

Quality Of Work Life: Relationships With Organizational Behaviors And Impact On Human Resources Management

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Abstract:

Background: *Quality of Work Life is an essential topic in the field of Work and Organizational Psychology. The literature on health and well-being at work highlights the consequences of low levels of health and well-being. This article presents data from several studies integrated into a Portuguese research project on Quality of Work Life. Relationships with other organizational behaviors are analyzed: affective organizational commitment, work satisfaction, job stress, turnover intention and human resources management practices. The role of the gender variable in Quality of Work Life is also analyzed.*

Materials and Methods: *Measures of Quality of Work Life. Work Satisfaction, Affective Organizational Commitment, Turnover Intention, Job Stress and Human Resources Management Practices were applied in 3 samples of employed adults. The samples are composed of 871 participants (Study 1), 259 participants (Study 2) and 310 participants (Study 3).*

Results: *The correlations between Quality of Work Life-Frequency and Work Satisfaction and Affective Organizational Commitment are positive and high. The correlations observed between Quality of Work Life-Frequency and Turnover Intention and Job Stress-Frequency are negative. There are also positive, significant and relatively high relationships between all Human Resources Management Practices and Quality of Work Life-Frequency. In most items, whether of Importance or Frequency of Quality of Work Life, there are no differences between sexes. The existing differences regarding the Importance of Quality of Work Life are all in favor of females. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that women attach greater importance to aspects of QWL related to work and family balance. Regarding the frequency of Quality of Work Life, the differences found are all in favor of males.*

Conclusion: *It is important to identify, in each specific organizational context, which trends are observed, both in Quality of Work Life dimensions and in particular events, to develop strategies that allow, when promoting Quality of Work Life, to also promote Work Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment Affective and reduce Turnover Intention and Job Stress. Finally, there is an imperative need to promote Quality of Work Life, especially at a time when competitive factors in markets may tend to put human factors in the background. It is up to psychology professionals to highlight Quality of Work Life as an essential condition for the success of people and, consequently, of organizations.*

Key Word: *Quality of Work Life; Work Satisfaction, Affective Organizational Commitment; Turnover Intention; Job Stress; Human Resources Management Practices*

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I. Introduction

Quality of Work Life (QWL) is an essential topic in the field of Psychology and in the field of work and organizations.

We fully agree with Conte's statement (2003, p. 34) when considering that "what we most desire in life is happiness, an ancient human quest. However, to be happy, you need to be healthy, satisfied with yourself and your work, and all of this includes quality of life." We also agree with the opinion of Vasconcelos who states "... if it is in organizations that we spend most of our lives, it would be natural for us to transform them into more pleasant and healthy places to carry out our work. Places where we could, in fact, spend a few hours living, creating and achieving fully – with quality of life, satisfaction and joy" (Vasconcelos, 2001, p. 34).

QWL is not a new term, although its origin is not consensual. For some authors, its origins are in the 50s of the 20th century, in which the School of Human Relations should be highlighted, and the studies of Elton Mayo at Western Electric and Eric Trist at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London; for others, it was only possible to effectively talk about QWL in the 1970s (Saklani, 2004).

Although the definitions of QWL are not consensual, there seems to be a certain consensus that QWL is a construct that deals with the individual's well-being in relation to their work, to the extent that their work experiences are rewarding and satisfactory. A set of fundamental aspects for an individual's QWL include the

tasks they perform, the physical and social environment, the career system and the relationship between work life and life in general. It also appears to be a concept that can be distinguished from that of *work* satisfaction (Roan & Diamond, 2003; Rose, Beh, Uli, & Idris, 2006).

The relationship between QWL and various types of organizational behaviors is very present in the research results. Examples include identification with the organization, *work* satisfaction, organizational commitment, effort made at work, performance at work and the intention to leave the job.

Also noteworthy is the literature on health and well-being at work, which highlights the consequences of low levels of health and well-being (Grote & Guest, 2017; Eurofound, 2020); European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2013; Warhurst & Knox, 2020). These consequences include absenteeism, low productivity and efficiency, reduced quality of products and services, high compensation for compensation, increased costs in healthcare expenses and direct medical expenses (Huang, Lawler, & Lei, 2007; Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel, & Lee, 2001). For Pereira and Bernhardt (2004), QWL is an essential condition for the success of an organization, because the motivation of workers is considered fundamental. Unmotivated workers produce less, make more mistakes and are more prone to workplace accidents, absenteeism and occupational illnesses. Naturally, it follows from this principle that the lower the QWL, the greater the risk the organization runs of failure.

Various conceptualizations of QWL have marked the evolution of the concept. Although it is a model that emerged in the 70s of the 20th century, the proposal by Walton (1975) can be highlighted among the set of models. This model integrates the following major dimensions: Fair and adequate compensation; Working conditions (safety and health); Opportunities to use and develop capabilities; Opportunities for growth, advancement and career development; Social integration in the company; Constitutionalism; Social Relevance; and Balance between work and total living space. For each of these dimensions, more specific indicators are also presented (Walton, 1975). More recently, topics such as the balance between family and work, between work and life in general, professional stress and emotions at work are noteworthy in the field of QWL research (Björk-Fant, Nordmyr, & Forsman, 2024; Saklani, 2004; Schouteten & Witte, 2005).

This article presents some data from a research project on QWL, in a Portuguese context. Global results are presented for three samples of working adults, describing the relationships obtained between QWL and the variables affective organizational commitment, *work* satisfaction, job stress, turnover intention and human resource management practices. The role of the gender variable in QWL is also analyzed.

II. Material And Methods

Measures of Quality of Work Life. Work Satisfaction, Affective Organizational Commitment, Turnover Intention, Job Stress and Human Resources Management Practices were applied in 3 samples of employed adults.

Samples:

Study 1

The sample consists of 871 employed adults (337 men, 534 women), aged between 19 and 66 years.

Study 2

The sample consists of 259 employed adults (95 men, 164 women), aged 20 to 63.

Study 3

The sample consists of 310 employed adults (122 men, 188 women), between 19 and 66 years old.

Instruments

Quality of Work Life

The Quality of Work Life Inventory (Rafael & Lima, 2008) is made up of 60 items that cover work-related events, organized into six dimensions: 1. Characteristics of work/employment, and training and development of personal and professional skills; 2. Career: Promotion, recognition and economic component; 3. Social relations and justice at work; 4. Work/Family Balance; 5. Work and Leisure; 6. Working Conditions. The instrument evaluates and distinguishes Importance and Frequency of occurrence of QWL. For each statement (item), participants are asked to indicate the degree of importance for their QWL (on a scale of six response alternatives from Not at All to Very Important), as well as the frequency with which they check these events in their workplace (considering a scale of six response alternatives from Not at All to Very Frequent). Thus, there are two scales: one relating to Importance and the other to Frequency. Subscales (Importance and Frequency) are considered for each of the dimensions mentioned. It is also understood that item analysis allows for a more detailed, enriching and useful analysis in individual and group analyses. In several investigations, very high precision coefficients (greater than .70) were observed, both for scales and subscales (e.g., Brandão, 2012; Rafael & Lima, 2008c).

Job stress

The Portuguese version of the Job Stress Inventory (Rafael, 2001, 2003) was used, which constitutes a generic measure of this construct. Consisting of 60 items, it differentiates Severity (perceived intensity) from the Frequency of occurrence of working conditions that can negatively affect the psychological well-being of workers who are exposed to them. The instrument consists of several scales and subscales. In this article, only results relating to the Job Stress Scale-Severity (provides an average measure of the stress felt in 30 work events potentially causing stress) and the Job Stress Scale-Frequency (which represents the average frequency of occurrence) are used. of 30 work events in the last six months). Several studies on Portuguese samples (Branco, 2010; Cardoso, 2016; Pinto, 2012; Silva, 2013; Simões, 2014) reveal very high precision coefficients (above .70), similar to those found in studies carried out in the States United (Spielberger & Vagg, 1999).

Work satisfaction

An assessment of work satisfaction indicators was carried out, through the inclusion of seven questions. Participants were asked to indicate, on a four-point scale (very satisfied, satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied and dissatisfied) the degree of satisfaction in the following situations: “your current job”; “the overall progress of your career to date”; “the future prospects of your career”; “relationships at work”; “the relationship between work and family life”; “the relationship between work and leisure activities; and “working conditions”. The indicator used in this article is the average of the questions (Rafael & Lima, 2008a).

Affective Organizational Commitment

Affective Organizational Commitment was assessed based on six items from the Affective Commitment subscale of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993).

Turnover Intention

Turnover Intention was measured using the indicators used by Huang, Lawler and Lei (2007).

Human Resource Management Practices

Human resource management practices were measured based on the Human Resource Management Practices Questionnaire, consisting of a total of 31 items, which evaluates the following human resource management practices: Job security, Performance evaluation, remuneration, Career opportunities, Training opportunities, Participation opportunities, Access to information (Esteves, 2008).

Procedure methodology:

After written informed consent was obtained, several questionnaires were used to collect the data.

III. Results

Study 1

In Table 1, the means, standard deviations and reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) are presented for each of the dimensions considered in the Quality of Work Life Inventory.

Table no 1: Means, standard deviations and Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the Quality of Work Life Inventory dimensions

| QWL dimensions | Importance | | | Frequency | | |
|---|------------|-----|----------|-----------|------|----------|
| | <i>M</i> | DP | α | <i>M</i> | DP | α |
| 1. Characteristics of work/employment, and training and development of personal and professional skills | 5.27 | .58 | .91 | 3.87 | .94 | .93 |
| 2. Career: Promotion, recognition and economic component | 5.27 | .64 | .90 | 3.42 | 1.07 | .92 |
| 3. Social relations and justice at work | 5.44 | .57 | .88 | 4.23 | .90 | .87 |
| 4. Work/Family Balance | 5.40 | .66 | .91 | 4.00 | 1.05 | .88 |
| 5. Work and Leisure | 5.34 | .73 | .88 | 3.72 | 1.23 | .91 |
| 6. Working Conditions | 5.34 | .64 | .92 | 3.83 | 1.05 | .89 |
| Total | 5.33 | .49 | .96 | 3.83 | .77 | .96 |

Table 2 presents the correlations between the total QWL results and the variables Affective Organizational Commitment, Turnover Intention, Work Satisfaction, Stress Severity and Stress Frequency.

Table no 2: Correlations between QWL (Importance and Frequency) and Affective Organizational Commitment (AOC) , Turnover Intention (TI), Work Satisfaction (WS), Job Stress Severity (JSS) and Job Stress Frequency (JSF)

| QWL | AOC | TI | WS | JSS | JSF |
|------------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|
| Importance | .08 | -.03 | -.02 | .21** | .12* |
| Frequency | .49** | -.37** | .63** | -.07 | -.23** |

The correlations between QWL-Importance and the other variables are, in general, quite low. What happens in relation to QWL-Frequency is quite different. Indeed, positive and high correlations are observed with Work Satisfaction (.63), Affective Organizational Commitment (.49) and negative correlations with Turnover Intention (-.37) and Job Stress-Frequency (-.23).

A more specific analysis (not indicated in the table) of the dimensions considered allows us to see that Work Satisfaction has significant relationships with all dimensions of QWL-Frequency. It should also be noted that the dimensions “Characteristics of work/employment, and training and development of personal and professional skills” and “Career: Promotion, recognition and economic component” present correlations, in absolute value, greater than 30 with the variables . Affective Commitment (positive correlations), Turnover Intention (negative correlations) and Professional Satisfaction (positive correlations).

Study 2

The positive, significant and relatively high relationships between all Human Resources Management Practices and QWL – Frequency stand out, with the highest being those relating to Training Opportunities (.58), Participation Opportunities (.57), Opportunities Career Development (.56) and Access to Information (.52). The relationships between Human Resources Management Practices and Satisfaction are also all positive and significant, highlighting up as the highest Participation Opportunities, Career Opportunities and Performance Assessment. On the contrary, there are no significant relationships between Human Resource Management Practices and QWL-Importance.

Study 3

There are significant differences between the sexes in 13 of the 60 items of the Importance of QWL, all of which are favorable to women. It is noteworthy that most of the differences are in items related to work/family balance (6 items). Differences are also found in items related to work/employment characteristics, and training and development of personal and professional skills (3 items), social relations and justice at work (1 item), Work and Leisure (1 item) and Working Conditions Work (1 item). There are significant differences between the sexes in 9 of the 60 QWL Frequency items, all in favor of males. These differences are seen in items that relate to aspects such as personal (2 items) and professional (6 items) development opportunities and working conditions (1 item).

IV. Conclusion

We argue, both in this work and in previous ones (Rafael & Lima, 2007, 2008b; 2008c), that QWL is a central theme in human resources management, and that the need to articulate the individual and the organization is indisputable. We also argue that interventions must be based on research data from the Portuguese reality, which are relatively scarce.

The significant relationships found between the Frequency of occurrence of QWL and other variables deserve particular attention. These relationships are indicators that the higher the Frequency of occurrence of QWL, the greater the Professional Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment, and the lower the Intention to Turnover. The importance of Human Resources Management Practices is also confirmed regarding their impact on positive employee behaviors, in particular Work Satisfaction and Quality of Work Life.

In most items, whether of Importance or Frequency of QWL, there are no differences between sexes. The existing differences regarding the Importance of QWL are all in favor of females. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that women attach greater importance to aspects of QWL related to work and family balance. Regarding the frequency of QWL, the differences found are all in favor of males. These results highlight the existence of inequality between the sexes in aspects such as pay, career progression, job stability and health and hygiene conditions.

Despite the need to carry out additional studies, it can be stated, on the one hand, that the results are in the same direction as research carried out in other countries and, on the other, they highlight important implications for the development of intervention strategies in human resources and career development and management practices to promote QWL in organizations.

It is important to identify, in each specific organizational context, which trends are observed, both in QWL dimensions and in particular events (items), to develop strategies that allow, when promoting QWL, to also promote Work Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment Affective and reduce Turnover Intention and Job Stress.

In the field of research, additional studies are needed on the QWL assessment instrument (notably psychometric characteristics), on the specific QWL dimensions (notably confirmation of the dimensions cited in this study for the Importance of QWL but also a similar analysis at the level of Frequency of occurrence) and on differential and/or demographic variables such as, among others, age, professional activity, type of contract, number of years of professional experience, or even the type of organization.

Finally, knowing the implications portrayed in the QWL literature at individual and organizational levels, it is concluded that there is an imperative need to promote QWL, especially at a time when competitive factors in markets may tend to put human factors in the background. It is up to psychology professionals to highlight QWL as an essential condition for the success of people and, consequently, of organizations.

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