

An Empirical Research on the Relationship between Quality of Work Life and Leadership Styles in SMEs

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Abstract: Literature on Quality of Work Life (QWL) is limited and several studies commonly correlate with some variables but no study on QWL has associated with Leadership styles. This research investigates the relationship between QWL of employees and Leadership styles in SMEs. The objectives of the study are a) To find the status of QWL of employees in SMEs, b) To investigate and determine the relationships between QWL and Leadership styles and c) To compare the QWL under Transformational Leadership style and Transactional leadership style. In this context, study conducted in mechanical manufacturing SMEs in and around Bangalore. Results showed that there is a significant relationship between QWL and Leadership styles. Under Transformational leadership style employees enjoys high level of Quality of Work Life.

Key Words: Quality of Work Life, Leadership Styles, Transformational Leadership Style, Transactional Leadership Style.

1. Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a vital role in a nation's development through its high contribution towards domestic production, significant export earnings, low investment requirements and operational flexibility, so growth and efficient operation of SMES is an essential factor for any economy. According to the Deloitte Research Report on "Growth Opportunity for Indian SMEs" (2008) there are many hurdles that deprive SMEs from achieving their full potential like, use of obsolete technology, lack of finance, drastic changes in technology, non-availability of skilled manpower, employee turnover, absenteeism etc. For success of any organization, it requires competent

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manpower. Presently, the SMEs are reeling under the crisis of employee turnover which is one of the major threats. Employee turnover is adversely affecting the quality of products and services offered, Pizam and Thornburg (2000). Addressing to employee turnover has become a major concern for SMEs. Further, it is not possible to design jobs solely grounded on the needs of technology completely overlooking the needs of workers. There is an all-round demand for developing the humanized jobs which can satisfy workers with respect to their job and work environment. The jobs need to be excellent both from the point of view of technology and human needs. In view of this, the traditional job design needs to be replaced by enriched job design. This enriched job design which is stipulated for redesigning of jobs is known as Quality of Work Life (QWL).

Raduan Che Rose *et al.* (2006) opined that QWL programs will benefit both employees and management, by mutually solving work related problems, building cooperation, improving work environments, restructuring tasks carefully and fairly managing human resource outcomes and payoffs. The motivation for the employees is possible through effective implementation of QWL, which in turn reduces mental stress, absenteeism and enhances job satisfaction and employee performance. Mehdi Barzegar *et al.* (2012) study highlights, the effective approach to QWL improvement appears to be very demanding, faced with the full-range challenges of change management in the organization, requiring strong leadership.

Leadership is a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of followers in an effort to reach organization goals (Bunmi Omolayo 2007). An effective leader influences followers in a specific manner to achieve desired goals. Different leadership styles may affect organizational performance (Nahavandi 2002). Workers under democratic leadership style do not experience high job related tension but, employees experiences high job related tensions under autocratic leadership styles (Bunmi Omolayo 2007). However there is a gap in the literature which explains the link between the leadership styles and various dimensions of QWL.

The present research is an effort to gain more insight on the correlation between QWL and Leadership styles among the employees working in mechanical manufacturing SMEs.

Literature Review

Quality of Work Life (QWL):

According to Chander and Singh (1983), the QWL is a dynamic multidimensional construct that includes reward systems, training, career advancements opportunities, participation in decision making, employment conditions, employment security, income adequacy, profit sharing, equity and other rewards, employee autonomy, employee commitment, social interaction, self esteem, self expression, democracy, employee satisfaction, employee involvement, advancement, relations with supervisors and peers and job enrichment. Gardon (1984) argues that QWL has two objectives, one is to enhance the productivity and other one is to achieve the satisfaction of employees.

According to Gunaseelaan and Rethinam *et al.* (2008), QWL is a multi-dimensional construct, made up of a number of interrelated factors that needs careful consideration to conceptualize and measure. It is associated with job satisfaction, job involvement, motivation, productivity, health, safety and well-being, job security, competence development and balance between work and non-work life. The absence of QWL results in job dissatisfaction which in turn leads to deficiency in motivation and moral in the employees.

Daud Normala (2010), investigated the relationship between QWL and organizational commitment among employees in Malaysian firms. Seven QWL variables were examined. They are growth and development, participation, physical environment, supervision, pay and benefits and social relevance to determine their relationship with organizational commitment. The research identified that QWL variables are associated with job commitment and job satisfaction. This study emphasized that determining the QWL of employees is an important consideration for employers interested in improving employee's job satisfaction and job commitment.

A study conducted by Abbasi *et al.* (2011), for employees in industrial units of Ardabil province identified that the Quality of Work Life has a positive relation to other variables in the organization such as performance, efficiency, organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Behnam Talebi *et al.* (2012), examined the relationship between the employees QWL and effectiveness in banking sector. In the study, seven QWL variables are considered to determine the present status of QWL of employees. They are: salary and benefits, job security, healthy and secure work environment, autonomy at work, providing the basis for skills education, and determining the job development direction. The research revealed that there is a significant relationship between the employees' QWL and their effectiveness in organization.

Nitesh Sharma and Devendra Singh Verma (2013), examined the QWL existence in Small Scale Industries in Indore. The Study identified seven QWL variables to measure the QWL of employees, namely good working environment, chance of growth, fair compensation, job satisfaction, employee's motivation, and communication flow, flexible or suitable working time. The study revealed that QWL is not highly prevalent as per the view of employees.

Godina Krishna Mohan and Kota Neela Mani Kanta (2013) examined the variables that play a vital role in influencing the QWL in the manufacturing organizations in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The variables selected for the present study are as follows: Working conditions, inter personal relations, trust among employees, autonomy and freedom, decision making, training, career advancement, superior support, top management support, conflict management, safety conditions, amenities, performance linked pay system, communication, implementation of organizational policies, transparency system, participative management, nature of job, rewards and recognition, value system and job satisfaction. The research reveals that the key factors influencing QWL were working

environment, group dynamics, personal growth and advancement, motivation and organizational climate.

This review of literature identified that QWL is a multi-dimensional construct. There are numbers of variables that affect on the employees QWL like work environment, organizational culture, job satisfaction, job security, compensation, etc.

Leadership Styles

Leadership is a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to reach organization goals (Omolayo B O 2007). Oladipo *et al.* (2013) defined leadership as a special type of persuade activity that affects and enhances individual in an organization is being seen in all kinds of social situation, which is in perceptible demand that makes people work together towards the attainment of common goals and objectives. The leadership role is a necessity for an organization, in order to synchronize the activities and goals of a group. Leadership cannot be separated from a group and there cannot be a group without a leader.

P. M.Podsakoff and S. B.MacKenzie *et al.* (1990) argued that leadership behavior can affect, trust and satisfaction of employee to organization and organizational citizenship behavior. Further, it enhances the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment directly. McNeese-Smith (1995) study revealed that democratic leaders take great care to involve all members of the team in discussion, and can work with a small but highly motivated team. If the task is highly structured and the leader has good relationship with the employees, effectiveness will be high on the part of the employees.

Today's organizations need effective leaders who understand the complexities of the rapidly changing global environment. Different leadership styles may affect organizational effectiveness and performance (Nahavandi 2002). According to Goh Yuan *et al.* (2005) study, leadership style is significantly influenced by the leader's immediate and extended family, clan, and tribe. This study identified the link between organizational leadership and business ethics, thereby making contributions toward increasing the quality of organizational life which may have a positive influence on members of the organization and the wider community.

Chung Hsiung Fang *et al.* (2009) identified that leadership style can affect organizational commitment and work satisfaction positively and work satisfaction in turn can affect organizational commitment and work performance positively. M C Voonl *et al.* (2011) investigated the influence of leadership styles on employees' job satisfaction in public sector organizations in Malaysia. They used the factors like salaries, job autonomy, job security and workplace flexibility. Out of these factors, they found that transformational leadership style has a stronger relationship with job satisfaction. According to Jeremy *et al.* (2012) the associations between leader and worker give supplementary to the usual employees' satisfaction, which is considerably affected through the leadership styles adopted by the leader.

The study conducted by O K Sakiru *et al.* (2013), in selected organizations at Lagos metropolis, revealed that the most commonly practiced leadership style by the managers in the organization is the transformational leadership styles, followed by the transactional leadership styles, and laissez-faire type of leadership styles. Although some managers used other styles of leadership, the number of managers using the other styles is negligible. Study also revealed that there is a significant relationship between leadership styles and employees' job commitment within the organization.

Literature, thus, reveals that the leadership styles affects many parameters like employees job satisfaction, job security, organizational change, work environment, team building, performance, effectiveness, etc.

Research Methodology

Estimation of sample size

Using the Hogg and Tannis (1997), and Bartlett *et al.* (2001) formula, sample size for the research was estimated to be 231 SMEs. Employees working in the mechanical manufacturing SMEs were considered to be the unit of analysis for the research. The structured questionnaire was administered to 1500 employees of 300 mechanical manufacturing SMEs, of which 1147 employees of 248 SMEs responded. However, at the end of the survey only 1092 questionnaire from 240 firms were found to be valid and appropriate for the final analysis.

Design of Questionnaire

Based on thorough literature review on QWL and Leadership styles important components were identified. Further, factor analysis was conducted to reduce the components using principal component analysis. From the principal component analysis, nine factors whose Eigen values are greater than one were retained and these nine important components were considered for the present research. Further, the same was discussed with SMEs' HR experts and academicians, and a draft questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire was designed both in Kannada and English languages. The following were the nine components: Work environment, Organization culture and climate, Relation and co-operation, Training and Development, Compensation and Rewards, Facilities, Job satisfaction and Job Security, Autonomy of work, Adequacy of resources. In addition, the sampling adequacy test was performed through Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic. Since, KMO values greater than 0.6 is considered as adequate (Kaiser and Rice 1974), the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy with value of 0.601 was acceptable. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (912.393, df. 351, Sig.0.00) shows that, the values are significant and therefore acceptable, implying that non-zero correlations existed at the significance level of 0.000. Further, it provides an adequate basis for proceeding with the factor analysis. The reliability coefficient is obtained as 0.88 and hence the questionnaire designed was adequate for exploring research and is tenable for statistical computation.

The questionnaire designed has three important sections namely:

1. Respondent and Firm's demographic characteristics
2. Employees Perceptions towards QWL
3. Employees opinion about leadership styles of their superiors

Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis for Leadership styles and QWL of employees'

H₀₁: There is no significant relation between Leadership styles and QWL of Employees'

Null Hypotheses for Leadership styles and components of QWL

H₀₂: There is no significant relation between Work Environment and Leadership styles

H₀₃: There is no significant relation between Organization culture and climate and Leadership styles

H₀₄: There is no significant relation between Relation and co operation and Leadership styles

H₀₅: There is no significant relation between Training and Development and Leadership styles

H₀₆: There is no significant relation between Compensation and Rewards and Leadership styles

H₀₇: There is no significant relation between Facilities and Leadership styles

H₀₈: There is no significant relation between Job satisfaction and Job security and Leadership styles

H₀₉: There is no significant relation between Autonomy Work and Leadership styles

H₀₁₀: There is no significant relation between Adequacy of resources and Leadership styles

Research Findings

Status of Quality of Work Life of Employees in SMEs

To explore the status of employees QWL in SMEs, employees' were divided into two groups namely, satisfied and unsatisfied, based on their QWL score. The QWL score for each respondent is determined by summing score for each of the nine components of QWL (Q1– Q50) and then dividing by 50. The individual response choices, ranged between 1 to 5. The maximum QWL score for an individual is 5, while minimum score is 1. The two categories of Quality of Work Life level were determined by dividing the range of possible QWL scores (1-5) into two intervals. Those scoring more than the overall mean of QWL were assigned as satisfied and those scoring less than overall mean were assigned as unsatisfied. For the present study overall mean is 3.85.

According to Likert and Rensis (1932), resulting total score may be interpreted normatively, with reference to some comparison group or absolutely, with reference to theoretically or empirically chosen cut-off scores. In this research overall mean (3.85) is considered as a cut off score. According to Jerome (2013) and Vijay Anand (2013), the overall mean is considered as "satisfied" and below the overall mean is considered as "unsatisfied" with QWL.

The employees are categorised into satisfied and unsatisfied on the basis of their perception towards QWL. Overall Mean is the cut-off score, the score above the overall mean is considered satisfied with

the present QWL, while score less than the overall mean is unsatisfied. Table 1 presents the status of Quality of Work Life of employees.

Table 1: Quality of Work Life of Employees

Status of QWL	No of Employees	Percentage
Satisfied	260	23.81
Unsatisfied	832	76.19
Total	1092	100.00

Among 1092 surveyed employees, from 240 SMEs, 260 (23.81 Percent) employees were satisfied with the present status of Quality of Work Life and 832 (76.19 Percent) employees were unsatisfied. From this it can be inferred that only one fourth of employees are satisfied with present status of Quality of Work Life.

Leadership styles

To know the type of leadership style prevailing, the leadership score for each respondent are determined by summing-up the score of each question of leadership styles. The transformational leadership score for each respondent was determined by summing the scores for each of five items (Q1-Q5) and dividing by 5, similarly for transactional leadership score for each respondent was determined by summing the scores for each of the five items (Q6-Q10) and dividing by 5. The individual response choices ranged between 1 to 5. The maximum Leadership Style (LS) score for an individual is 5, the minimum score is 1. The types of leadership styles were considered, depending on the highest mean score.

The 1092 employees surveyed from 240 SMEs are grouped into two based on their opinion about their superiors leadership styles like Transformational leadership style and Transactional leadership style. On the basis of highest mean score the type of the leadership style is decided.

Table 2: Leadership Styles according to Employees Opinion

Leadership styles	No of Employees
Transformational Leadership style	624
Transactional Leadership style	468
Total	1092

The Table 2 depicts that, among 1092 surveyed employees 624 (57.14 Percent) employees opinion is their superiors display the Transformational leadership styles in SMEs whereas 468 (42.86 Percent) employees opinion is their superiors displays Transactional leadership style in the SMEs.

Leadership styles and Status of Quality of Work Life of Employees

The Surveyed 1092 employees are grouped under two categories based on their opinion about their superior's leadership styles. Out of 1092 respondents 624 respondents opinion is that their superiors exhibit transformational leadership style, while 468 respondents opinion is their superiors exhibit transactional leadership style. This section describes the status of QWL under transformational and transactional leadership styles.

Quality of Work Life under Transformational leadership style

Under transformational leadership style, 624 employees were surveyed and they are grouped into two based on their perceptions about present status Quality of Work Life. Table 4.3 shows the Quality of Work Life of employees under transformational leadership style.

Table 3: Quality of Work Life under Transformational Leadership Style

Status of QWL	No of Employees
Satisfied	168
Unsatisfied	456
Total	624

Under Transformational leadership style, 624 employees were surveyed and only 168 employees were satisfied and 456 employees are unsatisfied with the present status of Quality of Work Life in surveyed SMEs.

Quality of Work Life under Transactional leadership style

Under transactional leadership style, 468 employees were surveyed and they are grouped into two based on their perceptions about present status Quality of Work Life. Table 4.32 shows the Quality of Work Life of employees under transactional leadership style.

Under Transactional leadership style, 468 employees were surveyed and only 92 employees were satisfied and 376 employees are unsatisfied with the present status of Quality of Work Life in surveyed SMEs. Form this it is concluded that only 20 percent of employees are satisfied the present

Table 4: Quality of Work Life under Transactional Leadership Style

Status of QWL	No of Employees
Satisfied	92
Unsatisfied	376
Total	468

status of Quality of Work Life under transactional leadership styles, that is majority of the employees are unsatisfied the status of Quality of Work Life in surveyed SMEs under transactional leadership style.

Relationship between Leadership Styles and Quality of Work Life

To find the relationship between leadership styles and Quality of Work Life employees, a hypothesis H_{01} was established. Using Chi Square analysis hypothesis was tested for independency. The employees were classified into satisfied and unsatisfied on the basis of their perception towards QWL under transformational leadership style and transactional leadership style and the same is presented in Table 5 It also presents the χ^2 value and their significance level for testing the association between different leadership styles and Quality of Work Life of employees in the surveyed SMEs.

Table 5: Leadership Style and Quality of Work Life of Employees

SI No	Leadership styles	Status of QWL		χ^2 Table Value	χ^2 Calculated Value	P value	Significance Level
		Satisfied	Unsatisfied				
1	Transformational leadership style	168	456	3.84	7.781	0.004	5%
	Transactional leadership style	92	376				

Quality of Work Life of employees has a significant association with the types of the leadership styles ($p < 0.05$, $\chi^2_{\text{Calculated}} > \chi^2_{\text{Table}}$). That is Quality of Work Life of employees is dependent on type of leadership style.

Relationship between Leadership Styles and Components of QWL

To know the relationship between leadership styles and components of Quality of Work Life of employees, nine hypotheses namely H_{02} , H_{03} , H_{04} , H_{05} , H_{06} , H_{07} , H_{08} , H_{09} , H_{010} , were established. Using Chi Square analysis hypothesis is tested for independency. The employees were classified into satisfied and unsatisfied on the basis of their perception towards for all nine components of QWL under transformational leadership style and transactional leadership style and are presented in Table

4.6. Table also presented the χ^2 value and their significance levels (if significant) for testing the association between different leadership styles and nine components of Quality of Work Life in surveyed SMEs.

Table 6: Relationship between Leadership Styles and Components of QWL

SI No	Components of QWL	Leadership styles	Status of components of QWL		χ^2 Table Value	χ^2 Calculated Value	P value	Significance Level
			Satisfied	Unsatisfied				
1	Work Environment	Transformational	395	229	3.84	4.085	0.043	5%
		Transactional	268	200				
2	Organization Culture and climate	Transformational	286	338	3.84	6.157	0.013	5%
		Transactional	250	218				
3	Relation and co operation	Transformational	300	324	3.84	0.957	0.328	NS
		Transactional	239	229				
4	Training and development	Transformational	366	258	3.84	3.366	0.067	NS
		Transactional	249	220				
5	Compensation and Rewards	Transformational	294	330	3.84	10.118	0.001	5%
		Transactional	266	202				
6	Facilities	Transformational	337	287	3.84	0.797	0.372	NS
		Transactional	240	228				
7	Job satisfaction and job security	Transformational	349	275	3.84	0.469	0.493	NS
		Transactional	252	216				
8	Autonomy of work	Transformational	323	301	3.84	0.927	0.336	NS
		Transactional	256	212				
9	Adequacy of Resources	Transformational	300	324	3.84	14.832	0.000	5%
		Transactional	280	188				

QWL components like Work environment, organization culture and climate, compensation and reward and adequacy of resources ($p < 0.05$, $\chi^2_{\text{calculated}} > \chi^2_{\text{Table}}$) has significant association with leadership style. Chi Square independent test identifies that Work environment, organization culture and climate, compensation and reward and adequacy of resources of employees in selected SMEs is dependent on type of the leadership style.

QWL components like relation and cooperation, training and development, facilities, job satisfaction and security, autonomy of work ($p > 0.05$, $\chi^2_{\text{calculated}} < \chi^2_{\text{Table}}$) are not associated with leadership style. Relation and cooperation, training and development, facilities, job satisfaction, autonomy of work are independent to leadership style.

Conclusions:

One fourth of employees are satisfied with present status of Quality of Work Life in mechanical manufacturing SMEs. The research revealed that in majority of the SMEs, superior's displays transformational leadership styles to get the work from the employees.

Quality of Work Life of employees has a significant association with the leadership styles. That is Quality of Work Life of employees is dependent on leadership style like transformational leadership style and transactional leadership style.

Research analysis revealed that under transactional leadership style more percentage of employees' are unsatisfied with the present status of Quality of Work Life than under transformational leadership styles.

Among selected nine Quality of Work Life components, work environment, organization culture and climate, compensation and reward and adequacy of resources of employees is dependent on type of the leadership styles.

Other components, Relation and cooperation, training and development, facilities, job satisfaction and security, autonomy of work are not depended on leadership styles.

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