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QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AS METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK IN ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES: STATE OF THE ART AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE RESEARCH

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QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AS METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK IN ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES: STATE OF THE ART AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE RESEARCH^{4,5}

The main goal of the present paper is to conduct theoretical and methodological analysis of the current state of the art in the field of QWL studies and to outline perspectives for the future research of the QWL in managerial and organizational research. 716 publications listed in the Web of Science utilizing the QWL concept were selected at the initial stage and 420 papers were included in the final set of publications for analysis. The literature examination revealed the absence of the clear and concrete definition of QWL, various (and often incomplete) approaches to QWL content and indicators, interference of QWL with other concepts like job satisfaction which all resulted in general confusion in academic discussions about the notion. We argue that it is necessary to elaborate a new model for QWL assessment which would combine subjective and objective measures in the context of the general framework of needs satisfaction approach. We hope to contribute to the current discussions by suggesting our own version of classification of employee needs in the QWL framework elaborated basing on previous research by other authors.

JEL Classification: Z10; Z13; O18.

Key words: quality of work life, methodology, indicators, theory, organizational studies, managerial studies.

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Introduction

Issues of human well-being and quality of life take significant place in several fields of contemporary social sciences. The discussions became more intensive in connection with the economic crisis of 2008 and the further examination of its social consequences. Economic analysis of well-being was enlarged by the study of social dimensions because economic indicators are not enough to provide general overview of the overall changes in the quality of life (Diener, Seligman 2004). Moreover, as several studies have shown, the increasing of well-being in terms of its economic indicators often combines with stability or even decrease of subjective well-being (Blanchflower, Oswald 2004, Diener, Biswas-Diener 2007, Clark, Frijters, Shields 2008). In our view, the word “life” itself in the notion of “quality of life” implies the necessity to consider human activities within the wide societal analytical framework and taking into account a wide range of environmental and social factors. Thus, it is prospective to supplement objective indicators by subjective perceptions in empirical studies of quality of life. Therefore, the necessity of complex approach which includes both objective and subjective aspects of human existence becomes obvious and essential.

This argument relates not only to macro level of social reality but also to the lower level presented, for example, by organizations. Managerial studies as the main field of organizational research show that the social and, in general, humanitarian aspects of organizational life are given more and more attention. For example, the employee’s perception of different components of organizational environment became the focus of numerous empirical and theoretical researches. The frequency of using such concepts as “job satisfaction” (Porter et al. 1974, Ostroff 1992) and “organizational commitment” (Mowday et al. 1979, Meyer, Allen 1991), “employee psychological contract” (Rousseau 1989, Restubog 2008), “perceived organizational justice” (Greenberg 1990, Colquitt et al. 2001), “perceived organizational support” (Eisenberger et al. 1986, Zagenczyk et al. 2011), “leader-member exchange” (Graen, Scandura 1987, Wayne et al. 1997) demonstrates that the subjective opinion/perception of employees is in the center of the large part of current managerial studies. These concepts and theories draw main attention to subjective aspects of organizational reality and focus on individualized dimension in employee-organization relations.

One of the most significant concepts for well-being evaluation is the quality of working life (QWL). The question of QWL is often treated separately from the issues relating to the quality of life, which is a substantial limitation since large part of working-age population spends the majority of their lifetime on the workplace (Erdogan et al. 2012). Moreover, work provides resources to satisfy different needs in everyday life: not only material needs (being employed usually gives some gratification in this regard) but also social and higher order needs such as needs in respect, support, sense of self-worth and status (Diener, Oishi, Lucas 2003, Martel, Dupuis 2006, Erdogan et al. 2012). Some authors attempted to integrate QWL with overall life satisfaction, happiness and well-being within one analytical scheme (Armstrong et al. 2007, Zelenski, Murpfy, Jenkins 2008, Erdogan et al. 2012). For example, the ‘spillover approach’ to QWL suggests that job-satisfaction is strongly associated with satisfaction with other life domains such as family, health etc. (Sirgy et al. 2001). Some authors use QWL measures (like job satisfaction, perceived QWL, etc.) as the component of the general quality of life indicator (Zelenski, Murpfy, Jenkins 2008). There are two different views on how QWL is related to the quality of life: bottom-up spillover (QWL is viewed as one domain of life so satisfaction with work contributes to satisfaction with life in general) and top-down spillover (overall life satisfaction affects perceptions of the particular life domain so QWL is influenced by the general quality of life) (Sirgy et al. 2001).

There are three other models of the relation between QWL and quality of life discussed in literature: compensation, accommodation and segmentation (Martel, Dupuis 2006). All of them like the spillover model suggest that the QWL affects satisfaction with the other life domains. Another way of considering the association between QWL and overall well-being which first appeared in managerial studies concerns the corporate social responsibility framework (Mirvis, Lawler 1984).

According to this framework organizations should be responsible for their employees and QWL improvement is a proper way of thinking about people. This is a completely different approach because the social environment characteristics (on organizational and society levels) are taken into account. For example, corporate social responsibility philosophy implies analysis of the different levels of organizational support in developing countries and in the West. There is no agreement in literature about the role of the company in employee's well-being. In our view, the approach relating QWL to the overall well-being in the context of cultural and social dimensions should be given special attention.

The perspective suggesting the strong interrelation between the general quality of life and QWL calls for the special attention to the social aspects of employment and work life in order to understand the essence of this relation. This brings us to the necessity to include macro context in the analysis of the quality of work life as the perception of life depends on the characteristics of life standards, cultural patterns and social norms existing or dominating in the particular society. Social and cultural dimensions (if included in QWL studies) have the potential to result in the wider view and deeper understanding of processes and perceptions relating to the day-to-day life in organizations.

This approach is especially relevant for the developing societies as cultural and social norms in these countries are substantially different from those in developed countries and hence it is very important to take them in the full consideration which calls for a profound sociological analysis of QWL. For example, our previous research has demonstrated that career development process, personnel recruitment practices and overall human resource management in Russian companies have peculiarities and specifics that are highly connected with economic, social and cultural settings (Efendiev, Balabanova 2012). In this case sociological perspective is more preferable for QWL research.

The main goal of the present study is to conduct theoretical and methodological analysis of the current approaches to the QWL concept basing on sociological perspective and to outline directions for the future research of the QWL in managerial and organizational studies. We also believe that this work will contribute to the current academic discourse on the questions of subjective well-being and quality of life. Our study of QWL will be based on the examination of a substantive body of the multidisciplinary literature dealing with the QWL concept published in the last decades. All the papers under study were published within the period from 1973 until 2014 in the academic journals listed in the Web of Science database. As the analysis was focused on the concept of QWL we selected papers by titles, abstracts and key words. We used three forms of request in our search: "quality of work life", "quality of working life" and "quality of worklife". By the August 2014 we received 716 unique items. Abstracts, titles and the texts of these 716 papers were reviewed to identify the sort the academic use of the QWL term. 112 items were excluded either because of occasional use of the term of QWL or because the publication was a book review (this type of the literature is not considered for the research). About a fifth part of papers (137 items) were excluded because the QWL term was mentioned only once in introduction or in conclusion in order to reflect on the research results in general discussion (general phrases are used without any detail, for example "the results may be useful for future planned activities intended to improve the quality of working life"). Besides the proceedings and materials of the conferences (47 items) were also excluded as all of them don't provide the full text of the report so they are not included in the current academic discourse fully. All these papers excluded from our analysis were devoted to different managerial problems separated from QWL field. Finally 420 papers were selected for profound and detailed analysis about how exactly QWL concept is utilized (definition of the term, indicators, general framework of analysis, etc.).

Detailed examination of the texts allowed to identify papers selected for the further analysis. Papers used for this study met the inclusion criteria: the aim of the paper is centered on QWL issues or QWL is one of the main components of the empirical study or theoretical research⁶.

QWL: the history of the concept

There is no agreement concerning formal definition of QWL in the current literature (Sirgy et al. 2001, Martel, Dupuis 2006) which results in serious difficulties in analyzing this concept in the fields of human resource management, organizational behavior, organizational theory, etc. The major obstacle for locating the QWL in the current academic discourses is that it is not clear how QWL relates to other concepts (for example, to such concepts as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job involvement, etc.) and how can it be distinguished from them? There is a growing confuse regarding indicators of QWL and empirical tools for measuring it. Tracing the history of the notion is important for better comprehension of the current situation.

In the several papers QWL concept analysis is given with historical overview and retrospective analysis (Stjernberg, Philips 1993, Lewchuk, Stewart, Yates 2001, Martel, Dupuis 2006, Ross 2008). It is believed that QWL was first introduced in the 1960s when the discussion on employment relations was focused on the problem of the consistency of the interests of employees and organizations. Within this approach the role of trade unions was also given serious consideration (Drexler, Lawler 1977, Martel, Dupuis 2006, Royuela, Lopez-Tamayo, Surinach 2008).

The achievements in economic development and the rise of the so called welfare states in the West led to great changes in the relations between employees and management in organizations. Numerous programs aimed at improving the QWL were launched concentrating, first of all, on progressing in the field of working conditions and offering profit-sharing plans to the employees. One of the most important aims of these programs was to increase employees' participation in the decision-making process and develop 'democratic management' (Guest 1979, Lawler 1982, Fields, Thacker 1992, Stjernberg, Philips 1993, Ross 2008).

Our literature review has revealed that about a tenth of the whole body of empirical studies devoted to QWL describe different projects aimed at QWL improvement (e.g. Drexler, Lawler 1977, Guest 1979, Bushe 1988). The question of trade union and managerial participation in the QWL programs was in the focus of empirical research agenda during 1970s and 1980s while governmental projects and activities appeared in the discourse in 1990s and 2000s.

In general, governments and trade unions played significant role in the development of the issues connected with QWL. Remarkably, the US and European countries implied different approaches in regards to QWL programs. In the US governmental policy stimulated the model in which the main role in QWL improving was played by the management representatives. As a result, the changes in QWL were possible mainly as the voluntary initiatives of the top-managers (Nadler, Hanlon, Lawler 1980). As literature shows, these initiatives usually were aimed at raising the productivity and decreasing the influence of trade unions (Drexler, Lawler 1977, Lawler 1982, Nadler, Lawler 1983, Havlovic 1991, Eaton, Gordon, Keefe 1992, Fields, Thacker 1992) but there were also joint union-management QWL programs (Holley, Field, Crowley 1981, Bushe 1988). In Europe QWL initiatives were concentrated mostly on creating new job-places of high quality as several state funding targeted QWL-improving programs were established (Royuela, Lopez-Tamayo, Surinach 2008). Usually these programs were embedded in the wider economic or social transformations: the development of a particular region or reformation of an industry (Gallie 2003, Alasoini 2012). These programs were oriented primarily on reorganization of workplaces and were closely linked to improvement of employees' well-being (Martel, Dupuis 2006). Several similar targeted QWL-improving programs were also launched in the US but there were little concrete results in this area in the North America (Lawler 1982).

⁶ The full protocol of the papers evaluation is available by request.

The strategy to develop QWL by means of targeted QWL-improving programs is usually called 'institutional approach' (Royuela, Lopez-Tamayo, Surinach 2008). As a result, a number of studies utilized the concept of QWL as an indicator of the social, psychological and economic consequences of different organizational changes and transformations in working conditions, including those beyond the framework of trade unions activities (Marks et al. 1986, Kraut, Dumaiss, Koch 1989, Lewchuk, Stewart, Yates 2001, Ross 2008). Finally, the concept of QWL became extremely diffused and fuzzy as it was very difficult to classify the consequences of the great variety of managerial practices and initiatives which were implemented in business-organizations (Nadler, Lawler 1983, Martel, Dupuis 2006). QWL was even called an 'umbrella term which includes many concepts' (Krueger et al., 2002, p. 2) and 'a "catch-all" phrase for a variety of activities, including employee counseling, performance appraisal, employee meetings, labor-management committees, quality circles, suggestion boxes, opinion surveys ...' (Sonnenstuhl 1988, p. 355).

The second approach for using the term of QWL is based on the analysis of the issues relating to the subjective 'comfort' on the workplace and is mostly limited to the studies of 'stress' and 'mental health' on the workplace (Lawler 1982, Hart 1994, van der Klink et al., 2001, Jenaro, Flores, Arias 2007, Baillien, De Witte 2009). In other words, the high quality of working life here means, first of all, the absence of factors that cause employees' anxiety and distress and may result in different diseases or occupational injuries (Iverson, Erwin 1997). There was also substantial research devoted to health dimension of QWL but this issue usually was on the periphery of the discussions in literature (Nadler, Lawler 1983, Poissonnet, Veron 2000).

Further development of the studies in QWL shifted from studying of 'working conditions' to analyzing 'job satisfaction' (Martel, Dupuis 2006). The personal workplace experience of the employee here is seen through the prism of the needs satisfaction, therefore this approach is often called 'need satisfaction approach' (Sirgy et al. 2001). In this case it becomes most important to determine the extent to which employee's needs are satisfied which largely depends on the characteristics of social environment of the company. This approach was introduced in 1970s and further developed in managerial studies. Looking at the empirical research conducted in the two last decades it may seem that this approach has become the dominant one. More than a half of the total number of empirical studies devoted to QWL issues are performed in the framework of satisfaction approach.

At the same time, as we will demonstrate further, the nature of the QWL studies has been changed. The idea of needs satisfaction was practically replaced by the assessment of several limited and narrowly focused organizational phenomena like job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job involvement. Even though these phenomena are closely linked with QWL they are still different as only QWL concept allows integral assessment of the level of the employee needs' satisfaction. The lack of such methodological framework (aimed at complex and integrative understanding of the major conditions and dimensions of the employee's working life) is a significant limitation of the current managerial studies.

The analysis of the history of the QWL concept explains historically determined differences lying at the core of the current confusion in methodological debates regarding QWL. Briefly, there are two main historically shaped approaches: 'work conditions'-approach and 'satisfaction'-approach. Unfortunately in the current discussions we do not see consistent elaboration of either of these two approaches. But, what is mostly striking, we also cannot find sufficient number of papers focusing on integrative efforts and trying to combine these two approaches within one analytical framework. Our literature review reveals the strong tendency to use different and fragmentary combinations of concrete dimensions of QWL from both approaches within one analytical framework (Cohen, Ledford, Spreitzer, 1996, Cordero, Farris, DiTomaso 1998). Furthermore, most of the questionnaires for Quality of Working Life Surveys are in line with this tendency (Manz, Grothe 1991, Davoine, Erhel, Guergoat-Lariviere 2008, Royuela, Lopez-Tamayo, Surinach 2008). However, these papers usually deal with limited number of empirical issues and do not aim at elaborating the integrative theoretical

model or methodological framework of QWL per se. That is why from theoretical point of view current understanding of QWL remains incomplete.

QWL: objective and subjective approaches for measuring

In this part of our paper we will try to reveal the main opportunities that QWL concept offers for the studies in management, organizational behavior, industrial relations and other relating fields. The major methodological concern here is about the measuring of QWL: should it be measured as a subjective phenomenon or as an objective parameter of organizational environment? This question is highly connected with understanding of the content of QWL as our historical analysis has shown.

One of the initial aims for inventing and utilizing the concept of QWL in the 1960-80s was to integrate two aspects of employee's life in the company. The first aspect is the general impression that employees have about organizational environment. Hence, there is a strong need to get an indicator which could be used to compare companies with each other or to conduct panel analysis of one and the same company. The second aspect relates to managerial practices that influence this perception. The general model of components of organizational environment in relation to QWL was not elaborated but QWL concept was considered to be a possible instrument to assess both objective working conditions and subjective employees' perceptions (Kraut, Dumaiss, Koch 1989, Cordero, Farris, DiTomaso 1998).

Our analysis of the extensive block of literature has shown that there is no specific scale for the QWL measuring. Approaching QWL as a subjective parameter is mostly typical for managerial literature and organizational studies (Martel, Dupuis 2006) while objective indicators are often used in sociological and economic papers (Davoine, Erhel, Guergoat-Lariviere 2008).

The main question within objective approach to QWL is: which exactly working conditions are most important? Literature analysis demonstrates no agreement in this regard. Later we will return to this problem in more details. Now it is important to stress that objective measures are demanded when we deal with confrontation between employees and management or between trade union and management. So in QWL programs objective parameters of working conditions (like working hours, number of occupational injuries or percentage of employees involved in decision-making process) were used. These indicators were the subject of negotiation between different parties of employment relations as they were used to measure the results of different managerial interventions (Holley, Field, Crowley 1981, Eaton, Gordon, Keefe 1992).

The subjective aspect deals with employee perception of organizational environment and gives the general view on how employees feel on the workplace. And here in empirical studies different strategies for measuring QWL could be implemented. The first strategy is to ask employee directly about the 'general quality of working life' (Zelenski, Murpfy, Jenkins 2008). The second strategy is to address several aspects of employee's perception (satisfaction with different aspects of environment, organizational commitment, etc.) and then to calculate the average rate for these interconnected scales (Cohen, Ledford, Spreitzer 1996). Such approach allows to have a single index of QWL which is composed of different facets and can be treated in data analysis as an overall variable, but unfortunately this way is rarely used. The third strategy is to separately assess the effect relating to each facet of QWL (Igbaria, Parasuraman, Badawy 1994, Cordero, Farris, DiTomaso 1998, Gifford, Zammuto, Goodman 2002).

While the first two strategies are the attempts to give a general and full measure of employee's perception of work environment, the last one aims to trace effects of different aspects of organizational life. Thus, QWL in this case is only the aggregate title that incorporates different separate elements. Our literature review suggests that the third strategy is used in the majority of empirical studies within satisfaction approach. Unfortunately, this way of QWL comprehension doesn't provide any significant contribution to understanding of the phenomenon per se while focusing instead on the different and discrete parameters. The QWL itself becomes here just a fashionable notion.

The most fundamental difference between subjective and objective measures of QWL is that subjective measure stresses the employee's perception of the whole environment in the organization while objective measure is highly dependent on the actual characteristics of the organizational environment. Therefore, within subjective approach it is impossible to assess the relations between QWL and concrete parameters of organizational environment (for example decision-making practices, job content). At the same time it is possible to ignore job and company specifics and to take into account personal experience on the workplace. Objective measure, on the contrary, is aimed at understanding of real conditions of this social environment and hence allows revealing linkages between QWL and productivity or effectiveness. Therefore, QWL in this approach can be used as an instrument in organizational management. However, the specifics of the particular job place, the organizational characteristics (size, industry, etc.) are needed to be taken into account.

Our literature review shows that indicators for studying of the QWL are usually applied not systematically, but rather on occasion (Erdogan et al. 2012). This means that the further methodological and theoretical work on summarizing and integrating different approaches to the QWL and its indicators is essential. First of all, clarity and explicitness in this question are the necessary preconditions to find the proper place for QWL in the current theoretical discussions about the practical interventions aimed at QWL improving. Second, integration of subjective and objective measures in QWL assessment is needed considering limitations given above (Martel, Dupuis 2006). In this paper we present the first step in this direction by structuring the indicators and defining the scope for describing and explaining the organizational life using the concept of QWL.

The bright illustration of the current confusions in understanding of QWL is the relations between the two concepts: QWL and job satisfaction. Is QWL a consequence of job satisfaction or is it an antecedent? If QWL analysis is based on 'needs satisfaction'-approach, it becomes the determinant of job satisfaction (Sirgy et al. 2001). However, there is also a view that satisfaction determines QWL level as the overall good perception of organizational environment lead to high QWL while low job satisfaction defines poor QWL (Diener, Seligman 2004, Martel, Dupuis 2006).

Indeed, Martel and Dupuis have conducted a profound analysis of these two notions and have come to the conclusion that satisfaction is the antecedent of QWL (Martel, Dupuis 2006). Their arguments are based on the preposition that satisfaction reflects the psychological state and depends on the extent to which the current working conditions are desirable for employees or accepted by them. At the same time these authors assert that the changes of working conditions are not necessarily always perceived by the employee in the sense of 'satisfaction' or 'dissatisfaction'.

Another important problem is that the increase in satisfaction rate may come in contradiction with the management goals of increasing productivity, production quality or overall company economic effectiveness while a certain level of dissatisfaction provides space for incentives and additional work efforts for the employees (Martel, Dupuis 2006, Zelenski, Murpfy, Jenkins 2008). As we have mentioned above, the increase in productivity and organizational effectiveness was often considered to be the main result of QWL projects (Nadler, Lawler 1983, p. 23): "QWL as a set of methods, approaches, or technologies for enhancing the work environment and making it both more productive and more satisfying". However the satisfaction dimension of QWL is not oriented on improvement of the company's effectiveness (Mirvis, Lawler 1984, Bushe 1988, Havlovic 1991, Lau 2000).

Therefore QWL is often considered as an overall measure of the employee's well-being related to organizational life. However, there are serious theoretical problems relating to the nature of QWL as it may be looked at differently from the point of view of organization and employees. The objective measures of QWL are particularly important in empirical studies. If we distinguish satisfaction and QWL the latter could be used as the objective indicator of employees' well-being. Hence, we can utilize it to assess the consequences of diverse organizational changes. On the one side, this gives an opportunity to compare conditions before and after organizational changes. On the other side, it may

provide management with the directions for further changes which would improve working conditions and, at the same time, contribute to organizational goals. Such understanding of the QWL justifies its further integrating in the current managerial discussions (Martel, Dupuis 2006).

The following section of the paper offers the analysis of the three branches of contemporary QWL studies: 'working condition approach', 'job satisfaction approach' and 'needs satisfaction approach'. Basing on the literature review we outline main indicators for each of these three approaches and argue which approach is the most relevant currently.

'Working conditions approach'

In the current literature we did not find substantial attempts to elaborate the general framework for analyzing working conditions which would describe the variety of characteristics of the contemporary work environment from the point of view of the employees' needs satisfaction. Remarkably, sometimes in literature the term 'perceived quality of working life' is used to stress that authors use only subjective measures for work conditions (Marks et al. 1986, Perry, Chapman, Snyder 1995, Layer, Karwowski, Furr 2009).

In the current empirical research we can find a lot of sets of working conditions indicators analyzed by the researches separately. For example, one set of indicators may be related to the job performance, another may include relations with supervisors and colleagues, the others may pay attention to the level of stress, to communications, to managerial practices, etc. In most cases authors don't justify why they have used particular aspect of working environment in their study. Possibly, the most profoundly elaborated sets of working conditions could be those developed by Turcotte (1988 in Royuela, Lopez-Tamayo, Surinach 2008), Martel and Depuis (2006), and also those used by European Commission (Davoine, Erhel, Guergoat-Lariviere 2008). Among work conditions which are most often used as QWL facets we can outline the following groups:

- job characteristics
 - meaningfulness of work (Marks et al. 1986, Manz, Grothe 1991)
 - job challenge (Marks et al. 1986, Kandasamy, Ancheri 2009)
 - job responsibility (Marks et al. 1986, Louis 1998)
 - autonomy (Kraut, Dumaiss, Koch 1989, Iverson, Erwin 1997; Lewchuk, Stewart, Yates 2001, Kandasamy, Ancheri 2009)
 - routinization (Iverson, Erwin 1997)
- stress factors
 - role ambiguity (Iverson, Erwin 1997)
 - role and interpersonal conflicts (Iverson, Erwin 1997, Boeckerman, Ilmakunnas 2008,)
 - work overload (Kraut, Dumaiss, Koch 1989, Manz, Grothe 1991, Iverson, Erwin 1997)
 - job hazards (Iverson, Erwin 1997, Boeckerman, Ilmakunnas 2008)
- social interactions
 - support of supervisors or colleagues (Manz, Grothe 1991, Iverson, Erwin 1997, Louis 1998, Krueger et al. 2002)
 - level of respect (Manz, Grothe 1991, Louis 1998)
- managerial practices
 - intensity and duration of work (Manz, Grothe 1991, Lewchuk, Stewart, Yates 2001, Grosch et al. 2006, Kandasamy, Ancheri 2009)
 - health and safety on the workplace (Macy, Mirvis 1976, Lewchuk, Stewart, Yates 2001)
 - team work (Manz, Grothe 1991, Lewchuk, Stewart, Yates 2001, Krueger et al. 2002, Kandasamy, Ancheri 2009)

- work and incentive pay schemes (Manz, Grothe 1991, Lau 2000, Lewchuk, Stewart, Yates 2001, Krueger et al. 2002, Kandasamy, Ancheri 2009)
- opportunities for learning and developing skills (Louis 1998, Kandasamy, Ancheri 2009)
- organizational culture, climate and atmosphere (Boeckerman, Ilmakunnas 2008)
- participation opportunities (Marks et al. 1986, Manz, Grothe 1991, Lau 2000, Krueger et al. 2002, Whipp, Tan, Yeo 2007)
- communication (Marks et al. 1986, Manz, Grothe 1991, Lau 2000, Krueger et al. 2002, Kandasamy, Ancheri 2009)

This 'work conditions framework' may appear to be useful for increasing the QWL. For example, there are studies devoted to different interventions in order to decrease the level of stress or to diminish the consequences of stress on the workplace (van der Klink et al. 2001), to improve QWL in regards of general activities (Ingelgard, Norrgren 2001, Sparks, Faragher, Cooper 2001, Ross 2008) or to increase QWL for a particular job position (Louis 1998, Hsu, Kernohan 2006, Armstrong et al. 2007, Kandasamy, Ancheri 2009).

'Job satisfaction approach'

Our review of academic papers on QWL has shown that in the majority of cases this concept encompasses constructs of job satisfaction (Kraut, Dumaiss, Koch 1989, Igbaria, Parasuraman, Badawy 1994, Cohen, Ledford, Spreitzer 1996, Cohen, Chang, Ledford 1997, Hodson 1997, Cordero, Farris, DiTomaso 1998) and organizational commitment (Igbaria, Parasuraman, Badawy 1994, Cohen, Ledford, Spreitzer 1996, Cohen, Chang, Ledford 1997, Cordero, Farris, DiTomaso 1998, Gifford, Zammuto, Goodman 2002), and sometimes of job involvement (Cordero, Farris, DiTomaso 1998, Deci et al. 2001, Gifford, Zammuto, Goodman 2002). In empirical studies researchers usually take scales that are already developed and validated therefore QWL becomes just an integrative title for the set of these constructs. Data analysis and hypothesis testing in the majority of cases include treating the concepts separately without calculating the overall rate of QWL.

A number of empirical studies focus on the different managerial issues and authors consider QWL basing on satisfaction scales as an outcome variable. This type of papers presents the studies of groups and teams (Cohen, Ledford, Spreitzer 1996, Cohen, Chang, Ledford 1997, Cordero, Farris, DiTomaso 1998), organizational culture (Gifford, Zammuto, Goodman 2002), consequences of different organizational changes (Kraut, Dumaiss, Koch 1989). In this block of literature job satisfaction measures of QWL are often combined with the other measures: intent to turnover (Gifford, Zammuto, Goodman 2002), trust (Cohen, Ledford, Spreitzer, 1996), empowerment (Gifford, Zammuto, Goodman 2002) etc.

All these studies are aimed at revealing the relations of different factors with each component of the QWL as they don't intend to assess the general level of employee well-being. Therefore the variables are used separately without figuring out the overall index or rate of QWL (Igbaria, Parasuraman, Badawy 1994, Cohen, Chang, Ledford 1997). In general, we can say that for these types of studies the concept of QWL is not necessary at all because they already apply the most frequently used and recognized concepts of organizational studies; the term QWL allows just to come to more general conclusions but it gives nothing in terms of empirically tested scientific knowledge.

Here we face one of the most important problems of the current organizational studies. On the one hand, there is the necessity to look behind the narrow concepts and integrate the results of each particular study with other academic works in order to form the general theoretical conceptualizations, but, on the other hand, we lose practically nothing (from the scientific point of view) if we put out the term of QWL. Thus, our analysis leads us to the question: what is the purpose to use the term or concept of QWL in this type of studies?

Satisfaction rate depends on the needs that are perceived as important for the respondent at the moment of the survey. So such measures can't provide stable rate of quality of work life since subjective measures are relevant to the current social experience of respondents. It is quite difficult to compare different groups of employees without controlling their experience, expectations and actual needs. This makes it impossible to compare quality of working life among companies, industries or countries. Several studies conducted historical reviews of the different corporate programs devoted to improvement of quality of working life and have shown that the level of 'subjective QWL' hadn't increased after introduction of these programs (Lewchuk, Stewart, Yates 2001). This could be explained in following way. Employees increase their level of expectations after positive changes in work processes or managerial practices are introduced so the higher level is considered to be normal and level of satisfaction returns to the initial rate soon. At the same time it could be argued that if companies do not pay attention to QWL improving employees would become more and more dissatisfied with the same conditions as the absence of positive changes may be interpreted as a negative fact. This example proves the necessity for careful combining subjective and objective indicators when studying quality of work life.

Also it should be noted that the subjective measures used for QWL studies are widely used in organizational studies without addressing the concept of QWL. There are scales for different forms of satisfaction (job satisfaction, group satisfaction etc.), organizational commitment, and involvement concerning the overall perception of employee. Also there are many specific scales for perceived organizational support, perceived organizational justice, psychological contract, and etc. which describe different aspects of social relations between employee and the organization. In our view, QWL could be most fruitful as the general concept which could be the way to integrate these various sides of employee's life in a company and to relate it to the concepts describing other life domains. For example, such concepts as "employee well-being" and "satisfaction with overall life" could be addressed (Sirgy et al. 2001).

'Needs satisfaction approach'

In "needs satisfaction approach" as well as in "job satisfaction approach" the key word is the same: "satisfaction". However, our analysis suggests that these are two different ways and therefore they should be separated. We distinguished needs satisfaction approach from job satisfaction approach as the former has sufficient peculiarities and gives a profound basis for empirical studies. The classification of needs can provide the framework for analysis of the working conditions that are relevant to each need. So needs satisfaction approach allows to combine working conditions approach with satisfaction approach.

Our analysis of QWL research field suggests that especially promising studies are those which use satisfaction measures based on the employee's needs. As it was mentioned above this idea is not new for the current QWL studies but unfortunately for the present moment there has been comparatively little research based on this approach. In these papers authors consider the level of satisfaction of the different employee needs related to organizational life like growth needs satisfaction (Cohen, Ledford, Spreitzer, 1996, Marks et al. 1986, Igbaria, Parasuraman, Badawy 1994), group satisfaction (Cohen, Ledford, Spreitzer, 1996), satisfaction with supervisor (Hodson 1997). In these papers we can see the different fragments of individual needs under study while there are few studies based on initial 'needs satisfaction approach' (Cheung, Tang 2009, Koonmee et al. 2010).

In our view, needs satisfaction assessment might be especially important direction for organizational and managerial studies in the field of QWL as it provides the framework to structure the field of employment interactions in relation to different working conditions. We assume that it would be beneficial for researchers to use the full range of needs that could be satisfied on the workplace. However, complex and systematic approach to the needs is impossible without examination of all groups of working conditions: physical conditions, job characteristics, social relations and also possibilities to satisfy higher needs of self-actualization. Sirgy and colleagues have proposed the model

of QWL based on Maslow's taxonomy of needs. They defined QWL as '*employee satisfaction with a variety of needs through resources, activities, and outcomes stemming from participation in the workplace*' and outlined several groups of needs with reference to main job conditions responsible for satisfaction of each of them (Sirgy et al. 2001, p. 242):

- satisfaction of health and safety needs (protection from ill health and injury at work and outside of work, enhancement of good health)
- satisfaction of economic and family needs (pay, job security, time for the family)
- satisfaction of social needs (collegiality at work, leisure time off work)
- satisfaction of esteem needs (recognition and appreciation of one's work within and outside the organization)
- satisfaction of actualization needs (realization of one's potential within the organization, and as a professional)
- satisfaction of knowledge needs (learning to enhance job or professional skills)
- satisfaction of aesthetics needs (creativity at work, personal creativity and general aesthetics).

According to their conceptualization, organizations that score high on QWL are those that provide resources to meet the basic and growth needs of their employees. The advantages of this model is that needs are related to the set of working conditions. Also the close connection of QWL with satisfaction with other life domains, primarily the family and professional communities, is taken into account. We have adapted it to propose our version of QWL concept by supplementing it with the system of objective and subjective indicators of work conditions and utilizing results of indicators study made by Royuela, Lopez-Tamayo and Surinach (2008):

- Survival needs:
 - Needs of health and safety
 - Protection from ill health and injury at work
 - Occupational injuries
 - Perception of safety at work
 - Adequate work and rest regime
 - Protection from ill health and injury outside of work
 - Medical insurance
 - Other job related health benefits (discounts or cost compensation on health and wellness centers, fitness etc.)
 - Enhancement of good health
 - Culture of health care on workplace (values related to health promotion)
 - Ergonomic at work
 - Physical working conditions (noise, lighting, cleanliness, etc.)
 - Availability of facilities (parking, daycare, restaurants etc.)
 - Economic needs
 - Pay and adequate wages (work and incentive pay schemes)
 - Perceived job security (how likely to get laid off, type of contract)
 - Number of fringe benefits
 - Intensity and duration of work
 - Family needs
 - Benefits for family members
 - Perceived work-life balance
- Social needs:
 - Need of interpersonal interactions friendships and need for membership and being-in-the-know in a significant social group

- Perceived support of colleagues
 - Perceived corporate values relevant to the interactions with colleagues
 - Perceived attractiveness of the group
 - Collegiality at work
 - Perceived interactions at work
 - Group or team working
 - Non-work groups (unions, circles of quality etc.)
 - Leisure time off work
 - Perceived time from work to relax and experience leisure
- Ego needs:
 - Need for self-esteem
 - Participation in corporate awards for doing a good job at work
 - Perceived recognition and appreciation of one's work within the organization
 - given by colleagues
 - given by supervisor
 - Perceived recognition and appreciation of one's work outside the organization,
 - given by the local community
 - given by professional associations for work done within the organization or on behalf of the organization
 - Need for autonomy
 - Job characteristics
 - Perceived job responsibility
 - Perceived job autonomy
 - Perceived fit between qualification requirements and duties
 - Perceived diversity of job duties
 - Relations with supervisor
 - Perceived control at work
- Self-actualization needs
 - Perceived realization of one's potential within the organization,
 - Perceived realization of one's potential as a professional
 - Training and professional development opportunities
 - Perceived opportunities to learn to do the job better provided by organization
 - Perceived opportunities to learn to become an expert in one's field
 - Actual participation in training and learning programs
 - Perceived creativity at work
 - Perceived involvement in decision-making process
 - Personal development
 - Perceived growth and advancement opportunities
 - Perceived participation in decision-making
 - Perceived opportunities for innovation at work

There are several models of needs structure relevant to the workplace and we can use them to analyze the content of QWL concept basing on the working conditions relevant to each group of needs. This idea is in line with the principle proposed by Martel and Dupuis: to combine subjective and objective measures in QWL evaluation (Martel, Dupuis 2006). In this case the QWL concept has the potential to achieve the goal of integrating two main domains in organizational studies devoted to work conditions assessment and defining the level of job satisfaction. This also creates opportunities for determining the directions for increasing the QWL level in practice. Moreover, it could be useful in organizational change assessment: for example, in comparison of the employees QWL level on the different stages of organizational transformations in objective terms.

This approach doesn't imply that the usual direct question about the individual perception of overall quality of working life is useless. On the contrary, it could be easily included in the model but it is not the central measure within the proposed analytical framework.

One of the most important advantages of the proposed model is that it implies clear and direct method for connecting working life and quality of life because employee's interests which are outside of the organization are also considered. This relates to family needs (Armstrong et al. 2007, Cheung, Tang 2009), health (Sonnenstuhl 1988), leisure (Kandasamy, Ancheri 2009) and professional development (Martel, Dupuis 2006).

Conclusion

The present study demonstrated that there are a lot of difficulties in locating the concept of QWL in current academic discourse. The QWL concept is on the periphery of the contemporary managerial and organizational studies. About the third of papers devoted to empirical research are made in health care organizations so the respondents are nurses or diverse staff of hospitals. QWL as the general framework is usually addressed without proper comprehension of its analytical potential. QWL is often mentioned only for summarizing the results of empirical study or for justification of the general significance of the research (Main et al. 2005, Tai, Bame, Robinson 1998, Woodward et al. 1999).

Our extensive literature analysis (basing on the initial database of 716 papers listed in Web of Science system of which 420 papers remained in the final publications set) has shown that there are objective reasons for methodological and conceptual problems with QWL: absence of clear and concrete definition of QWL, various (and often incomplete) approaches to QWL content, interference of QWL with the concept of job satisfaction which resulted in general confusion.

Our study of theoretical and methodological foundations of QWL concept and its implementation in the current empirical research has shown that it is necessary to elaborate a new model for QWL assessment which would combine subjective and objective measures in the context of the general framework of needs satisfaction analysis. In our view, the conceptualizations by Sirgy and colleagues (2001) could be considered as the basis of this model as they imply assessment of needs satisfaction with relevance to working conditions. We believe that the future research in QWL would benefit from implementing such approach in both empirical and theoretical studies. We also hope to contribute to the current discussions by suggesting our own version of classification of employee needs in the QWL framework elaborated basing on previous research by other authors.

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