

ABSTRACT

THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF INDUSTRIAL WORKERS IN BANGKOK AND VICINITY

by

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This study investigates the effects of work-related life conditions on Thai industrial workers' perceived quality of life as well as their physical and psychological health. The empirical analysis of the quality-of-life causal model was conducted on cross-sectional data gathered from a sample of 825 industrial workers, 437 males and 388 females, working in 26 industrial factories in Bangkok and its vicinity.

The study, seeking to investigate the 'fit' between objective and subjective indicators of well-being and to understand how each of the relevant factors of interest affects both the cognitive and affective evaluation of the individual workers, resorts to disaggregation of both objective and perceptual data. The employment of path analysis technique in the analysis of the quality-of-life causal model makes it possible to measure the direct influence along each separate path in the model and thus to find the degree to which variations of the workers' perceived quality of life and health are determined by each particular cause. Multiple regression analysis technique was employed in the analyses of 14 sub-models in the path model.

Seven life domains: financial status, family, leisure, housing, community, work, and health were selected as important components of life with which satisfactions or dissatisfactions are relevant to the person's perceived well-being.

The result of the multiple regression analysis of overall life satisfaction confirms that satisfactions with these domains highly correlate with overall life satisfaction.

Consistent with most studies on subjective well-being, most of the effects of objective life conditions on domain satisfactions are mediated by domain assessments and their direct effects are found to be rather weak. The results from the path analysis of the total model, however, show that their overall effects on life satisfaction can be reasonably strong.

It is found that physical health is the best predictor of the perceived quality of life. It affects levels of satisfaction with all domains except community. Its considerable effect on financial status satisfaction, which is greater than that of income itself, indicates that health is a very important asset for industrial workers; failing health makes them financially insecure. It also implies that the cost of health care is considerably burdensome for many industrial workers.

Physical health is in turn affected by a number of work-related factors; long work hours, rotating work shift, chemicals used in the workplace, and physical strains caused by working posture, work pace and the difficulty of their work all have adverse effects on industrial workers' health. These, and other, work-related factors such as the presence of vapors, fumes or odors, the sound level in the workplace, work characterized as having narrow job content, and lack of control over work situation also have negative effects on work satisfaction. It is found that while negatively affecting the predominantly cognitive evaluation of their work, rotating work shift positively affects the nonconscious, affective evaluation. The estimated causal effect of each particular work-related factor appears to be small, but when combined, the effect of overall working condition is one of the most important factors of the perceived quality of life.

Perceived quality of life, or psychological well-being, positively correlates with psychological health. Its influence is stronger on depressive symptoms than on other areas of mental health symptoms. While living

environment registers no significant impact on the workers' psychological health, working conditions do in varying degrees. Long work hours, rotating work shift, the experience of occupational accident, the presence of vapors, fumes or odors, sound level and chemicals used in the workplace and all the work characteristics under study--narrow job content, lack of control, physical strains from working posture, work pace, work difficulty, and constant alertness required by their work--all have detrimental impact on the workers' mental health. The total causal effect of each individual factor is small, but because the workers experience not one but a combination of these factors, the overall effect can become very substantial. It is found that constant alertness decreases male workers' depressive symptoms; on the contrary, constant alertness has an adverse effect on female workers' psychological health. This suggests that, in general, work assigned to male and female workers is different in nature, so this should be taken into consideration when contemplating ways to improve industrial workers' working conditions. At any rate, human capital welfare benefits provided by employers prove to be one effective means of improving the workers' quality of life and their psychological health.

The results of the analysis illustrate that disaggregation of perceptual data helps identify not only some significant relationships but also components of mixed effects of some independent variables.