

Core Self-Evaluations and Quality of Work Life in Public Sector of Iran

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Abstract This study investigated the relationship between core self-evaluations and quality of work life in public sector employees. Questionnaires administered to 278 employees at five public service organizations in Kerman, Iran. The results showed that core self-evaluations correlated to quality of work life of employees. Moreover, the results indicated that core self-evaluations correlated to six components of quality of work life including: job & career satisfaction, working conditions, general well-being, home-work interface, stress at work, and control at work. In regression analyses core self-evaluations was found to be a significant predictors of quality of work life and its components, while age, gender, educations, and tenure as control variables, were insignificant predictors. The conclusion of the study was that core self-evaluations could enhance quality of work life of employees in public organizations.

Keywords Quality of Work Life, Core Self-Evaluations, Public Service Organizations, Iran

1. Introduction

Nowadays, improvement of work conditions is the most important factors for organizations and employees, because the work has a critical role in the life of human beings (Bahrami, Aslani, Abdollahie, & Torabi, 2013). Trend like Quality of Work Life (QWL) is considered as important predictors of sustainability and viability in today's working environment (Indrani & Devi, 2014), which is dynamic, ambiguous and variable (Hadjali & Salimi, 2012). QWL which refers to an employee satisfaction with working life is a multidimensional concept comprised of several components such as: job satisfaction, work stress, work conditions, and well-being. QWL is an important issue for organizations because it is related to concerns about effects of job/work on health and general well-being. It provides safe and healthy working conditions (Korunka Hoonakker & Carayon, 2008; Adhikari & Gautam, 2010), that in such working conditions employees exhibit positive organizational behaviors (Kashani, 2012; Taher, 2013). It also reduces the negative behavior of employees and contributes organizational effectiveness (Mullins, 1996). So, it is significant for managers to maintain QWL perfectly in order to utilize employees most efficiently and effectively.

Therefore, organizations seek ways to provide a good QWL for their employees.

On the other hand, the personality traits have been

recognized as predictors of some job related outcomes and researchers all around the world have focused on examining the effect of different personality traits on various job related outcomes. For instance, several researches indicated that self esteem correlated to job satisfaction (Judge & Bono, 2001; Alavi & askaripur, 2003; Pierce & Gardiner, 2004), and perceived stress (Reilly, Dhingra, & Boduszek, 2014). Several researches reported that locus of control correlated to job satisfaction (Judge & Bono, 2001; Chen & Silverthorne, 2008), and job stress (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008). In several studies it was found that self efficacy correlated to job satisfaction (Judge & Bono, 2001; Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, & Steca, 2003; Chen, Goddard, & Casper, 2004), and stress (Betoret, 2006). Moreover, emotional stability was found to be correlated to job satisfaction (Judge & Bono, 2001), subjective well-being (Vitterso, 2001), quality of life, and work environment satisfaction (Bobic, 2012). Van der Berg and Martins (2013) in their study found that there is a positive relationship between big five Personality traits and QWL. In another study, Mensah and Lebbaeue (2013) indicated that self efficacy was related to QWL.

Recently, Core Self Evaluation (CSE) has become a popular topic in the fields of psychology and management. It was proposed as positive characteristic for enhancing of well-being in different applied domains (Chang, Lance Ferris, Johnson, Rosen, & Tan, 2012). CSE defined as "fundamental premises that individuals hold about themselves and their functioning in the world" (Judge, Erez, & Bono, 1998, p. 168). This concept consists of four personality traits (self-esteem, general self efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability). These four traits, as mentioned above have historically been examined separately

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from each other (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997).

CSE has received considerable research attentions during the past decade (Bowling, Wang, Tang & Kennedy, 2010; Chang et al., 2012). Much of research has examined the potential work-related consequences of CSE (Bono & Judge, 2003; Johnson, Rosen, & Levy, 2008; Judge, 2009). Researchers found that CSE was correlated to job performance (Judge & Bono, 2001), goal-setting and task motivation (Erez & Judge, 2001), stressors, strains, and coping (Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge, & Scott, 2009), engagement (Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010), popularity (Scott & Judge, 2009) and perceptions of the work environment (Judge et al., 1998). Moreover, recently, researchers reported that CSE was correlated to several job attitudes such as job satisfaction and career satisfaction (Chang et al., 2012), and perceived work stress (Judge, Ilies, & Zhang, 2012).

However, although several empirical studies have examined the effects of CSE on some components of QWL such as job & work satisfaction, stress at work, yet, until now, no studies have directly investigated the effect of CSE on QWL as a whole and some components of QWL such as working conditions, general well-being, home-work interface, and control at work. Therefore, the current study fills these gaps in the literature and fits into this research stream by examining CSE as predictor of QWL and its components in public sector of Iran.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Core Self-Evaluations

CSE is defined as "fundamental premises that individuals hold about themselves and their functioning in the world" (Judge et al., 1998, p. 168). Judge et al. (1997) proposed that four personality traits reflected CSE: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, emotional stability, and locus of control. These traits, according to Judge et al. (1997), have three criteria: (a) these traits are evaluation focused, (b) they are fundamental rather than surface-level traits, and (c) they are broad in scope.

Specifically, Self-esteem is a person's overall appraisal of their own self-worth (Rosenberg, 1965). General self-efficacy is defined as person's general estimate of their ability to perform under a wide range of situations (Bandura, 1997). Locus of control is the belief in one's capacity to impact the environment and produce desired effects (Rotter, 1966). Finally, emotional stability (or conversely, neuroticism), reflects a propensity to feel calm and secure and show less reactivity to everyday occurrences (Eysenck, 1990).

As same as all personality traits which are psychological in nature, relatively stable over time, and provide the reasons for behavior (Church, 2000), these four traits are relatively stable and affect our all appraisals about ourselves and world around us (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002).

These traits, according to Judge, Bono, Erez, Locke, & Thoreson (2002) are among the most commonly studied traits in psychology.

Evidence from empirical studies regarding validity of the CSE construct showed that the four constituent CSE traits load onto a common latent factor (Judge, Bono, & Locke, 2000; Judge et al., 1998). Therefore, CSE is a higher-order latent construct with indicators of these four specific traits (Judge, Bono, & Locke, 2000; Judge, Bono, Erez, & Locke, 2005).

2.2. Quality of Work Life

QWL is defined as "employee satisfaction with a variety of needs through resources, activities, and outcomes stemming from participation in the workplace" (Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel, & Lee, 2001, P.242). QWL is a very broad and multidimensional concept that conceptualized in various manners. It is characterized in the literature as a broad concept contains certain aspects of work life (Nair, 2013).

One of these conceptualizations proposed by Walton (1985), that introduced eight major dimensions for QWL including: (1) adequate and fair compensation, (2) safe and healthy working conditions, (3) immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities, (4) opportunity for continued growth and security, (5) social integration in the work organization, (6) constitutionalism in the work organization, (7) work and total life space and (8) social relevance of work life (Inderani and Devi, 2014). The emphasis on conceptual categories of QWL proposed by Walton (1975) was humanistic values and social responsibilities (Boonrod, 2009).

Easton and Van Laar, (2013) proposed six dimensions for QWL that include: Job & Career Satisfaction (JCS), Working Conditions (WCS), General Well-being (GWB), Home-Work Interface (HWI), Stress at Work (SAW), and Control at Work (CAW). Job and career satisfaction related to general satisfaction with the job and with career development. Working conditions refer to level of satisfaction with the physical working environment and conditions. General well-being is related to key aspects of psychological and physical well-being, such as happiness and wellness. Home-work interface reflects employees' views about the degree to which the organization understands and tries to help them with pressures outside of their work. Stress at work reflects level of work-related stress. Control at work refers to involvement in decision making. This conceptualization of QWL proposed by Easton and Van Laar, (2013) was used in this study.

2.3. Core Self-evaluations and Quality of Work Life

The effect of CSE on outcomes can be explained by the approach/avoidance framework (Chang et al., 2012). The difference in sensitivities to positive (the approach) and negative (the avoidance) information influences how a person evaluates situations as favorable or unfavorable (Ferguson & Bargh, 2008). According to Ferris et al. (2011),

persons with high CSE are more sensitive to positive stimuli and less on negative stimuli, whereas persons with low CSE are more sensitive to negative stimuli and less sensitive to positive stimuli. Therefore, the difference between individuals in evaluations of their QWL can be explained by this approach/avoidance framework.

According to Kumar and Iyer (2012), uniqueness of individuals in his physical, mental, cultural, emotional and attitudinal framework plays a major role in determining their QWL. They argued that the work environment and the employee both have a role in determining QWL in which the individual related factors are intrinsic and the work environment related factors are extrinsic and provided by the organization.

According to Johnson, Rosen, and Levy (2008), the core evaluations is a response by Judge *et al.* (1997) to a need for providing an integrative framework that explain the influences of individual dispositions on their level of job satisfaction. They added that CSE theory intends to explain why certain traits predict job satisfaction.

Individuals who have high scores on CSE are known as -well adjusted, positive, self-confident and efficacious (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003). Empirical studies found that CSE is a significant predictor of career satisfaction (Stumpp, Muck, Hulsheger, Judge, & Maier, 2010), job and life satisfaction (Bono & Judge 2003; Chang *et al.*, 2012; Stumpp *et al.*, 2010), happiness and positive affectivity (Gardner & Pierce, 2010; Rey, Extremera, & Duran, 2012; Stumpp *et al.*, 2010), positive aspects of career decision making (Di Fabio, Palazzeschi, & Bar-On, 2012; Koumoundourou, Kounenou, & Siavara, 2012), work stress level (Brunborg, 2008; Luria & Torjman, 2009; Judge, Ilies, & Zhang, 2012; Morris, Messal, & Meriac, 2013), better health functioning (Hilbert, Braehler, Haeuser, & Zenger, 2014), and higher levels of life balance (Grisslich, Proske, & Korndle, 2012).

However, as mentioned above, CSE affects on job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and work stress. These variables were definitely conceptualized by Easton and Van Laar (2013) as components of QWL. Moreover, CSE acts as predictors of life satisfaction, better health functioning, positive aspects of career decision making, and life balance. These concepts are close in definitions to some variables that proposed and considered in this study as components of QWL. Accordingly, the following main hypothesis and six specific hypotheses were proposed:

Main Hypothesis: CSE is correlated to QWL.

Specific Hypothesis 1: CSE is correlated to JCS.

Specific Hypothesis 2: CSE is correlated to WCS.

Specific Hypothesis 3: CSE is correlated to JWB.

Specific Hypothesis 4: CSE is correlated to HWI.

Specific Hypothesis 5: CSE is correlated to SAW.

Specific Hypothesis 6: CSE is correlated to CAW.

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

Participants in this study were 278 employees in five public organizations in Kerman, Iran. Data were collected via two surveys. The characteristics of the participants are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Participants characteristics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Gender</i>	
<i>Male</i>	80.1
<i>Female</i>	19.9
<i>Age</i>	
<i>Less than 30 years</i>	24.7
<i>30-40 years</i>	40.4
<i>40-50 years</i>	25.8
<i>More than 50 years</i>	9.1
<i>Education</i>	
<i>High School Diploma</i>	31.4
<i>Associate Degree</i>	14.6
<i>Bachelor Degree</i>	39.7
<i>Master and Doctorate Degree</i>	14.3
<i>Tenure</i>	
<i>Less than 15 years</i>	25.4
<i>15-20 years</i>	23
<i>20-25 years</i>	23.7
<i>More than 25 years</i>	27.9

3.2. Measures

This study was surveyed with measures that comprehensively used by researchers all over the world. These measures were originally in English. In this study, double-back translation procedure was used to translate these measures to Persian. This procedure is appropriate to ensure equivalence of meaning (Farmer, Tierney & Kung-McIntyre, 2003). CSE was measured with a 12-item scale (1 = never to 5 = always) developed by Judge *et al.* (2003). They provided evidence of a unitary factor structure and psychometric support for this scale. The alpha coefficient of this scale in this study was calculated .83. The stability of the measure was controlled by test re test method.

A 23- Item scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) developed by Easton and Van Laar (2013) was used to measure QWL. The alpha coefficient was calculated .86 for QWL measure in this study. The alpha coefficients for sub scale of this measure were in the range of .72 to .84. The stability of the measure was controlled by test re test method.

4. Results

Descriptive statistics including means (M) and standard

deviations (SD) for all study variables are listed in Table 2. The correlation analysis was conducted in this study to determine the correlation and direction of relationship between CSE and QWL as well as the relationships between CSE and six QWL components. The results of the correlation analysis as presented in table 2, indicated that CSE was significantly and positively correlated to QWL ($r = .411, p < .01$). The results also showed that CSE were significantly and positively correlated to JCS ($r = .449, p < .01$), WCS ($r = .471, p < .01$), GWB ($r = .381, p < .01$), HWI ($r = .427, p < .01$), and CAW ($r = .507, p < .01$). In addition, the result showed that CSE is significantly and negatively correlated to SAW ($r = -.398, p < .01$).

Table 3 lists hierarchical regression results. The hierarchical regression analyses were conducted in this study to examine the proposed hypotheses (Main hypothesis and six specific hypotheses). The hierarchical regression analyses conducted in 2 models for each of dependent variables. The control variables including gender, age, education, and tenure entered at first model of regression; CSE and all control variables entered together on regression in second model. In model 1 of the regression predicting QWL, JCS,

WCS, GWB, HWI, SAW, and CAW, it was found that all control variables were not significant predictors. 1.3% of variance in QWL was explained by all 4 control variables. Moreover, .3% of the variance in JCS, .4% of the variance in WCS, .9% of the variance in GWB, .3% of the variance in HWI, .5 % of the variance in SAW, and .4 of the variance in CAW were explained by all 4 control variables. In model 2 of the regression predicting QWL, JCS, WCS, GWB, HWI, SAW, and CAW, CSE and all control variables entered together in regression model. The results showed that, only CSE act as significant predictor and all 4 control variables were insignificant predictors. An additional 16.1% of variance in QWL ($\beta = .406, p < .01$) explained by CSE. Consequently, the main hypothesis of the study was accepted. Moreover, an additional 20% of the variance in JCS ($\beta = .452, p < .01$), 22.1% of the variance in WCS ($\beta = .475, p < .01$), 14.2% of the variance in GWB ($\beta = .380, p < .01$), 18.3% of the variance in HWI ($\beta = .432, p < .01$), 15.5% of the variance in SAW ($\beta = -.397, p < .01$), 25.8% of the variance in CAW ($\beta = .512, p < .01$) were explained by CSE. Therefore, six specific hypotheses of the study were accepted.

Table 2. Mean, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 CSE	3.744	.7409	-							
2 QWL	3.393	.7227	.411**	-						
3 JCS	3.387	.7190	.449**	.553**	-					
4 WCS	3.549	.8537	.471**	.415**	.635**	-				
5 GWB	3.358	.7509	.381**	.712**	.366**	.304**	-			
6 HWI	3.474	.7381	.427**	.476**	.664**	.636**	.344**	-		
7 SAW	2.471	.9780	-.398**	-.264**	-.134**	-.183**	-.202**	-.217**	-	
8 CAW	3.436	.7198	.507**	.462**	.693**	.671**	.355**	.691**	-.202**	-

Note: **= $p < .01$

Table 3. Hierarchical regression analyses predicting QWL, JCS, WCS, GWB, HWI, SAW, and CAW

Outcomes Variables	QWL	JCS	WCS	GWB	HWI	SAW	CAW
Model1							
Age	.057	-.001	-.023	.060	.028	.000	.017
Gender	.067	.059	.023	.036	.030	.057	.047
Education	.067	-.032	.029	.030	-.028	.024	-.015
Tenure	.040	.008	-.035	.064	.039	.040	.046
R ²	.013	.003	.004	.009	.003	.005	.004
Model2							
Age	.034	-.026	-.050	.038	.004	.023	-.012
Gender	.028	.015	-.023	-.001	-.012	-.019	-.003
Education	-.065	-.030	.031	.032	-.026	.023	-.012
Tenure	-.031	.018	-.025	.072	.048	.031	.057
CSE	.406**	.452**	.475**	.380**	.432**	-.397**	.512**
R ²	.174	.203	.225	.151	.186	.160	.262

Note: N=278, **= $p < .01$

5. Discussions & Conclusions

The research results showed a significant and positive relationship between CSE and QWL. Moreover, these results showed that CSE had significant and positive correlations with five components of QWL including: job & career satisfaction, working conditions, general well-being, home-work interface, and control at work. The results also indicated that CSE had significant and negative correlation with sixth components of QWL namely stress at work. The results of the study realized that CSE act as predictor of QWL and its components.

Theoretical discussions supported the findings of this study. Robbins (1991) addressed that self-esteem and locus of control (as two components of CSE), and several other personality characteristics act as antecedents of employees' attitudes and behaviors. In additions to theoretical support, empirical evidences in the literature supported the research findings. Although, there was no study that empirically examined the effect of CSE on QWL as a whole, several researches have examined the effects of CSE on several components of QWL. For instance, Stumpp *et al.* (2010) indicated that CSE had an effect on career satisfaction. Chang *et al.* (2012) indicated that job and life satisfaction were correlated to CSE. Researcher also found that CSE influenced on work stress (Brunborg, 2008; Luria & Torjman, 2009; Judge, Ilies, & Zhang, 2012; Morris, Messal, & Meriac, 2013). These results were consistence with the current study findings.

Moreover, several researches have focused on studying the variables which were not among six components of QWL proposed by Easton and Van Laar (2013), but these studied concepts were close to definitions of some QWL components. For instance, Gardner and Pierce (2010) found that happiness and positive affectivity were correlated to CSE. Hilbert *et al.* (2014) indicated that individuals with high level of CSE had a better health functioning. It was also reported in previous researches that individuals with high level of CSE also had higher levels of life balance (Grisslich, Proske, & Korndle, 2012). These studied variables (happiness and positive affectivity, better health functioning, higher levels of life balance) were very close to definition of general well-being as one component of QWL. Di Fabio *et al.* (2012) and Koumoundourou *et al.* (2012) found that CSE influenced on positive aspects of career decision making which reflect the definition proposed for control at work as one components of QWL. The findings of these studies have been carried out in different cultures throughout the world, were in line with findings of the present study that clarify the effect of CSE on QWL and its components in Iranian context.

Findings of this study expand the body of knowledge in relation to the predictors of QWL. Therefore, it assists managers, HR practitioners, organizational psychologists, and others in developing their strategies to enhance and maintain the QWL of employees in organizations. Such strategies could be persuaded by managers, HR practitioners,

and organizational psychologists are the employment strategy focuses on choosing employees with high CSE and intervention strategies for enhancing CSE of employees.

This study had several limitations that need to be considered in future researches. This study was carried out in five public service organizations in one city of Iran. This issue reduces the ability to generalize the research findings. Expanding the future researches in a broader domain in Iran can enhance the ability to generalize research's findings. Moreover, conducting similar studies in international level can be significant for increasing the generalization of the research findings.

Another limitation in current study was that it focused only on examining the effect of CSE on QWL and its components and ignored the moderating and mediating mechanisms by which CSE influences QWL and its components. Although, there is no research that addressed moderating and mediating mechanisms by which CSE influences QWL, empirical evidences support that several factors moderate or mediate the effect of CSE on outcomes. Kim (2015) addressed that "one important area of CSE research involves the conditions that can enhance or mitigate the effects of CSE on employee outcomes" (p.346). In this regard Kim *et al.* (2015) found that transformational leadership moderated the effect of CSE on job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment. O'Neill *et al.* (2015) reported that individualism-dominant cultural profile moderated the effect of CSE on job performance in which CSE was a stronger predictor of job performance in employees with an individualism-dominant cultural profile. In another research, Neves and Champion (2015) found that trust in the supervisor and emotional exhaustion mediated the relationship between CSE and workplace deviance. Therefore, such factors also can be considered as moderators or mediators in studying the relationships between CSE and QWL.

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