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Relationship between quality of work life and career advancement among Iranian academics

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Abstract

Background and aims: Career advancement can lead to productivity and success of educational canterns and universities. Academic employees have a significant role in the community education and social development. Success in universities depends on academic employee’s career advancement and quality of workplace. Quality of work life (QWL) views the organizational environment in accordance with employees' needs (health and safety, economic and family, social, esteem, actualization, knowledge and aesthetic). This study investigated the relationship between QWL and career advancement among academic employees in Hamadan, Iran. Methods: The structured questionnaires were based on information of 307 randomly selected academics in two Hamadan public universities in year 2013. The data collection was based on a self-administered questionnaire including background characteristics, seven dimensions of quality of work life and four dimensions of career advancement. Data was analyzed with structural equation modelling (AMOS) method. Results: The mean age of respondents was 39.67 (7.4) years. Most of them had Ph.D (70%) and 30% had M.Sc. educational level. Majority of respondents perceived moderate level of QWL (73%) and perceived high level of career advancement (62.2%). The results of the patch analysis showed that quality of work life and career advancement was significantly and positively related (β=.28, P=.039). Conclusions: It can be concluded that there was a positive and significant relationship between quality of work life and career advancement. The results of the study supported this idea that higher quality of work life lead to higher career advancement. Therefore, improving quality of work life of academics in universities might have high impact on educational and community development in country.

Keywords: Career advancement; Quality of work life; Academic employees; Iran

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1. Introduction

Career advancement can lead to productivity and success of educational centres and universities. Therefore, comprehensive higher education plans should be continuously evaluated. Specifically, in public universities, it is essential to assess their strategic plans, including career advancement for their human resources. Career advancement is viewed as an ongoing sequence of educational and work activities that are significant to the personal and that increase the value to the organizations.

Every organization has been known for a particular task and plays a specific role in society (Yaghinlo et al., 2005). Therefore, universities, which are responsible for public education and development of community and country, play a significant role in the process of social development. In another word, universities that have improved by optimizing the success and productivity of their employees, especially among academic employees, may directly affect student outcomes and productivity of the organization (Zamani et al., 2011; Ismail & Arokiasamy, 2007). Hamadan University of Medical Sciences and Bu-Ali Sina University are famous for quality of education in Iran. The success of any organization is dependent on the efforts and career advancement (i.e., salary, goal achievement, promotion prospects) of its employees. In the study by Hamidi and his colleagues (2011) in Hamadan universities, only 33.7% of employees were satisfied with their jobs and factors such as supervision, income level, and the nature of work are positively correlated to career satisfaction.

Quality of Work Life (QWL) views the organizational environment in accordance with a wide range of needs of their employees' well-being in the workplace that can lead to career advancement (Cascio, 1998; Sirgy et al., 2001). Quality of work life describes satisfaction of employee in seven major needs consists: (a) Health and safety needs, (b) Economic and family needs, (c) Social needs, (d) Esteem needs, (e) Actualization needs, (f) Knowledge needs, and (g) Aesthetic needs (Sirgy et al., 2001). University leaders and policy makers must be responsive to, and sensitive to, unconstructive factors in the place of work, such as job stress, that influence employees' health and negative effects on career advancement. However, little is known about the influence of organizational factors such as quality of work life among academic employees in universities in Iran. Thus, the aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between quality of work life and career advancement among academic employees in Hamadan universities, Iran.

2. Methods

A cross-sectional study was done in two Hamadan public universities in the year 2013. A structured questionnaire based on information of 307 randomly selected academic employees collected the data collection including background characteristics, seven dimensions of quality of work life and four dimensions of career advancement. Respondents were asked to determine the extent to which each of the questions reflects their organization in the aspects of quality of work life and career advancement (1 = almost never; 5 = almost always). According to the suggestion of Lee et al. (2007), we collapsed these need dimensions into two major sets: lower- and higher-order needs. Lower-order needs include health/safety needs and economic/family needs. Higher-order needs include social needs, esteem needs, self-actualization needs, knowledge needs, and aesthetic needs. In current study reliability of the QWL and career advancement constructs were at desirable levels (Cronbach’s alpha>0.70). Using the pilot study, the researcher improved the face and the content validity of the questionnaire. Data was analyzed with structural equation modeling method (AMOS).

| Constructs               | N of items | Sources                      | Reliability in pilot study | Reliability in actual study |
|--------------------------|------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Quality of work life     | 16         | Sirgy et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2007 | .894                       | .863                       |
| Low-level needs          | 6          |                              | .766                       | .812                       |
| High-level needs         | 10         |                              | .875                       | .844                       |
| Career advancement       | 15         | Weng, et al., 2010.          | .924                       | .890                       |
| Goal progress            | 4          |                              | .901                       | .782                       |
| Professional ability     | 4          |                              | .894                       | .849                       |
| Promotion speed          | 4          |                              | .764                       | .746                       |
| Remuneration growth      | 3          |                              | .903                       | .923                       |
3. Results

The age of respondents ranged between 26 to 46 with mean 39.67 (7.4) years. 44.6% were female and 55.4% were male. The majority (83.4%) of the respondents were married. About 70% of respondents had Ph.D. degree. 15% of employees had low level of QWL, 73% had a moderate level and 12% had a high level of QWL in the university (based on categorizing the data into equal interval width (low $\leq 2.339$), (2.34 $\leq$ moderate $\leq 3.669$), and (3.67 $\leq$ high $\leq 5$).

| Scale | Level               | Freq. | Percent | Mean (S.D) | Median |
|-------|---------------------|-------|---------|------------|--------|
| QWL   | Low (1.00-2.33)     | 46    | 15.0    | 38.50 (8.30)| 38.00  |
|       | Moderate (2.34-3.66) | 224   | 73.0    |            |        |
|       | High (3.67-5.00)    | 37    | 12.0    |            |        |
|       | Total               | 307   | 100.0   |            |        |

QWL: Quality of Work Life

27.0% of employees had low level of perceived career advancement, 62.2% had a moderate level and 10.8% had a high level of perceived career advancement in the university (based on categorizing the data into equal interval width (low $\leq 2.339$), (2.34 $\leq$ moderate $\leq 3.669$), and (3.67 $\leq$ high $\leq 5$).

| Scale | Level               | Freq. | Percent | Mean (S.D) | Median |
|-------|---------------------|-------|---------|------------|--------|
| CA    | Low (1.00-2.33)     | 83    | 27.0    | 37.88 (9.87)| 37.96  |
|       | Moderate (2.34-3.66) | 191   | 62.2    |            |        |
|       | High (3.67-5.00)    | 33    | 10.8    |            |        |
|       | Total               | 307   | 100.0   |            |        |

CA: Career advancement

The results of the path analysis showed that quality of work life and career advancement was significantly and positively related ($\beta=0.28$, $p=0.039$). It can be concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between quality of work life and career advancement.

4. Discussion

The results of the study supported this idea that higher quality of work life lead to higher career advancement. Similarly, studies have found high QWL employees have a high level of organizational recognition, job fulfillment, job performance and a lower level of turnover and personal hostility (Donavan et al. 2004; Homburg & Stock 2004). According to Dolan et al. (2007), QWL is a major issue for employees, and how organizations deal with this issue is of both academic and practical significance. QWL is the perceptions to which the organizational environment meets the full range of employees’ needs for their wellbeing at work (Cascio, 2000; Sirgy et al., 2001). Self-Efficacy is the conviction of a person that he/she can execute behaviours relevant to their own work (Vijaimadhan and Venkatarama Raju, 2013). In a study conducted by Hisk et al. (2010) found that by motivating communication between employer and employee, increasing experience to the working environment can enhance self-efficacy and ability of more adaptive coping strategies. Abigail, Asamani (2013) suggested that employees’ self-efficacy and education level play an important role in employees’ tasks, responsibilities, and to a large extent affect their quality of work life. Lack of information, low self-managed team could be the reason of less members’ satisfaction and productivity. Job enrichment and mutually supportive communication build employees’ perceived efficacy to take on broader functions and a proactive work role (Bandura, 2001; Parker, 1998). The finding of this study confirmed quality of life play an important role on employees’ career advancement. Career advancement has usually been associated with learning new ideas, concepts and facts that can improve one’s opportunities, having strong personalities such as high self-efficacy and mentoring as well as developing new interaction may have similar benefit. Strong individualities and frequent networking need to become as important to one’s plan for career
advancement as they related significantly to individual’s career advancement.

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