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QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE AS A STRATEGY FOR PEOPLE MANAGEMENT: THE CASE OF A GRAPHIC INDUSTRY IN SANTA CATARINA

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ABSTRACT

The analysis of the Quality of working life (QWL) along with the identification of the main factors influencing it is one of the people management strategies in the industries. The present study measured the QWL of the employees in a graphic industry located in the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil. For data collection, the QWLQ-bref questionnaire was used, which reached 95% of the total number of employees. All questionnaires answered were considered valid and were used in the evaluation of the result. The organization is between the average and good levels of QWL according to the scale used, since the evaluation presented a global average of 3,562 (71.24%). The Physical/Health domain had a mean of 3,601 (72,02%), a Psychological of 3,465 (69,3%), the Personnel of 3,724 (74,48%) and, finally, the Professional domain of 3,459 (69,18%). The study showed that all domains of QWL were considered satisfactory by company employees. The personal factor was considered as the factor of greater contentment, while the professional one of greater discontent. The lack of investment in qualification was pointed out as the main point of dissatisfaction. Therefore, it is suggested that the managers of the organization create a training plan in order to improve the satisfaction of its employees.

Keywords: Quality of working life; Strategic Management of People; Graphic industry.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the last decades, the organizations have undergone great transformations due to the exigencies of the consuming markets and the fierce competitiveness between the companies. This scenario has brought about significant changes in the dynamics of the work environment, in which the effort for survival undertaken by organizations has been very intense: the current dynamics demand more and more productivity and more quality to meet the demands of the markets.

Thus, Quality of working life (QWL) emerges as one of many organizational strategies to contribute to and help organizations adapt to the dynamic environment in which they are inserted (Timossi *et al.*, 2010). QWL is a complex issue that has recently spread in management practices and refers to a set of factors (objective and subjective) that incorporate the satisfaction of the employee in their work activity, humanizing the situations related to work (Ruiz, 2007; Silva *et al.*, 2010).

According to Islam (2012), both the work environment, the workload, remuneration policies and benefits as well as the family life of the individual significantly impact on their QWL and, consequently, their performance. Serb et Gogeanu (2014) argue that the proper management of these factors can significantly contribute to individuals feeling satisfied with their work activities.

In this way, the QWL influences the performance and productivity of employees, and the company must understand that the motivated employee will have more productivity and will bring positive results to the organization. Therefore, managers should be concerned with the well-being of their employees and observe the needs of improvement in the work environment, aiming to improve their productivity through the satisfaction of employees (Oliveira *et al.,* 2018).

According to Muindi et K'Obonyo (2015), when it comes to the business environment, QWL is essential for organizations to attract and retain their employees. Sureshkumar et Marimuth (2014) see QWL as a possibility of success for any organization, when it is aligned with the strategies of the organization and linked to people management.

Based on this context, this article aims to identify the degree of satisfaction of employees of a graphic industry in Santa Catarina, located in the south of the state, regarding QWL. Thus, a quantitative study of a descriptive nature was made possible through the application of the Quality of Working Life Questionnaire (QWLQ) bref de Cheremeta *et al.* (2011) with 41 employees.

2. THEORETICAL REFERENCE

2.1 Quality of working life (QWL)

Studies on QWL began with Eric Trist's research on worker satisfaction in the 1950s, covering the dimensions of individual, work, and organization (Rodrigues, 1998). In the mid-1960s, research on the subject intensified, mainly in the United States, due to the need of American businessmen to understand and influence the relation of the worker to the work.

The main theories and models on QWL were developed between the 1970s and 1980s and their concepts are used as a foundation for research up to the present day. During this period, study fronts appeared with the objective of defining the ways in which it could be used in favor of organizations (Garcia, 2010).

According to Moretti (2003), QWL can be understood as the search for humanization at work, with the purpose of providing greater satisfaction and improving the worker's well-being. Walger *et al.* (2014) add that QWL includes the understanding of living conditions at work, through various aspects such as: well-being, good use of personal energy, health and physical security, mental and social security, and capacity to perform tasks safely.

Thus, the concept addresses the individual's well-being with respect to their working life; however, it extrapolates the organizational environment and starts to have a more global concern for the human being, since job satisfaction is intertwined with the other dimensions of human life (Cardoso, 2001). Therefore, the actions that stimulate the increase of QWL aim to reconcile the interests of individuals with that of organizations, that is, to improve worker satisfaction and, therefore, the productivity of the company (Conte, 2003).

It is noticed that the objective of the studies of the QWL is, then, the relation of the individual between the work environment and its life outside the organizations. Fayol (1994) believes that it is the responsibility of organizations to promote the factors that directly affect QWL, extending actions outside the organization and also considering the personal needs and aspirations of the individual. That is, QWL is a tool of great importance for companies, as it contributes directly to the increase of productivity. Unsatisfied and unmotivated workers present high rates of absenteeism, turnover and accidents at work, reflecting the low productivity and poor quality of products and services (Medeiros, 2002).

The employees who have their professional and personal needs satisfied produce more and better. Without major concerns, individuals direct their efforts to work, performing

their activities satisfactorily. The personal expectation of the professionals is that if companies expect quality in the products and services they offer, QWL actions should be incorporated definitively in the daily life of companies (Conte, 2003).

Limongi-France (2010) states that an QWL program consists of the actions of an organization that involve the implementation of improvement and managerial and technological innovations in the workplace. The quest for QWL, which is worker satisfaction, occurs through the collection of alternatives for maintaining healthy work environments, making them better for people (Kops *et al.*, 2013). It is recognized that companies implementing a QWL program achieve greater effectiveness and productivity, while meeting the basic needs of their workers, including increasing their well-being and participation in decisions and work problems (Chamon, 2011; Limongi-França, 2010; Sant'Anna *et al.*, 2011).

As can be seen in Figure 1, for an organization to be healthy, it must have quality of life as one of the fundamental pillars.

Source: Farsen *et al.* (2018, p. 37)

Limongi-França (2003 apud Oliveira, 2006) affirms that the actions of the QWL program cannot be confused with improvements in the environment or in the work policies, since it concerns everything that directly interferes in the performance of the worker. Taking into account only the professional environment in the development of the individual is limiting, since the human being is a complex system, which integrates body, mind and spirit, and its motivation depends on different variables. For this reason, it is important for managers to identify which are the factors that directly influence the performance of each in the organization.

A set of factors are required for the employee to meet their personal needs through work. Several models have been developed based on these factors that provide worker satisfaction and promote QWL, including Walton, which considers both the internal and external factors of the organization (Vieira, 1996). Walton (1973 *apud* Rueda *et al.*, 2013), in his model, conceptualized the criteria and indicators presented in Chart 1.

Chart 1. Conceptual categories of Quality of Working Life (QWL)

CRITERIA	QWL INDICATORS
1. Fair and adequate compensation	Internal and external equity
	Justice in compensation
	Productivity gains sharing
2. Working conditions	Reasonable working day
	Absence of insalubrity
3. Use and capacity building	Autonomy
	Relative self-control
	Multiple Quality
	Information about the total work process
4. Opportunity for growth and security	Career Possibility
	Personal growth
	Perspective of salary advance
	Job security
5. Social integration in the organization	Absence of prejudice
	Equality
	Mobility
	Relationship
	Community feeling
6. Constitutionalism	Rights of worker protection
	Personal privacy
	Freedom of expression
	Impartial treatment
	Labor rights
7. Work and total living space	Balanced role at work
	Stability of schedules
	Few geographical changes
	Time for family leisure
8. Social relevance of work in life	Company's image
	Corporate Social Responsibility
	Product liability
	Employment Practices

Source: Walton (1993 *apud* Fernandes, 1996, p. 48).

Pereira (2012), on the other hand, presents a more concise model, which takes into account the personal dimension, that is, questions intrinsic to the human being, for the analysis of QWL. Table 2, presented below, specifies the four dimensions that the author understands as being fundamental to satisfaction and QWL.

Chart 2. Dimensions of the Reis Júnior Model

A. Physical/Health	It addresses all aspects of health, work--related illnesses, and healthy employee habits.
B. Psychological	It addresses all aspects of personal satisfaction, motivation at work, and employee self-esteem.
C. Personal	It addresses family aspects, personal and religious beliefs, and cultural aspects that influence employee work.
D. Professional	It addresses the organizational aspects that can influence the quality of life of employees.

Source: Reis Júnior (2008, *apud* Pereira, 2012, p. 72).

2.2 QWL assessment tools

The literature has some options in relation to instruments for evaluation of QWL, such as interview scripts, data collection through the Kertesz and Kerman Index, the Professional Life Quality Inventory 35, the Individuals Perceived Scale for QWL, QWLQ-78, and QWLQ-bref (Cheremeta *et al.*, 2011; Fernandes, 1996; Limongi-França, 2010; Ogata et Simurro, 2009; Reis Júnior *et al.*, 2011).

The QWLQ-78 model was developed in Brazil using the same methodology used by the WHOQOL-Group for the creation of the WHOQOL-100, which is currently one of the most used instruments in the QWL evaluation. Based on the already existing and widely used questionnaire, the QWLQ-78 focuses its research on four different aspects of the individual that are called factors or domains: Physical/Health, Psychological, Personal and Professional.

The Physical/Health domain refers to aspects related to the health and habits of employees of a given organization, as well as to work-related diseases. The Psychological domain refers to the self-esteem and personal satisfaction of the employees and to the motivational aspects in the work. The Personal domain addresses personal and religious beliefs, cultural characteristics that influence work and the family dimension. The Professional domain, in turn, refers to the aspects that influence, in a global way, the perception of QWL (Reis Júnior *et al.*, 2011).

In recent studies, to facilitate and accelerate application and evaluation, Cheremeta *et al.* (2011) have created an abbreviated version of QWLQ-78, the QWLQ-bref. The questionnaire addresses four domains, totaling 20 questions, four of which are Physical/Health issues, three in the Psychological domain, four in the Personal domain and nine in the Professional domain.

Table 3 specifies the division of the questions of the collection instrument according to the domain to which they belong.

Chart 3. Division of issues between domains

Domain	Questions
1. Physical / Health	4, 8, 17 e 19
2. Psychological	2, 5 e 9
3. Personal	6, 10, 11 e 15
4. Professional	1, 3, 7, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18 e 20

Source: Adapted from Pereira (2012).

Following the presentation of the QWL and the scale for measurement, the following sub-item will present the importance of strategic management for organizations.

2.3 Strategic management

The concept of management refers to the actions of organizational diagnosis, structuring the process of planning and formulating a shared purpose for the whole organization, choosing business strategies, setting goals and challenges, as well as assigning responsibilities for the details of the plans and projects and, finally, its implementation. It also includes actions to revise plans so that they always remain adequate to the external and internal realities of the organization (Costa, 2010).

Strategic management consists of a systematic, planned, managed, executed and monitored process under the leadership of the top management of the institution, involving and compromising all managers and employees of the organization (Costa, 2010).

According to Amolia et Aghashahi (2016), for an effective strategic management, it is important that the managers of the organization know and understand the environment in which the company is inserted. The authors complement that not only the elements of the external environment, but also the internal ones need to be considered as influential, such as their employees. Organizations that think and act strategically anticipate eventual changes and adapt their management to current market dynamics, which is a requirement for current business success.

Strategic management aims to ensure the growth, continuity and survival of the organization by continually adapting its strategies and structure, enabling it to cope with observed or predicted changes in its external or internal environment, anticipating them (Costa, 2010).

The next item will present the method that made possible the operationalization of the study.

3. METHOD OF STUDY

In order to operationalize the study a quantitative research was conducted that seeks to quantify the data in search of conclusive evidence based on large and representative samples and usually involves some form of statistical analysis. Unlike qualitative research, quantitative research findings can be considered conclusive and used to recommend a final course of action (Malhotra, 2011) and may be descriptive in nature, as it seeks to describe the characteristics of particular populations or phenomena. In addition, one of its most significant characteristics is the use of standardized techniques of data collection, such as the questionnaire and systematic observation (Gil, 2010).

Data collection was performed through the QWLQ-bref of Cheremeta *et al.* (2011), composed of 20 questions of evaluation of the Physical/Health, Psychological, Personal and Professional domains of the QWL, besides the QWL as a global factor. The questions are presented in a Likert scale of five alternatives, where point 1 represents a very negative response and point 5 represents a very positive response in order to define the degree of employee satisfaction with QWL and its importance before the members of the printing company.

The research qualifies as census, since the application of QWLQ-bref was performed with 41 of the company's 43 employees. After the application, the data tabulation was performed in Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, with calculations of the means and percentages by questions and domains of the QWL. The classification of the results was followed by the indications of Cheremeta *et al.* (2011) who, in turn, used the same scale of classification in levels: very unsatisfactory, unsatisfactory, neutral, satisfactory and very satisfactory.

4. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

4.1 Company Characterization

Founded in 1986 in the southern state of Santa Catarina, the organization under study is a first-generation family business. Initially it provided photocopy services and had only one copying machine, one blueprint machine and one binding machine. From 2008, the company directed its production to the publishing market, specializing in the manufacture of books, magazines and periodicals through offset printing technology. It currently serves government organizations and private institutions throughout the country and is regionally recognized for the quality of printing and finishing of its products.

According to the category of the Brazilian Service of Support to Micro and Small Companies of Santa Catarina (Sebrae/SC, 2018), the company analyzed is a small business (EPP, acronym in Portuguese) and, in all, 43 employees are responsible for maintaining the activities. The company has a low level of staff turnover, especially in specialized positions.

4.2 Analysis of the factors of the applied model

The overall mean indicated by the survey was 3,562, and according to the evaluation scale used, it is between medium and good. The Personal factor reached the highest average among all factors, with 3,724, and the lowest was the Professional factor, with 3,459. The difference between the means among the factors with worse and better results is very close, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results by domain.

Domain	Mean
A. Physical/Health	3,601
B. Psychological	3,465
C. Staff	3,724
D. Professional	3,459
QVT	3,562

Source: Elaborated from the results

The results show that employees consider that personal issues such as family, beliefs and culture are respected. That is, they evaluate that the company considers relevant that its employees have the conditions to enjoy a quality of life that positively impacts their families, beliefs and cultures, regardless of the service provided within the organization. Costa *et al.* (2012) have already mentioned in their studies that job satisfaction is not only related to occupational factors, but also to personal aspects of the worker's life. In this sense, the minimalist view of work, professional and QWL programs should give way to a new concept of worker satisfaction, in which all spheres are essential and the focus is QWL.

According to studies by Lee *et al.* (2013), there is a direct relationship between QWL and subjective phenomena that express satisfaction at work, since the perception of QWL suffers from personal feelings and values that each worker holds. In turn, the professional conditions, covering the organizational aspects that influence the quality of life of employees, are the least valued in the current context of the company. Vilas Boas *et* Morin (2014) already point out in

their research that the organization of work must be understood as a determinant factor of workers' health, as well as their performance and attitudes at work.

The personal factor concerns the family and cultural aspects that influence the work. At this point, the company is in the range between medium and good, presenting the best result of the survey with an average of 3,724. The result is that the employees of the company are satisfied with the work / family relationship, that is, they can harmonize this relationship and reconcile well the obligations of professional life with personal and family life, not allowing one to interfere in the good performance of the other. Silva et Ferreira (2013) mention that the devaluation of the personal competencies of the professionals, on the part of the organization, affects feelings such as commitment to work, satisfaction for the accomplishment of the work activities and, consequently, the QWL and productivity. A satisfying work environment enables the employee to have other commitments in their lives beyond work, such as family, friends, leisure, social activities, and individual participation in the community (Levering, 1986; Pilatti et Bejarano, 2005; Rechziegel *et al.*, 2001). Personal satisfaction on the part of the employees of an organization is often linked to the management of knowledge that, because it is a reciprocity process, can generate improvement in the relations among colleagues (Jiang et Hu, 2016). According to Zanardi *et al.* (2015), in order to achieve business success, the personal factor has been considered fundamental, since it is known that one of the means used to achieve the established levels of competitiveness and productivity in companies is to ensure that workers have QWL, for all production or product of a company pass through the hands of the workers.

The Physical/ Health Factor, which addresses health-related aspects of work-related diseases, obtained the second relevant average of 3.601. QWL has been gaining more and more emphasis on all types of organizations, whether private or public. This concern with the quality of life of employees has gained more importance when it is realized that the physical and mental health of people in the work environment directly impacts on their productivity and organizational results (Garlet *et al.*, 2017). According to Fernandes (1996), the management of physical and socio-psychological factors has an impact on the organizational climate, reflecting on worker well-being and corporate productivity. Work environments in which employees acquire health problems can lead to a decrease in productivity due to unplanned work-related shortages. Thus, Fernandes *et al.* (2013) corroborate the idea that a pleasant organizational climate can positively influence productivity by reducing employee turnover, avoiding absenteeism, as well as reducing occupational illnesses and accidents. Again, the company presents results between medium and good. According to the officials, this factor is satisfactory, which means that the organization

offers a suitable environment and working conditions to its employees, positively influencing their well-being.

In the psychological factor, the average obtained in the questionnaire was 3,465, which in the applied scale presents between medium and good. Personal satisfaction and self-esteem are essential factors for motivation at work. Maslow and Herzberg's theories suggest that when satisfied, employees tend to be more productive and creative, and the work context in general has a profound effect on employees and on QWL (Gaki *et al.*, 2013). According to Morin (2008), one of the factors that will cause workers to present psychological suffering is the moment they perceive their work negatively, leading them to think that their work has no meaning, as well as the environment in which they work. Lopes (1980) recognizes that motivation needs to be stimulated so that the potential of the people who make up the organization is released and, as a consequence, the effectiveness of the organization is maximized. Based on the result obtained, it is understood that the company seeks to motivate its employees through the integration among the members of the team in order to provide the feeling of security and stability.

The least expressive result in the analysis was the professional factor, with a mean of 3.459. Although it is the lowest result of the research, it is also between medium and good. The professional factor concerns the development of skills for career improvement, and as addressed by Rieger (2002), the aspirations of people in the work environment are to grow professionally, to improve knowledge and skills. By observing the professional factor as a fundamental variable for the individual within the organization, Sobrinho *et al.* (2010) point out that one of the causes of Burnout Syndrome (which is a syndrome of professional exhaustion due to continuous and excessive exposure to chronic interpersonal factors at work) is the low professional achievement, which refers to the feeling of ineffectiveness and impossibility to achieve professional goals. Davis et Newstrom (1992) argue for the need for management to create space for employees to independently plan and perform their routine tasks, as well as assist individuals in setting their own career goals and finding plans to achieve them. From this perspective, employees were satisfied with the possibility of growth in the company, but do not believe they are free to modify or create new things at work and are not satisfied with the level of participation in company decisions.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study had as objective to measure the degree of satisfaction of the employees of a graphic industry in the south of Santa Catarina, regarding the QWL. The data obtained by the QWQL-bref indicate that the employees of the analyzed company consider the analyzed factors bet-

ween average and good, since the average of the final QWL reached 3,562. Based on the analysis of the results obtained, it was verified that the graph presents a good work environment and provides quality of life to the workers, since, in general, all the analyzed questions were evaluated as satisfactory.

The greatest satisfaction factor was the Personnel, and the highest average reached was related to how the employees' families evaluate their work. This demonstrates that both employees and their families realize that the organization is concerned about being humanized by allowing employees to balance their professional and personal obligations.

On the other hand, the factor of greatest discontent was the professional factor. According to the employees of the printing company, the organization invests little or nothing in the qualification of its employees and does not worry about the development of the human potential of the company. In addition, employees do not believe they are free to modify or create new things at work and are not satisfied with the level of participation in the company's decisions.

In view of the presented results, it is suggested as a strategy that the managers of the company develop a plan for investing in formal qualification, encouraging the intellectual development of its employees. Therefore, as the performance of an organization is a result of the performance of its employees, human capital becomes a differential for the business. It is also suggested that the printing company develop an award-winning plan to encourage suggestions and improvements, creating the opportunity for innovation within the company. Involving everyone in organizational matters can increase employee satisfaction and consequently their quality of life.

As a suggestion for future studies, further studies using other analytical tools may be conducted to further examine relevant issues that contribute to the advancement of understanding regarding QWL and the knowledge area of strategic people management.

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