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Quality of Work Life as an Approach to Enhancing Employees' Mental Health A Diagnostic Theoretical Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to shed light on the importance of work-life quality in enhancing the mental health of employees within institutions. The quality of work life encompasses various dimensions, including physical and moral working conditions, wages and rewards, job security and stability, social support, professional development opportunities, participation in decision-making processes, and human relations within the work environment. These dimensions can contribute to employees' feelings of satisfaction, security and belonging to the institution, thereby promoting mental health.

Therefore, the importance of quality of work life as an organisational approach emerges as a means of achieving mental health. Paying attention to quality of work life is a strategic approach that not only improves institutional performance, but also protects human resources and enhances their mental health. This achieves a balance between the institution's objectives and its employees' needs.

Keywords: Quality of Work Life, Mental Health.

INTRODUCTION:

The topics of quality of working life and mental health have received considerable attention from researchers and specialists due to their important role in the lives of working individuals. Human resources are widely recognised as one of the most important factors in the effectiveness and continuity of institutions. Consequently, concern for employees has extended beyond their ability to produce and generate profits to encompass their mental health and satisfaction within the work environment. Employees are essential to achieving organisational objectives, and their contribution to an institution's success is influenced by the availability of a healthy working environment and quality of working life.

In this context, the concept of quality of work life has emerged as an important concept in work and organisational psychology and human resource management, given its association with the conditions in which employees perform their duties. This concept is important not only for improving working conditions, but also for addressing the quality of employees' professional lives and its implications for their mental health.

Accordingly, quality of work life emerges as an important organisational approach to enhancing employees' mental health by improving working conditions, providing social and professional support, promoting organisational justice and developing management methods that consider human resource needs. All of these

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factors can positively impact employees' mental health. Furthermore, establishing a link between quality of work life and mental health provides a deeper understanding of the relationship between organisational environment characteristics and employees' psychological states. It also helps institutions adopt practices that demonstrate greater concern for individuals by considering them the central focus of organisational processes.

- **Quality of Work Life:**

1. THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE:

The term 'quality of work life' has been defined in various ways, depending on the viewpoint. It has been defined as follows:

Anderson (1988), for example, defined it as increasing employees' participation in decision-making and recognising their efforts and capabilities, as well as continuously improving preventive security and occupational health. The author also adds certain needs that he considers essential for improving organisational performance. He believes that participation in decision-making, health and security are organisational priorities that must be emphasised to meet employees' ambitions and aspirations. Al-Tabbal Abdullah emphasises the importance of providing the necessary physical and moral conditions to increase loyalty and commitment to the organisation, thereby improving its performance (Adel Boumjan, Aqti Jawhara, Khaled El-Wafi, 2018, p. 124).

Sherman, Bohlander and Snell define it as the changes undertaken by the organisation to improve the working lives of its employees. These changes focus on finding better ways to improve the work environment, thereby reducing anxiety and stress levels among individuals. They argue that it encompasses all changes implemented by the organisation with the aim of improving working conditions, thereby creating a sense of comfort and reassurance among employees.

Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelly (1997) also define it as a management philosophy that emphasises employees' dignity, introducing changes to organisational culture while improving employees' physical and mental well-being by creating opportunities for growth and development (Khan, 2020, p. 424).

2. OBJECTIVES AND IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE:

The importance of quality of work life stems from considering it to be part of an organisation's social responsibility towards its employees. The importance of quality of work life can be summarised as follows:

- It influences the organisational and physical health of employees.
- It is one of the important variables that either hinder or support performance efficiency.
- It is one of the important factors affecting individuals' motivation and loyalty.
- It reflects the organisation's leadership through employees' feelings (Adel Mohamed, 2012, p. 14).

Quality of work life is also characterised by its significant impact on employees' performance. Concern for quality of work life stems from the assumption that employees within an institution require a motivating work environment. The main objective is therefore to develop a satisfied and motivated workforce that is highly loyal to its work.

Al-Maghribi (2007) adds that organisations seek to achieve several advantages by implementing quality-of-work-life programmes. The most important of these are:

- Providing a more loyal and motivated workforce.
- Organising organisational effectiveness from the perspective of the organisation's owners.
- Achieving employees' personal objectives and aligning them with the institution's objectives. (Boumjan et al., 2018, p. 125).

3. DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE:

Due to the multiplicity of the concept's dimensions and their variation according to different institutions and work groups, there is no clear determination of the dimensions of quality of work life. Each researcher or scholar approaches the concept from a particular perspective, using this to measure the factors and dimensions that ensure quality of work life for employees. In this regard, Skinner and Lancevich consider the following to be factors of quality of work life:

- A fair compensation system.

- A safe and healthy work environment.
- Opportunities for professional growth.
- Opportunities for promotion and job security;
- Flexibility of job tasks and work schedules.
- Attention to job design and workflow planning.
- Cooperation between labour unions and management.
- Effective work teams.

Jad Al-Rab believes that the quality of working life depends on the following dimensions and elements:

- Providing a healthy and safe work environment that is free from stress, anxiety and disease.
- Effective participation in its broad sense (decision-making, self-management, returns and ownership).
- Participation of labour unions in managing the organisation and improving employees' working conditions.
- Social justice and the establishment and preservation of employees' dignity and privacy.
- Providing the requirements for job stability and security.
- Redesigning and enriching jobs to match employees' aspirations and skills.
- Fairness in wages, rewards and material and moral incentives. (Boudhiaf, Z. & Ben Hamza, H., 2023, pp. 252–253).

Meanwhile, Walton identified the following eight dimensions:

- Fair and adequate rewards and compensation.
- Safe and healthy working conditions
- Human relations and social integration within the work organisation.
- Opportunities for developing and enhancing human capabilities.
- Balance between work and personal life.
- Opportunities for promotion and career advancement.
- Opportunities for growth and job security.

Constitutional rights within the work organisation and the role of the trade union. (Boukhdouni, 2024, p. 173).

- **Mental Health: The Concept**

1. THE CONCEPT OF MENTAL HEALTH

1.2 The concept of mental health in Freud's psychoanalysis:

Freud, the founder of the psychoanalytic school, believed that the fundamental elements constituting the theoretical structure of psychoanalysis were the theories of resistance, repression and the unconscious. This theory is based on several principles that serve as assumptions when explaining behaviour. These include psychological determinism, sexual energy, constancy and equilibrium, and the pleasure principle. Balance is achieved between the id, the ego, and the superego, but this balance is disturbed when the ego is unable to maintain equilibrium between the instinctual id and the idealistic superego.

According to Freud, the return of repressed experiences has a significant impact on the development of neurotic disorders. He believed that a person's mental health is determined by their ability to fulfil the fundamental desires of the id through socially acceptable means.

He answered the question concerning the criterion of mental health by stating that it is the ability to love and work. A psychologically healthy person is one whose ego has full organisational and achievement capacity, has access to all parts of the id and can influence it. There is no natural hostility between the ego and the id — they belong to each other and, in a healthy state, cannot be separated from each other in practice.

According to this definition, the ego constitutes the conscious and rational parts of the personality, while the id contains unconscious drives and instincts. In a state of mental health, these are appropriately integrated, whereas in the case of neurosis (a psychological disorder), they become rebellious and disorganised.

This model also includes the superego, which can essentially be likened to the conscience. Here, Freud assumes that in a state of mental health, an individual's higher moral values are humane and pleasurable. In the case of a psychological disorder, however, these values become aggravated by rigid and burdensome moral

perceptions. (Abu Asaad, 2015, p. 36).

1.3 The concept of mental health in Adler's individual psychology:

Adler's individual psychology approaches the concept of mental health differently to traditional psychoanalysis. Adler considered neurosis to be an incorrect lifestyle and a form of social deviation.

Based on his conclusion that society or the surrounding environment constitutes a fundamental aspect of human beings that cannot be eliminated or invalidated, Adler developed the concept of social interest as a criterion for mental health.

1.4 The concept of mental health in Skinner's behavioural theory:

This theory considers all human behaviour to be learned. Since behaviour is learned, it can therefore be changed and modified. Accordingly, an individual enjoys mental health when they acquire sound psychological and social habits from their environment. Thus, mental health is acquired. Conversely, mental health is compromised when an individual learns bad habits and incorrect ways of thinking that cause unhappiness, sadness and pain.

1.5 The concept of mental health in the humanistic theories of Maslow and Rogers:

According to Maslow and Rogers, mental health consists of the individual's full realisation of their humanity, whether through satisfying their needs (Maslow) or maintaining the self (Rogers). Differences in levels of mental health among individuals are attributable to the different levels they attain in realising their humanity.

Maslow believes that individuals enjoy mental health when they are able to satisfy their various needs and reach self-actualisation. Accordingly, he argues that individuals have certain needs and experience distress and discomfort when these needs are not satisfied, resulting in a low level of mental health. (Ahmed Abdel Latif, 2015, pp. 37–38).

2. OTHER DEFINITIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH:

Mental health can be defined as a relatively permanent state in which an individual is well-adjusted psychologically, emotionally and socially, both with themselves and with their environment. They feel happy with themselves and others, are able to achieve self-actualisation, and can make the fullest possible use of their abilities and potential. They are also capable of facing the demands of life. Furthermore, they have an integrated and balanced personality, normal behaviour, and good moral character, enabling them to live in a state of well-being and peace (Hamed, 2005, p. 9).

3. IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH:

The importance of mental health lies in the fact that it benefits both individuals and society.

3.1 The importance of mental health for the individual:

Mental health is extremely important for individuals for several reasons, which can be summarised as follows:

- Self-understanding: A person with good mental health is well-adjusted, understands themselves and is aware of their needs and goals.

- Adjustment: This refers to personal adjustment through self-satisfaction, as well as understanding oneself and others in the surrounding environment.

Mental health enables individuals to live free from tension, disturbance and continuous conflict, allowing them to feel happy with themselves.

Mental health enables individuals to cope with adversity and crises, giving them an integrated personality that functions in a balanced and harmonious way.

Mental health enables individuals to control their emotions and feelings, ensuring they behave appropriately.

The ultimate goal of mental health is to develop as many psychologically healthy individuals as possible. (Ahmed Abdel Latif, 2015, p. 45).

3.2 The importance of mental health for society:

Mental health is important for society and its institutions because it involves studying and treating social issues that impact an individual's personality development. The following points highlight some important aspects of mental health for society:

- Sound mental health on the part of parents leads to family cohesion, creating a suitable atmosphere for the development of a well-integrated child's personality, and making individuals more capable of social adjustment.

- Mental health is important for schools, as good relationships between the administration and teachers, and among teachers themselves, lead to mutual understanding, which contributes to students' healthy growth and development. Likewise, a good relationship between the school and the home supports students' psychological development.

- Mental health is important for society because it addresses social issues that impact an individual's personality development and the broader societal context.

- Mental health is of the utmost importance to society because a fragmented society with a lack of integration among its institutions is a sick society. Therefore, we can conclude from the foregoing that mental health is important for both individuals and society, and that it is capable of achieving integration, development and happiness. (Ahmed Abdel Latif, 2015, p. 46).

4. MANIFESTATIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH:

Mental health can be identified through several manifestations, including:

- Positivity.
- Optimism.
- An individual's realistic acceptance of their limitations.
- Setting realistic goals.
- The ability to establish successful social relationships.
- An individual's respect for society's culture while maintaining a certain degree of independence from it.
- The ability to exercise self-control.
- A high level of psychological tolerance.
- An individual's success and satisfaction in their work.

5. FIELDS OF MENTAL HEALTH:

Mental health encompasses several fields through which emotional balance can be achieved. These include:

5.1 The Structural Field:

This theoretical field is concerned with studying personality structure and its development, the factors that contribute to growth and the driving forces behind human behaviour at different stages of life. It also covers the emergence of psychological conflict and defence mechanisms. The aim is to understand the foundations upon which healthy behaviour is built.

5.2 The Preventive Field:

This applied field focuses on protecting individuals from problems that prevent them from achieving mental health by taking appropriate measures and creating the necessary conditions to ensure such protection.

5.3 The diagnostic field:

This field involves studying the characteristics of psychological conditions and their components through detailed clinical examination. The aim is to identify the habits and behavioural characteristics that distinguish each condition.

5.4 The therapeutic field:

This field involves studying psychotherapy methods at various levels and implementing therapeutic and counselling procedures. (Hassan Noour El-Dine Abdelhamid, 2022, pp. 27–28).

6. HEALTH AND QUALITY OF WORK LIFE:

Physicians have agreed upon and defined the concept of physical health as the absence of disease symptoms and the extent to which the various body systems perform their functions. This is because they can measure the activity of these systems with an appropriate degree of accuracy. However, the situation differs when attempting to define the concept of mental health (Adeeb, 2002, p. 25). The latter is defined as a positive state within an individual, reflected in the proper, harmonious and integrative performance of their psychological functions

within the unity of their personality (Melhem, 2001, p. 26).

The concept of quality of life changes over time according to an individual's psychological and age-related conditions. Happiness has different meanings for different people in different situations: a sick person perceives happiness as health, while a poor person finds happiness in money. Thus, concepts change as the circumstances surrounding individuals change (Yahya Al-Najjar, p. 213). Some argue that happiness represents a balance between instinctual needs and what life can provide (François Cloutier, 1992, p. 15).

Therefore, quality of life is manifested through an individual's ability to satisfy their psychological health needs, such as physiological needs, positive social relationships, family adjustment, satisfaction with working life, economic stability and the ability to withstand social and economic pressures. This confirms that an individual's mental health is a significant indicator of quality of life.

Quality of life encompasses enjoying the material conditions of the external environment, experiencing well-being, having met needs and being satisfied with life. It also involves an individual's awareness of the forces and dimensions of their life, their sense of life's meaning, positive physical health and happiness. Ultimately, it enables them to live a life characterised by harmony between human nature and the prevailing values in their society (Yahya Al-Najjar, 2015, p. 213).

Similarly, organisational health is akin to individual health. Just as we cannot describe an individual experiencing pain as healthy, we cannot consider a dysfunctional organisation to be healthy. Although, as with individuals, the concept of organisational health differs from one organisation to another, it is a comprehensive concept encompassing an organisation's ability to perform effectively, adapt appropriately, change suitably and grow through its own efforts. Effective performance is one component of organisational health and includes the following ten dimensions:

- Focus on organisational goals: In terms of their clarity, acceptance, and the necessary support and endorsement to achieve them.
- Efficiency of the communication system: Open communication in both horizontal and vertical channels.
- Equality in the distribution of power between the team leader or group head and the other members.
- Optimal utilisation of resources: This means allocating personnel and organising their efforts in a way that does not expose them to work pressures or frustration.
- Cohesion: This refers to the cohesion of the individual, the group and the organisation, without affecting the individual's identity. Consequently, the individual will be attracted to the group, wish to belong to it and remain a member, be influenced by it and seek to exert a positive influence on it.
- Morale: This refers to employees' feelings of psychological comfort, job satisfaction, and individual, collective and organisational happiness.
- Creativity: The capacity for self-innovation, diversification and risk-taking, as well as encouraging others to do the same.
- Autonomy: The ability of individuals, groups and organisations to manage all matters related to their work and make decisions in the best possible manner, as they deem appropriate.
- Adaptation and adjustment: The ability to withstand the pressure resulting from the transitional phase while maintaining the existing situation and adapting to environmental factors.
- Problem-solving ability: The ability to address problems at their root with the least possible cost and effort, developed through experience over time (Musa'id, 2013, pp. 361–362).
- Feeling of injustice: According to the principles of scientific management, organisations should be governed by principles of justice in their practices. This begins with employee selection methods based on competence and merit, and continues with the application of these standards in promotion processes, performance evaluations, and the provision of incentives, wages, and other benefits to employees (Al-Qaryouti, 2008, p. 411).

Researchers in occupational medicine, work psychology and organisational sociology have emphasised the impact of work-related stress and poor-quality professional environments on individuals' mental health. In this context, Karasek and Theorell (1990) hypothesise that up to one-third of mental health issues may stem from the quality of the work environment. Dejours (1999), for his part, identifies three types of psychological response, of

varying degrees of severity, that individuals may exhibit in reaction to stressful working conditions:

- Stress and maladjustment: Manifested through psychological and physical disorders.
- Unexpressed psychological suffering: This may manifest as cognitive dysfunction and distortion, such as delusional states (états délirants).
- Acute and violent expressions: These result from a profound sense of helplessness and frustration, and may manifest as certain suicidal behaviours or suicide attempts.

Dejours further explains that these psychological responses emerge in relation to employees' sense of job security and the organisational institution's ability to invest in and effectively manage its human resources.

Similarly, a review of 63 studies conducted between 1979 and 1997 clearly demonstrated the impact of risk factors associated with poor working conditions, such as occupational stress, on mental health. This impact manifests as tension, psychological anxiety, depression and acute emotional disorders under the influence of time pressure, increasing workloads and the demands of personal and social life.

The impact of the quality of working life on mental health is determined by personal variables and characteristics that constitute an initial psychological predisposition to these responses. These include personality hardiness, endurance and psychological flexibility. These characteristics have been the focus of researchers' attention in the field of stress management in general, and occupational stress management in particular (Al-Zarrouq, 2013, p. 80).

In the workplace, promoting mental health is a fundamental starting point for ensuring employees' psychological stability. A higher level of mental health contributes to better occupational adjustment. This article will explain how mental health can be promoted through quality of work life and areas of intervention in the workplace.

Promoting mental health in the workplace encompasses several areas, including identifying shared goals and the positive aspects of work; creating a balance between work requirements and professional skills; providing social skills training; developing the psychological and social climate in the workplace; enhancing work capacity; using early rehabilitation strategies; assessing workload; and enhancing control over work, decision-making and social support. This can be achieved by adopting several strategies, including the following:

A. Work organisation: Addressing the increasing intensity of work and rising time pressure should not involve working overtime, as this may expose employees to psychological problems with negative consequences. Contrary to popular belief, studies have confirmed that reducing working hours and eliminating overtime does not automatically lead to lower productivity. Several work methods can be adopted to reduce pressure, such as job rotation, job enlargement, flexible working hours and task restructuring. These measures can promote employees' mental health.

B. Involving Employees in Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Processes: Employees should be involved in decision-making processes, whether through questionnaires, forums, or workshops, in addition to involving them in problem-solving, in order to maintain a psychologically healthy workforce.

C. Achieving a balance between effort and rewards: There is a strong relationship between effort and rewards. An imbalance negatively affects employees' mental health. For example, paying an employee a fair wage promotes their mental health, whereas an imbalance causes frustration and prompts them to look for a job that meets their basic needs and provides equivalent compensation for their efforts.

D. Improving Communication and the Exchange of Opinions: Trust and cooperation must be established within the institution as these play an important preventive role in maintaining employees' mental health. Methods for achieving this include organising training courses in verbal and non-verbal communication, both internal and external, and training courses in techniques for managing employees and their behaviour. Managers should also be trained in supportive leadership styles.

E. Encouraging and enhancing social support: Organisational conditions can be designed to encourage and strengthen a culture of social support within the institution by ensuring transparent dialogue and open cooperation. One example is allocating extra time to assist colleagues. Management can explicitly encourage employees to support one another by participating in each other's activities, as well as by using social support as a criterion in performance evaluations.

F. Further training and qualification: Continuing education and training aim to develop employees by providing opportunities for personal growth, thereby promoting healthy personal development (Bahri Saber and Kharmouch Mouna, 2022, pp. 215–217).

Accordingly, helping employees to achieve a good work-life balance through various means, such as organising work, involving employees in decision-making and problem-solving, reducing psychological conflicts resulting from the overlap of professional and personal responsibilities, building an effective communication network, training and qualifying employees to keep pace with various developments, adopting a policy of justice and equality in wages, and providing social support from colleagues and supervisors, helps to reduce occupational stress and enhances employees' sense of belonging to the institution. Furthermore, a clear understanding of duties and responsibilities provides employees with a sense of psychological comfort and role clarity. All these factors contribute to promoting employees' mental health.

Working conditions, the nature of professional relationships and job satisfaction also affect employees' psychological state. Given that individuals spend a significant part of their lives at work, their psychological state is influenced by the nature of their experiences.

Conversely, a poor quality of work life resulting from increased workloads, a lack of justice or greater exposure to psychological stress, burnout and anxiety may directly affect employees' mental health.

CONCLUSION:

The quality of working life can be viewed as an organisational approach to promoting employees' mental health. It enables institutions to move beyond focusing solely on material working conditions and consider the psychological well-being of their employees. The more an institution works to improve quality of work life by enhancing the aforementioned dimensions — providing a safe work environment, promoting organisational justice, improving professional relationships, recognising employees' efforts and providing opportunities for participation and development — the more it contributes to promoting employees' mental health. Mental health is not just an individual responsibility; it is also influenced by organisational culture, management methods and human resource policies.

Consequently, institutions need to periodically assess the quality of work life, identify organisational factors that may negatively affect mental health and develop programmes and practices that support it.

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