Does Effect of Workload on Quality of Work Life Vary With Generations?

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Received 25 March 2009; Received in revised form 11 December 2010; Accepted 10 June 2011

Abstract

This paper aims to explore the role that generation plays in the relationship between workload and quality of work life (QWL). A survey containing members from Generation Y, Generation X, and baby boomers was conducted and analyzed with multiple-group structural equation modeling (SEM). The results reveal that as workload gets heavier, QWL gets lower for Generation Ys and baby boomers. No significant effect of workload on QWL was found for Generation Xs. This finding statistically supports the claim of this study that generation moderates the relationship between workload and QWL. The implications of this finding raise discussion on the essential consideration of generation in employee selection, management, and work design.

Keywords: Generation, workload, quality of work life, moderating effect, SEM

1. Introduction

As the world becomes more competitive, businesses around the world need to provide a good quality of work life (QWL) in order to attract and retain qualifying employees. QWL and job-related outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment have been important topics in human resource and organizational development since the beginning of 1960s (Cummings and Worley, 2005; Leopold, 2005). Prior to 1970s, studies on QWL mostly focused on the effect of working environment on QWL. After 1970s studies on QWL shifted to the application of QWL to enhance organizational performance (Nadler and Lawler, 1983) and generally claimed that QWL is the extension of satisfaction which indicates an individual’s demand is fulfilled inside an organization (Efraty and Sirgy, 1990). The extent of an individual’s demand satisfied in an organization has positive effects on his or her performance, productivity, profitability, sales, profit, organizational commitment, organizational identification, loyalty to the organization, job involvement, job effort, employee’s self-esteem, turnover rate, and absenteeism, etc. (Havlovic, 1991; Labiris et al., 2002). This reveals the importance of QWL in general human resource management.

In studies of QWL, workload is deemed as one of the most influential factors (Manz and Grothe, 1991). Workload is also known as work demand (Laschinger et al, 2001) and can be further classified into physical (quantitative or objective) and perceptual (qualitative or subjective) workload (Fox et al., 1993; Dwyer and Ganster, 1991). Perceptual workload is

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\textsuperscript{**}DOI: 10.6126/APMR.2012.17.4.06