

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Quality of Work Life (QWL) represents a concern for the human dimensions of work and concern for improving it has been increasing since 1960s. Originally quality of work life activity occurred during the period 1969 to 1974, when a broad group of researchers, scholars, union leaders and government personnel became interested in how to influence the quality of an individual's on-the-job experiences (Nadler and Lawler, 1983: p. 21).

Quality of work life (QWL) is basically the quality of life that an employee experiences at his work place. Unless good quality of work life is provided to an employee, he can not be motivated towards work. Quality of work life covers all aspects of employees' work life—economic, social, psychological and organizational.

The issue of improving the quality of work life for those already employed in organization cannot be ignored. QWL involves industrial democracy for the employees, labour involvement in work-related decision making, adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, a proper balance between work and total life space and social relevance of work life. Recently behavioural scientist, managers, administrators and experts are expressing serious concerns for QWL and its improvement. The strains of fast changing technology on individual and society, and a realization that providing for people's control over job is a part of social responsibility of government and management have made concern for improving QWL a reality now.

QWL information can help understand the nature of different problems of employees in their work place and this in turn may be helpful in making proper policies for handling these problems effectively. Ultimately, QWL is a concern not only to improve life at work, but also outside work. QWL approach consists of identifying those aspects of work that are seen as desirable by organizational members, that is those aspects that enhance the quality of life at work, and incorporating that information into initial design consideration (Levine, Taylor and Davis, 1984: p. 82).

1.1 Areas of Quality of Work Life

The term 'Quality of Work Life' started appearing in research journals in 1970s. Jain (1991) pointed out that Quality of Work Life (QWL) is not single, or a specific notion. It consists of a whole parcel of terms and notions, all of which really belong under the 'Quality of Work Life' umbrella :

- *Industrial effectiveness*
- *Human resource development*
- *Organizational effectiveness*
- *Work restructure*
- *Job enrichment*
- *Socio-technical systems*
- *Working humanization*
- *Group work concept*
- *Labour management co-operation*
- *Working together, workers' involvement, workers' participation*
- *Cooperative work structures*

According to Singh (1982) works in quality of work life area have different connotations like new forms of work organization, industrial democracy, job redesign etc. He referred to the ILO's Directory of Institutions (1981) engaged in improving quality of work life (QWL) which considered the following areas as concerns of QWL :

- *Hours of work and arrangement of working time*
- *Work organization and job content*
- *Impact of new technologies on working conditions*

- *Working conditions of women, young workers, older workers and other special categories*
- *Work related welfare services and facilities*
- *Shop floor participation in the improvement of working conditions*

According to Suri, Singh and Akhtar (1991) areas of Quality of Work Life include:

- *Job and work place redesign*
- *Employees and union attitudes*
- *Working conditions*
- *Human resource development strategies*
- *Participative and consultative mechanisms*
- *Small groups activities and quality circles*
- *Sharing gains of productivity and employment generation*

Davis and Newstrom (1993) perceived a wide range of QWL activities as open communications, equitable reward system, a concern for employee job security and satisfying careers and participation in decision making. According to them emphasis should be placed on employees' skill development, the reduction of occupational stress and the development of more cooperative labour management relations.

Taylor (in Cooper and Mumford, 1979) suggested that the concept of Quality of Work Life (QWL) includes : emphasis on extrinsic and intrinsic job factors and other aspects like individual power; employee participation in the management process; fairness and equity; social support; use of one's present skills; self development; a meaningful future at work; social relevance of the work or product; and effect on extra work activities.

Almost everything that affects the employees at work both physically and psychologically and enrich the employees ability, skill performance, discipline are fall in the area of quality of work life (Singh, 1991: p.62).

1.2 Benefits of QWL

In general, the benefits of QWL include :

1. Healthier, satisfied and productive employee, and
2. Efficient, adaptive and profitable organization.

Specifically, the benefits are: -

1. More positive feelings towards one's self (greater self-esteem);
2. More positive feelings towards one's job (improved job satisfaction and involvement);
3. More positive feelings towards the organization (stronger commitment to organization's goals);
4. Improved physical and psychological health;
5. Greater growth and development of the individual as a person and as a productive member of the organization;
6. Decreased absenteeism, turnover, and fewer accidents; and
7. Higher quality and quantity of output of goods and services. (Dewivedi, 1995).

QWL provides a wide range benefits and social security, which makes improvement in productivity reduction in absenteeism, turnover, sick leave, alienation etc. QWL benefits also include financial services, consumer services,

career counseling, employee information reports, retirement benefits, recreational services and health safety measures.

1.3 Difficulties of QWL

QWL programmes in their collaborative forms (involving joint union-management activities) are fraught with difficulties. At least potentially, to the union and management open themselves to substantial risk. The union may perceive joint activities (undertaken at the initiative of the management) as a means by which it intends to 'do them in': likewise, the management may perceive joint activities, (initiated at the instance of the union) as an intention of diluting its ability to manage, and means by which the union will acquire more power. Particularly, the middle management may find it hard to believe the benefits of QWL, and may perceive that the management is becoming soft and giving in the union dominance (Dwivedi, 1995 : p. 556).

Though the positive effect of quality of work life is already established, all parties of the organization still resist to any schemes or procedure to improve QWL. The management may feel that the QWL at present level is satisfactory enough and no steps need be taken to improve it. They fail to measure the impact of improved QWL on the psyche of the employee, though all employees basically aspire for satisfaction. Employees on the other hand resist to changes with a pre-conceived notion that any scheme the management takes up would be to increase production without extra cost. A major barrier to improve the QWL is lack of financial resources. Employers with their limited financial resources think twice before providing better working conditions, offering better wage and implementing other programmes of QWL.

However, the situation is slowly changing for good. All parties of organization, i.e., employer, employees and trade unions are realizing the importance of QWL. Employees also are taking up awareness programmes to educate employees in this regard. Thorsrud (1982, p. 9) a researcher viewed “Even within the same country, there may be important cultural differences with regard to the relative importance of motivating factors, and therefore, there is a need to find local solutions to QWL problems, rather than applying uniform principles which cannot be adopted to local requirements.”

Lahre (1982) indicated certain conditions which help to overcome the QWL difficulties :

1. Acknowledgement by both parties of ‘mutuality of concerns’ and specific identification of these concerns;
2. An understanding that joint activities will, in fact, be joint and supportive of continuing integrity of both parties;
3. Acceptance of QWL concepts as the norm by the management, by union leadership and by middle management and supervision;
4. An administrative structure to provide guidance for QWL project activities;
5. An established character for QWL committees and project activities, specifying ground rules, responsibilities, authorities, etc.;
6. A clear-cut understanding that joint ownership of the entire QWL is a reality and open acknowledgement of what each party express to receive as benefits; and
7. A mechanism for involvement, handling substantive issues, worthwhile participation in personal terms and influencing affairs of the organization and a provision for knowledge and skills to deal with such problems effectively [cited in Venkatachalam and Velayudhan, 1997 “Quality of Work Life : A Review of Literature”, South Asian Journal of Management, January – March, 4(1), 45 – 57].

1.4 Statement of the Problem

The quest for improving productivity through human resources has its beginning in the early 1900s. Since then continuous research and experiments have been undertaken to understand human beings at work and the ways to improve their job satisfaction, balanced with the organizational goal so as to combine better productivity with job and employee satisfaction.

We are living in an age of change and in this context business and industrial units, government installations, financial institutions, voluntary agencies, universities and health organizations are reviewing their functions. An organization fulfils itself through work, which gets accomplished through persons in their mental and manual engagement. Work is the core of life, it means autonomy, it pays off in success, and establishes self-respect or self worth (Rosow, 1974). The quality of organization depends on the quality of work, which is further controlled by employees. Hence their satisfaction is a very important matter for an organization's growth and development. Dissatisfaction with working life is a considerable factor that affects almost all employees, regardless of position or status. The present study undertakes detail investigation on the different approaches of quality of work life of sugar mills employees in Bangladesh. People are the common element in every organization, because without the support of people, machine remains idle, raw materials lie staked and money tied up. Sugar industries of Bangladesh are suffering from many problems. Poor quality of work life may be a major cause for inefficient functioning of the sugar industry in Bangladesh, which needs proper emphasis. Therefore, it is very important to investigate the views of employees on QWL and the present state of quality of work life in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh with an increasing large population and per capita income of \$350 is in the grip of poverty (World Development Report 1999/2000). After independence Bangladesh wanted to establish a socialistic pattern of economic system and in pursuance of that policy all industrial units were nationalized. As a result in 1972 all 254 large industrial units in jute, textile, sugar, iron and steel, engineering and shipbuilding, fertilizer, pharmaceutical and chemical, oil, gas and mineral, paper and paper products were nationalized (Government of Bangladesh, 1973). The most significant policy reform took place in the field of industry by the New Industrial Policy (NIP) which paved the way of large-scale denationalization of Government undertaking industrial units. The industrial policy declared in 1991 assured that disinvestment and capital withdrawal from industries under the corporations except some reserve sector industries would continue (Government of Bangladesh, 1991).

After the emergence of Bangladesh all sugar mills have been nationalized. Bangladesh with a vast population of 130.2 million has setup a large number of large scale industries based on both indigenous and imported raw materials. Sugar industry is an important sector in Bangladesh and it plays an important role in manufacturing sugar providing job opportunity to a lot of people. Sugar industry also manufactures molasses, pressmud, bagasse, and furnace ash as by-product. Specially the north-western side of Bangladesh is suitable for growing cane sugar. So most of the sugar mills are located here. Unfortunately, this industry in Bangladesh suffers huge loss every year.

Physical and financial performance of Bangladesh sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC) are presented in the following table:

Table 1: Physical and Financial Performance of Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC)

Particulars	1999/2000 (Revised)	1998/99	1997/98	1996/97	1995/96	1994/95	1993/94	1992/93	1991/92
1. Production									
(a) Sugar (lakh MT)	1.28	1.54	1.66	1.35	1.84	2.07	2.22	1.87	1.96
(b) Spirit (lakh litre)	28.26	28.49	28.01	27.11	21.97	36.49	31.99	20.61	2.91
2. Sales Revenue (Million Tk.)	3271.10	3740.00	2419.10	3560.70	7304.60	4840.60	5133.30	5411.80	5512.80
3. Cost of Sales (Million Tk.)	4097.60	4762.80	4443.40	4105.30	7469.60	4576.60	5107.70	5955.10	5781.60
4. Operating Profit/ loss (Million Tk.)	-826.50	-1022.70	-224.40	-544.60	-165.00	263.90	25.50	-543.40	-268.80
5. Net Profit/loss (Million Tk.)	485.60	112.90	-392.30	-652.90	-377.60	25.30	-196.00	-861.60	-722.00

Source :
i) Bangladesh Economic Review 2000.
ii) Bangladesh Economic Review 1999.
iii) Bangladesh Economic Review 1998.
iv) Bangladesh Economic Review 1997.

1.5 Significance of the Present Study

Sugar industry is one of the oldest industries in Bangladesh. Unfortunately the sugar industries suffer loss every year and are highly subsidized. The major causes of losses are increasing price of sugar cane, increasing salary and wage, increasing burden of interest, increase in other overhead cost, and the lower rate of sugar recovery.

Sugar industry is a subsystem of the society, the performance of this subsystem will certainly affect the social system. If sugar industry performs in the effective and efficient manner, it will certainly add to the development of our society as well as nation. In addition to the other factors responsible for inefficient functioning of the sugar industry, poor quality of work life may be a factor, which needs proper emphasis. The problem of employees' adjustment to their work situation is reflected through their job satisfaction and perception of QWL. The knowledge of quality of work life is vital towards understanding their problems with their work place and also towards adopting suitable policies for making them more happy with their work situation.

No substantial work has so far been carried out on QWL of sugar industries in the context of Bangladesh. This study attempts to analyze and compare the quality of work life across five leading sugar mills in Bangladesh and it is expected that the results of this study may be a major contribution to the existing literature. In addition the researchers and academicians will also get relevant information that will be helpful for their research and teaching in the respective fields. It will also be useful guide to formulate pragmatic industrial policy at the national level.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to assess the views of employees on QWL, to identify hierarchical effect in perceiving QWL, to find the effect of QWL on Group Cohesiveness. However, the present study will attempt to achieve the following specific objectives :

1. To illustrate social profile of sugar employees and to measure their level of job commitment, job satisfaction and trade union involvement.
2. To make a comparative learning of existing and expected QWL of different sugar mills.
3. To investigate the reaction of employees about the existing and expected QWL in the sugar industry.
4. To see the impact of designation and the perception on QWL.
5. To see the impact of age and experience on QWL.
6. To determine the priorities assigned by the employees to various determinants of QWL.
7. To analyze the problem areas of QWL in the concerned sugar mills vis-à-vis industry.
8. To suggest some measures to be taken in improving QWL in the sampled industris.
9. To make some recommendations for policy making in the light of findings of the present study.

1.7 Hypotheses of the Present Study

In view of the objectives of the study and in the light of the available literature in this area the following hypotheses were formulated to evaluate the quality of work life in sugar industry in Bangladesh:

***Hypothesis – 1** There is a significant gap between the existing and expected quality of work life among the sugar mill employees.*

***Hypothesis – 2** The designation, experience and age of the employees do not alter their rating of the existing and expected quality of work life in sugar industry.*

Rationale for these Hypotheses :

The traditional ways of organizing work in industrialized society are in conflict with basic human needs related to creativity, influence and growth (Gardell, 1973). Pierce and Denham's (1976) findings suggested a significant link between objective condition of life with sense of happiness or unhappiness at the work place, and link between some objective condition and general sense of life satisfaction.

The considerations are socio-economic condition of Bangladesh, educational status of employees, living standard of employees, earning from the job, employees commitment level and satisfaction of employees.

***Hypothesis – 3** There are differences among five hierarchical levels across and between the department in perceiving employees quality of work life.*

Rationale for the Hypothesis :

The position within any organizational hierarchy has been repeatedly shown to have psychological implications for individual organization member (Porter and Lawyer, 1965; Payne and Mansfield, 1978). The different perception of quality of work life at various hierarchical levels will cause 'QWL' as differentiating factor.

The different levels are executive/officer, supervisor, skilled employee, semi-skilled employee and unskilled employee of the four departments (administration, cane, factory and finance) of the sugar mills.

Hypothesis – 4 The quality of work life has a definite effect on group cohesiveness.

Rationale for the Hypothesis :

The fulfillment of personal needs, values, expectations defines the quality of work life (Seashore, 1975). It is the working group of the organization, which acts as an instrument in providing personal satisfaction to the employees. The more need it satisfied, the more attracted the member would feel towards the group (Litterer, 1973).

For testing this hypothesis, departments are selected as unit of groups that will exhibit the characteristics of the formal work group.

1.8 Research Questions

The present study sought to examine the following research questions :

1. What are the reactions of the sugar mill employees about the existing and expected quality of work life?
2. What is the impact of designation, experience and age on quality of work life?
3. What are the social profiles of sugar mill employees, level of job commitment, job satisfaction, trade union and political involvement?
4. What is the effect of quality of work life on group cohesiveness?
5. What are the major problem areas of quality of work life in the sugar mills vis-à-vis industry?
6. What are the measures that can be taken for improving quality of work life in the sugar industry in Bangladesh? and
7. What are the differences among hierarchical levels of sugar mill employees across and between the department in perceiving quality of work life?

1.9 Limitation of the Study

The present study is assumed not to be free from limitations. Although adequate precautionary measures have been taken in selecting samples and collecting data for the study, yet the study suffers from the following limitations :

1. There were problems in views of employees through structured questionnaire as many employees tend to avoid extremes and take neutral stand regarding many aspects.
2. It is difficult to an individual to draw up an accurate picture of quality of work life of employees divided into various categories scattered geographically all over the country and particularly in rural areas under different circumstances, perceptions, attitudes, educational status, income status etc.
3. Independent measure on group cohesiveness could have been developed, especially in context to industrial situation.

These limitations however were reduced through interviews and through informal discussions with the employees and managers. It can be stated that the limitations would not affect the findings of the study as every effort is made to gather and evaluate the situation as accurately and objectively as possible and proper statistical tools have been used to overcome the limitations.

1.10 Scope of the Study

The present study reflects existing and expected quality of work life of sugar mills, the hierarchical effect in perceiving quality of work life and also reflects the effect of quality of work life on group cohesiveness. To measure quality of work life in the sampled sugar mills, Walton's eight points criterion consisting of

adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, opportunity to use and develop human capabilities, opportunity for career growth, social integration in the work organization, constitutionalism in the work organization, work and total life space and social relevance of work are used. Apart from these, component like job stress, participation in decision making, recognition and praise, interpersonal relations, which are considered as important in Bangladeshi context, are also being measured.