the dimension of QWL. They are as follows: (1) access to work, (2) net attractiveness of the employment package, (3) perceptions, attitudes and responses, (4) actors and their inter-relationship, and (5) measurement.

Corcoran (1986) did a study on “Improving the quality of work life in public schools” and suggested the following seven dimensions: (1) challenging job, (2) autonomy to make decisions about ones work, (3) sense of belonging to a group or community, (4) decent physical working conditions, (5) safety and security at work place (6) rewards associated with work – both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, (7) treating employees with dignity and respect. He however concluded that even though successful organizations have used most or all of the dimensions listed above to effectively implement QWL programs, there is no universal remedy for QWL. What works in one setting may fail in another due to poor implementation. Based on theoretical expositions and empirical studies, Gani and Ahmad (1995) examine various components and correlates of QWL in a large central public sector undertaking located in Jammu and Kashmir and combined the dimensions of QWL in four main categories: working environment factors, relational factors, job factors, and financial factors. In another study, Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel, and Lee (2001) developed a new measure of QWL based on need satisfaction and spillover theories. They identified and proposed seven need-satisfaction dimensions of QWL and these are: health and safety needs, economic and family needs, social needs, esteem needs, actualization needs, knowledge needs, and aesthetic needs. In the same year, Lewis, et al., (2001), in their paper "Extrinsic and intrinsic determinants of quality of work life", after a review of literature have proposed and grouped the dimensions of QWL in to eight generic areas namely, (1) co-worker and supervisor support, (2) team work and communication, (3) job demands and decision authority, (4) patient/resident care, (5) characteristics of the organization, (6) compensation and benefits, (7) staff training and development and (8) overall impressions of the organization.

As the uncertainty about the concept and dimensions of QWL continues and without any universally accepted measure being developed, Dahl, et al. (2009) did a study on “Quality of work – concept and measurement” and proposed six dimensions to be included in measuring QWL: job security, pay and fringe benefits, intrinsic job rewards, work intensity, skills, and autonomy and control. In the same vain Lokanadha and Mohan (2010) also embarked on a study entitled “Quality of work life of employees: emerging dimensions” and concluded that the dimensions of QWL include health and wellbeing; job security; job satisfaction; competence development; and the balance between work and non-work life. As recently as 2016, Nanjundeswaraswamy and Sandhya (2016) in their article “Quality of work life components: a literature review” examined various papers, and proposed a new set of QWL components to measure the degree of QWL of employees in the changed scenario. These

include work environment, job satisfaction, opportunities for growth and advancement, adequate and fair compensation, emotional intelligence, organizational commitment, organizational culture, relationship and co operations, job security, occupational stress, leadership styles, nature of work, facilities, autonomy of work, employee attitude, job challenges/ job responsibility, training and development, adequacy of resources.

The review of literature shows that the debate on the concept and dimensions of QWL is far from over. Given the subjectivity of the concept, it seems the disagreement among scholars and researchers might be dragged into the future and they might never come to a common ground on the concept and determinants of QWL. The universality of the concept still remain a myth. However, for the purpose of this research, the scale developed by Swamy, et al. (2015) will be used. They initially considered 27 important QWL components based on their frequency of usage in literature. They then conducted explanatory factor analysis (principal component analysis) to reduce the components and based on this analysis they finally selected nine QWL dimensions, namely: 1. Work environment 2. Organization culture and climate 3. Relation and co-operation 4. Training and development 5. Compensation and Rewards 6. Facilities 7. Job satisfaction and Job security 8. Autonomy of work and 9. Adequacy of resources.

3. EMPIRICAL REVIEW: QWL IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Several researches have been conducted on QWL in the education sector. Many of these studies focused on the relationships between QWL and variables such as job involvement, job satisfaction, motivation, organization commitment etc. However, several other studies focused on investigating employees' satisfaction with the general level of QWL as well as the relationship of QWL with demographic variables such as age, gender, work experience, income, employment status (full time or part time) which are the objectives of the present study. The results from these researches are mixed. For instance, Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2013) conducted a study on QWL of employees in private technical institutions and found that out of the 109 respondents, 48.6% were satisfied while 51.4% were unsatisfied with their QWL. Their results reveal a significant relationship between QWL of teaching and non-teaching staffs but demographic variables such as age, gender, designation, salary, experience are independent of QWL.

On the contrary, the results of the study conducted by Mehrotra and Khandelwal (2015) to investigate the association of demographic factors (gender and salary) on QWL of teaching

employees in private technical institutions in Bareilly Region, India revealed a significant association between QWL and demographic characteristics (gender and salary) of the employees. They concluded that female employees are more satisfied with their QWL than male employees. In another research also conducted in India by Elamparuthy and Jambulingam (2016) on college teachers' perception of QWL among 230 college teachers working during the year March 2014 to December 2015 in 18 colleges located within the "Tiruchirappalli and Kumbakonam" city limits, their results indicate that the level of QWL of college teachers is low. Their results further indicate that there is a significant difference between QWL and length of service of the respondents but no significant difference exist between QWL and gender, age, designation and income levels of the respondents.

Manju (2014) also investigated teachers' perception of QWL among 100 secondary school teachers from Mysore City and found that majority of them (70.2%) possessed an average level of QWL while 13.9% and 15.9% of them possessed low level and high level of QWL respectively. There results also indicate a significance difference between male and female teachers' QWL with female teachers enjoying a higher QWL than their male counterparts but no significant difference was revealed when it comes to the teachers' level of work experience.

In a study conducted in Iran by Mehdipour, Boushehri, Saemi and Rayegan (2012) on the relationship between the QWL and job involvement of Iranian physical education teachers, the results revealed that the QWL differs significantly on the basis of demographic factors such as gender, work experience, and academic degree. However, the level of QWL is not significantly influenced by age. Finally, the results of a rare study to find out the difference between QWL of permanent teachers and contractual teachers in higher education conducted by Gupta and Gupta (2013) indicates that there is a meaningful difference between permanent and contractual teachers' QWL. They concluded that permanent teachers are satisfied with all aspects of QWL while contractual teachers are least satisfied with all aspects of QWL.

It could be seen from the above empirical review that the findings of previous studies indicate mix results in terms of the overall level of employees' QWL. While some indicate that employees enjoy high level of QWL, some indicate that they enjoy moderate or average level of QWL and others indicate that their QWL is low. In addition, in some researches, a significant relationship was revealed between QWL and demographic variables while the opposite is the case in others. It is also observed that even though QWL is a hugely researched area, only few studies are conducted in Africa to empirically investigate the level of QWL or

its relationship with demographic factors. In fact, to the researchers' knowledge, no known study of any kind was conducted on the topic in the Gambia. Thus, a huge gap exist in the study of QWL in the Gambia. The present study is designed to fill or at least reduce this gap.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to undertake a combination of descriptive study - to ascertain and explain the level of QWL among the employees of University of the Gambia – and hypothesis testing - to establish the relationship between QWL and demographic factors of the respondents. However, in order to fulfill the objective of the study, a cross-sectional survey design is used in which a single group of respondents is surveyed by providing information about themselves through completing an online questionnaire (Leary, 2001) as well as using a single questionnaire to measure both the dependent variable (QWL) and the independent variables (Demographic factors) at the same point in time (Bhattacharjee, 2012). In addition, a correlational type of investigation is conducted to test the study's hypothesis (i.e. to determine whether QWL and demographic variables of the research subjects are related).

4.1. Population And Sample

The target population for this particular study constitute the entire staff body of University of the Gambia (UTG) which totaled to 480 staff, out of which 148 are administrative staff (147 full time and 1 part time) and 332 academic staff (248 full time and 84 part time). In this particular study, auxiliary staff (including security guards, drivers, cleaners, gardeners, laborers, grounds man) totaling to 78 staff which are categorized under administrative staff either have very low or zero formal English education and since a structured self-administered online questionnaire is used for collecting data, these people could not participate in the study because of their inability to read, understand or respond meaningfully to the questions due to their inadequate understanding of English. Given this reasons and in order to boost response rate, the remaining 402 staff (i.e. the 480 total staff population less the 78 auxiliary staff) were used as the sample.

4.2. Instrument For Data Collection

The instrument used for collecting the primary data was a set of structured self-administered questionnaire which is adopted from the study of Swamy et al. (2015) with a reliability alpha co-efficient of 0.88. The questionnaire is developed in English and is divided into two

sections: section one and section two. *Section one* contains questions relating to personal and demographic variables. Questions regarding age, gender, work experience, employment status, monthly salary, level of education etc. were asked in this section and the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. *Section two* consisted of 50 item QWL scale to measure nine dimensions of QWL which include: work environment, organization culture and climate, relation and co-operation, training and development, compensation and rewards, facilities, job satisfaction and job security, autonomy of work, adequacy of resources. The questions in this section were closed ended questions designed with 5 points Likert type scale ranging from strongly disagree “1” to strongly agree “5”. To reduce response bias, questions 3, 11, 16 and 45 were negatively worded. The responses are reverse scored on these survey items to determine the status of QWL (Swamy, Nanjundeswaraswamy & Rashmi 2015).

4.3. Data Analysis Methods

The data will be analyzed with the help of SPSS 24 using descriptive statistics, independent t-test and one way ANOVA. The overall level of QWL and its dimensions will be assessed using descriptive statistics. Mean values will be calculated for every dimension of QWL and the overall QWL as well to determine the level of satisfaction of staff with respect to their QWL and its dimensions which will range from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 5 (Balachandar et al, 2013; Swamy et al. 2015). Mean values of less than 2 are considered as highly unsatisfied, more than 2 but less than 3 as moderately unsatisfied, more than 3 but less than 4 as moderately satisfied and greater than 4 as highly satisfied. Hypotheses one to three will be tested using independent t-test because in all these cases, we are interested in testing whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other which involve a non-directional or two-tailed test (Bhattahrjee, 2012). The remaining four hypotheses (four to seven) will be tested using ANOVA since they all involve more than two groups and QWL is measured on an interval scale. However, to determine which groups the true differences lie, we will perform the “Hochberg’s GT2 procedures” because the different groups have unequal sample sizes (Sekaran, 2003; Field, 2013).

CONCLUSION

The growth, development and success of any society (i.e. a community, country, or even the world at large) largely depends on how effective and efficient its education system is especially higher education because higher education has a direct bearing on the productive capacity of a society by educating and training its labor force (doctors, engineers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, etc.) who eventually shoulder the responsibility of developing that society. However, the effectiveness and efficiency of the education system also depends on the quality of services provided by its workforce which in turn depends on the level of satisfaction, commitment, competence and creativity of those employees. Thus they should be provided with better QWL in order to achieve this goal. If their QWL is “below average then its resultant impact will be on teaching and research work and these are the basis for the progress of any society” (Bindu & Yashika, 2014).

Therefore, the present study is set out to investigate how satisfied UTG staff are with regards to their QWL and its dimensions. Another objective is to find out whether there is significant mean differences in QWL among the respondents in terms of their demographic factors such as gender, designation, age, educational qualifications, monthly salary and work experience. To achieve the objectives of the study, a cross-sectional survey method of data collection was used to collect primary data with the help of a set of structured self-administered questionnaire which is adopted from the study of Swamy, Nanjundeswaraswamy and Rashmi (2015). Data will be analyzed with SPSS and several tests will be conducted ranging from descriptive statistics to determine the overall QWL, independent T-test to compare the mean differences for some demographic factors and one way ANOVA for others.

We believe that the findings of this study will have several implications for the UTG decision makers and management. Improving UTG staff’s QWL will improve the psychological wellbeing of the staff, make them more committed and satisfied with their jobs. In addition improving QWL improves the level of employees’ motivation and ultimately leading to improving their performance and productivity. Therefore, UTG’s management should endeavor to improve their staff’s QWL in order to benefit from these positive effects of QWL. They could achieve this goal by implementing the recommendations that will be given by the end of the study.

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