

Full length research paper

Association between quality of work life and occupational stresses in personnel of social security organization in Hamadan province, IR Iran

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Quality of work life (QWL) is a multimodal comparative concept influenced by time, place, and personal and social values. Occupational stress is also a physical, mental, and emotional reaction experienced by individual's changes and needs of work life. The present study was aimed to assess relationship between quality of work life and occupational stresses in personnel of social security organization in Hamadan province, IR Iran. In a cross-sectional study performed in 2011, 58 personnel of the committee of treatment management in Hamadan social security organization were selected by census method. Study information was collected by the two standard self-administered questionnaires including the QWL questionnaire and the Holmes and Rahe stress questionnaire. QWL was significantly associated with personnel education level ($p = 0.001$) and work experience ($p = 0.003$). According to the Pearson's correlation test, a positive association was revealed between QWL score and stress scale of personnel (Beta = -0.782, $p = 0.003$). Managers should pay particular attention to the quality of working life. Therefore, they were able to increase participation of the personnel in decisions affecting their jobs and work environment through execution of QWL programs such as establishing open and appropriate communication networks in their organizations. This program has a special importance for newly recruited employees, and for those with lower levels of job demands. Thus, reducing occupational stress is expectable due to increase of job satisfaction.

Keywords: Quality of work life, Occupational stress, personnel

INTRODUCTION

Today, in the modern management, the concept of quality of work life (QWL) has become a major social issue all over the world (Randall R and Elizabeth M A 1994). QWL is a multimodal comparative concept influenced by time, place, and personal and social values that depends on the world-view of the person and on his life (Alvin *et al.*, 2009). In fact, QWL has a multidimensional structure contains concepts of health and welfare measures, incentive plans, job suitability, Job

security, Job design, the importance of the role of the individual in the organization, providing growth and development, participation in decision making, reducing conflicts and ambiguities, education, and reward systems (Randall R and Elizabeth M A 1994). QWL can be classified in both objective (real world) and subjective (perceived world) dimensions. The objective components of QWL consist of suitable employment, income, housing, education (access to education opportunities and capabilities), health, quality of life condition, services, safety, and environment. The subjective dimensions also include: composition and diversity of needs, individual perceptions of reality and a sense of security and comfort, sense of progress, Look person to life, suffering, death, restrictive diseases stability, nature, and most importantly love (Ahmad S and Mehta P 1997).

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In the last decade, it was emphasized only on personal (non-business) life, while proponents of the theory of QWL are searching for new systems and programs to help their staffs balancing QWL and personal life (Moheballi D 2005). The program of QWL includes any improvement in corporate culture that has led to the growth and excellence of the employees in the organization (Akdere Mesut 2006). Programming QWL is a process that personnel can participate in decisions affecting their jobs specifically and on their job environment generally. In order to these programs, reducing occupational stress is expectable due to increase of job satisfaction (Flippo.Edvin B 2008). In various studies, implementation of these programs led to reduced employee complaints, reduced rates of absenteeism, reduced rates of apply disciplinary codes, increased the positive attitude of staff and also increased their participation in the recommendation systems program (Martocchio *et al*). Also, fulfilling the needs of personnel can result in organization development and long-term performance of the organization (Gordon Judith R 1993). Danna and Griffin believed that the QWL is like a pyramid that its concepts include life satisfaction (in the top of the pyramid), job satisfaction (in the middle of the pyramid), and satisfaction of other unique aspects of job such as rights, co-workers and supervisors (in the bottom of the pyramid). Therefore, the range of the QWL is wider than the quality of life (Shareef Reginald 2003). Today, most of the empirical researches conducted on the QWL have implicitly accepted new perspective of job stress and other concepts related to job and profession (Danna K & Griffin R W 1999); because, one of the main factors affecting the performance of organizations is stress factors that put the health of personnel in dangerous situations (Che Rroso *et al* 2006). Therefore, in recent decades, the issue of stress and its effects on organization has become one of the central topics of organizational behavior (Holmes S 2001). Occupational stress is defined as a physical, mental, and emotional reaction experienced by individual's changes and needs of work life. Everyone responds differently to changes in life. Positive stress can be motivate, while negative stresses can appeared when these changes and demands are defeating the individual (Rezaian A 2004). Stress has an adverse association with job satisfaction and individual performance that affect health, safety, and QWL. Compensation and expenses of illnesses and complications due to stress in the workplace has attracted the attention of management (Lee I and Wong H 2002). The present study was aimed to assess relationship between QWL and occupational stresses in personnel of social security organization.

METHODS

In a cross-sectional study performed in 2011, 58 personnel of the committee of treatment management in

Hamadan social security organization were selected by census method. Study information was collected by the two standard self-administered questionnaires of QWL and job stress. The stress questionnaire (including 43 questions) was firstly introduced by the Holmes and Rahe (1977) who showed that the events causing a change of life can make a person vulnerable to mental illness. The Holmes and Rahe questionnaire is one of the measures of social adjustment that advisors often use it to check the status of depressed patients. In this test, the person can examine changes in their lives by assessing changing the number of each measure and can finally expect depression or its possibility in the next two years of his or her life. The QWL questionnaire (Walton 1973) consists of two sections: 1) personal characteristics including gender, educational level, marital status, age, and work experience; and 2) different components of the quality of life consisting of 21 items with a 4-point Likert scale including "very low, low, partially, and completely" scales. The reliability of the questionnaire was examined by calculating the Cronbach (α) coefficient that was estimated 0.92 for both questionnaires. Results were reported as mean \pm standard deviation (SD) for the quantitative variables and percentages for the categorical variables. Association between the quantitative variables was examined by the Pearson's correlation coefficient test. Lambda test was used to compare the mean values of QWL scales with other baseline nominal variables. P values of 0.05 or less were considered statistically significant. All the statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 19.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) and SAS version 9.1 for Windows (SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, USA).

RESULTS

Most of the participants were men (76.5%) and married (88.2%). about one-third of the cases had bachelor degree (58.8%) and higher than half of them had more than 10-year work experience (table 1). Also, 53% had an age ranged 30 to 40 years and only 17.5% were older than 40 years. There were significant associations between the QWL score and some baseline characteristics including educational level and years of work experience, analyzed by the Lambda test (table 2). However, QWL was not related to some other variables such as gender, age, and marital state. The mean value of QWL in the studied personnel was 2.8 ± 0.001 and the average of stress score was 167.75 ± 0.908 . As shown in table 1, an adverse correlation was revealed between the QWL score and stress score (Beta = -0.782, $p = 0.003$).

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to determine association of some personal aspects as well as stress with QWL in personnel

Table 1: Baseline information of the study population

Gender	
Female	14 (23.5)
Male	44 (76.5)
Educational level	
Primary	7 (11.7)
Diploma	19 (29.5)
College degree	32 (58.8)
Marital status	
Married	48 (88.2)
Single	10 (11.8)
Age (year)	
20 – 29 years	19(29.5)
30 – 39 years	29(53.0)
≥ 40 years	10 (17.5)
work experiences	
< 5 years	10 (14.7)
5 – 10 years	13 (23.5)
11 – 20 years	31 (53.0)
21 – 30 years	4 (8.8)

Table 2: Quality of life work in different baseline subgroups

Item	Mean/SD	Lambda	p-value
Gender			
Female	2.03/0.63		
Male	2.53/0.12	0.135	0.215
Educational level			
Primary	2.53/0.25		
Diploma	3.80/0.10	0.333	0.001*
College degree	3.54/0.55		
Marital status			
Married	1.80/0.12	0.001	0.999
Single	1.22/0.67		
Age (year)			
20 – 29 years	2.91/0.20		
30 – 39 years	1.96/0.02	0.178	0.131
≥ 40 years	2.01/0.01		
work experiences			
< 5 years	2.12/0.48		
5 – 10 years	1.62/0.25	0.217	0.041*
11 – 20 years	1.51/0.14		
21 – 30 years	2.48/1.98		

*p<0.05

of social security organization. According to our findings, no significant association was found between the QWL

and personnel gender that was consistent with the Sundberg (Saraji-NasIG & Dargahi H 2006) and Kintner

(Sundberg R 2009) observations. Besides, we showed that there was a direct relationship between education level and QWL value. The highest educational degree was related to the highest level of QWL. Similarly, Kintner (Sundberg R 2009) observed that the QWL in those with higher educational level was significantly higher than those who were illiterate. The similar finding was also revealed by Kalpaklioglu *et al.* (Kintner E 2008) Meanwhile, although we did not find association between advanced age and QWL level, Kalpaklioglu and his colleagues (Kintner E 2008) contrarily could demonstrate this relationship, however in their studies, the patients' population who were suffered from asthma were studied, not the personnel as the healthy subjects. We also could not find association between marital status and QWL, while Alvin *et al.* (Kalpaklioglu AF 2008) showed that the patients who live alone have a poor QWL status. The reason for the lack of consistent results might be due to this fact that the effects of marriage on QWL may be different from its effects in various disease conditions. We also find that more working experiences could be resulted in increased level of QWL that was completely consistent with the study by Lees and Kearns (Martel J.P. & Dupuis G 2006). In fact, QWL and job satisfaction can be enhanced in parallel with improvement of work experiences. Finally, according to our finding, an adverse association was observed between QWL and occupational stress (Khaghanizadeh *et al.*, 2008) similarly showed an adverse relationship between job-related stresses and QWL so that for every one point increase in stress score of individuals, QWL score could be reduced 0.3 points.

In conclusion, since, the factors of education level and work experience are directly related to the QWL level, managers should pay more attention to those with lower academic qualifications and also to personnel with low work experiences. One of the ways can be suggested to improve QWL in the personnel is providing the possibility of participation in job-related courses and continue education in order to further contribute to organizational decisions. The inverse relationship between QWL and the stress in the present study should be considered by managers. They should know that with improving QWL, the job-related stresses can be effectively reduced. Introducing some methods such as creating communication networks and providing necessary information for participation of personnel in business decisions can result in increasing their satisfaction and reducing work-related stresses.

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