


**QUALITY OF LIFE AT WORK - QWL: A CASE STUDY WITH THE EMPLOYEES OF THE SPECIALIZED REFERENCE CENTER FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE - CREAS IN THE CITY OF FORTALEZA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The need for quality of life has become increasingly explicit for organizations and people. Thus, this article presents a case study regarding the Quality of Life at Work (QWL) of the employees of the Specialized Reference Center for Social Assistance (CREAS) in the city of Fortaleza, using indicators based on the categories of the Walton Model. Its categories present broad indicators, easily adaptable to the Brazilian socioeconomic culture, adapting to the organizational condition of the community where the target population is located. The institution is public, belonging to the social assistance policy, in its specialized scope. The method adopted corresponds to an exploratory-descriptive research according to the objectives, and bibliographic according to the procedures. This is a unique case study of quantitative nature, whose data collection occurred through a closed questionnaire applied to sixteen employees of the researched organization. After concluding the data analysis, it is possible to infer that the QWL variables in the surveyed company are not well accepted by a significant portion of the respondents, since 38% of the respondents feel satisfied, while 58% are dissatisfied and 4% opted for an intermediate position.

**Keywords:** CREAS. People management. Walton's model. Quality of life at work.

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## INTRODUCTION

The need for quality of life has become increasingly explicit for organizations and people, highlighting the studies on Quality and Life at Work – QWL, which gains space due to the relevance of the theme in the organizational sphere. Companies take a closer look at the relationship between favorable working conditions and worker productivity.

The first questions about quality concerned only the quality of the product offered, with the purpose of meeting the expectations of the external customer. Over the years, companies began to realize that the internal customer was also deserving of quality, offered through actions aimed at the well-being of the employee (Vasconcelos *et al.*, 2011).

Recent data show Brazil in 67th place in an index that measures quality of life. The Social Progress Index – SPI is the global indicator that evaluates more than 50 parameters that make up the quality of life of citizens. In 2024, Brazil added 68.90 points to the overall average, on a scale of 0 to 100 points. The country fell 21 positions compared to 2014, from 46th to 67th place, a result that reflects the worsening levels of social and economic inequality in the country (Gouveia; José, 2024).

Achieving QWL is one more challenge among many others that people face daily in their work environment, regardless of the type of organization and its area of activity. In this context, this case study is inserted, a moment in which QWL has been studied by several authors, due to its importance in the academic and organizational areas. Thus, the research was carried out at the Specialized Reference Center for Social Assistance – CREAS, in the city of Fortaleza, a public facility, belonging to the social assistance policy, in a specialized scope.

The relevance of the role played by CREAS employees in the provision of vital services to users is undeniable, since the equipment is configured as a public and state unit, which offers specialized and continuous services to families and individuals in situations of threat or violation of rights (physical, psychological, sexual violence, human trafficking, compliance with socio-educational measures in an open environment, etc.). The provision of specialized and continuous care should prioritize the family and the situation experienced. This specialized care focuses on the family's access to social assistance rights, through the enhancement of resources and protection capacity. (Brazil, 1993).

Thus, in view of the important role in the care of families and in the provision of essential services to society, associated with the lack of studies on the QWL of professionals in the area of social assistance, the theme investigated in this research corresponds: "The Quality of Life at Work – QWL of Public Servants". And with the purpose of directing the studies, the research was guided by the following theme delimitation:



"Quality of Life at Work – QWL from the perspective of the employees of the Specialized Reference Center for Social Assistance – CREAS, in the city of Fortaleza – CE".

As mentioned, there is a lack of Brazilian studies aimed at investigating the QWL of these professionals. Due to this reality, the factors that motivated this research, it is necessary to consider the indisputable role of these professionals in the formulation and implementation of public policies.

As for the methodology, the study is characterized as an exploratory-descriptive research according to the objectives, and bibliographic according to the procedures. This is a single case study of quantitative nature, whose data collection occurred through a closed questionnaire applied to sixteen employees of the researched organization, using indicators based on the categories of the Walton Model.

The article will be divided into five sections. The first section will consist of the introduction of the research, with brief notes on the subject, describing the objectives of the study, the relevance, the methodology and the purpose. The second section corresponds to the critical reflection on the category "Work". In the following section, we worked with the category "Quality of Life at Work – QWL", rescuing the main concepts of QWL from the perspective of different authors and times. The fourth section alludes to the results of the research. And finally, in the fifth and last section dedicated to final considerations, the study was recapitulated, followed by the synthesis of the research results, emphasizing the importance of the case study for society.

The objective of this work is not to exhaust the discussions about the phenomenon, however, in view of the foregoing and the content expressed in the following pages, it is intended that this investigative process reaches contributions to the collection of social assistance policy and other areas of the social sciences, in addition to arousing reflections on the subject studied.

## CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE WORK CATEGORY

Work is the most valued social activity in current times, it can be said that people live in the world of work. However, when beginning studies on the category of work, it is relevant to know its meaning etymologically.

It originates from the Latin *tripalium*, although other hypotheses associate it with *trabaculum*. *Tripalium* was an instrument made of three sharp sticks on which farmers beat wheat, corn cobs, and flax, to tear and shred them (Albornoz, 2012, p. 83).



A considerable number of dictionaries state that *tripalium* was an instrument of torture. Although originally *tripalium* was used in the farmer's work, the use of this instrument as a means of torture gave meaning to the word for a long time. From the semantic content of suffering we moved on to that of striving, working and working. The first meaning would have lasted until the beginning of the fifteenth century, and this evolution of meaning would have happened at the same time in other Latin languages such as *trabajo* in Spanish, *traballo* in Catalan, *travail* in French and *travaglio* in Italian (Albornoz, 2012).

According to Marx (1994), work stands out as an ontological category, a founding component of the social being and human sociability. Through work, human beings transform nature and interact with their peers, building networks of social relationships. The freedom of choice of individuals is the basis of the relationship between nature and man, mediated by work; This freedom is alienated and fetishized in capitalist sociability, where the distinction between the owners of the means of production – the capitalists – and those deprived of such means – the workers – is clearly presented. Thus, labor power is placed as a commodity and the class that lives from labor, in turn, is subjected to a process of exploitation, aimed at social reproduction in exchange for wages, generating surplus value, a source of wealth for capitalists.

Therefore, work has proved to be a basic concern of humanity since its origin, because as daily life throws a series of adversities, the human being is led to the need to create survival strategies through his work.

It is worth mentioning that employees need the motivation factor to achieve a favorable degree of performance in their work, so a good interpersonal relationship is one of these factors, directly interfering with productivity levels.

In this way, it can be stated that labor relations arise from the social relations of production, constituting in a unique way the integration between social agents that occupy opposite and complementary positions in the production process, on the one hand, the workers and on the other, the employers. The patterns of labor relations in the organizational context are defined from macro-political-economic aspects corresponding to social movements, the government and the market; and from internal aspects, represented by human resources management, that is, by its ability to order, assign and build organizational identity (FLEURY and FISCHER, 2000).

## **QUALITY OF LIFE AT WORK – QWL**

In recent decades, QWL has undergone considerable transformations, from essentially operational and legislated practices to strategic corporate actions. Such changes



refer, in large part, to the changes that have occurred in the world of work and people's needs, culminating in the structuring of QWL activities in companies (Limongi-França, 2012).

Over time, the expression QWL has received different connotations, as research related to the theme is developed, transformations are carried out and new visions and perspectives are presented. In order to demonstrate the views of different authors and times, Merino (2004) cites authors such as Guest (1979), Davis (1981), Fernandes and Becker (1988), Fernandez (1989) and Vieira and Hanashino (1990), as shown in Chart 1.

Chart 1 – The evolution of the concept of Quality of Life at Work – QWL

AUTHOR	CONCEPT
GUEST (1979)	"[...] a process by which an organization attempts to unlock the creative potential of its people by involving them in decisions that affect their lives at work. A striking feature of the process is that its objectives are not simply intrinsic, focusing on improving productivity and efficiency itself; they are also intrinsic with respect to what the worker sees as self-actualization and self-actualization ends. self-aggrandizement."
DAVIS (1981)	"Conditions Favorable or Unfavorable from one work environment for employees."
FERNANDES E BECKER (1988)	"To regroup all the experiences of humanization of work and that guide according to what one has convention called industrial democracy".
FERNANDEZ (1989)	"It relates the motivational factors linked to performance (Maslow and Herzberg) – QWL exists when individuals can satisfy their important personal needs, through the organization in which they operate."
HANASHINO (1990)	"[...] the improvement of working conditions – with extension to all functions of any nature at the hierarchical level, in the behavioral, environmental and organizational variables, that come, together with consistent Human Resources policies, to humanize employment, in order to obtain a satisfactory result, both for employees and for the organization. This means mitigating the conflict existing between capital and labor [...]."

Source – Merino, 2004, p. 17. (adapted by the author)

It can be seen in the initial concepts of QWL that one of the main purposes was to increase productivity, consequently, aiming at greater profits. Over the decades, other focuses have been incorporated, aiming at the well-being of the worker in the face of various values such as: self-esteem, importance of the work performed, and greater participation of the worker in decision-making within the company.



The humanization of work relations in the organization is a constant search of QWL, maintaining a close relationship with productivity and worker satisfaction in their work environment (well-being, health and safety) (Merino, 2004, p. 16).

A more recent interpretation of QWL is perceived in the view of Limongi-França (2013), who assumes the position that people's quality of life can be defined as the perception of well-being with regard to individual needs, the socioeconomic environment and people's life expectancy, while QWL values working conditions, the care with the physical structure offered to the workers and the satisfactory interpersonal relationships.

Thus, based on the theoretical basis of the aforementioned authors, we can conclude that the term QWL has broad meanings, changing according to the historical moment. And that companies, as a way to implement improvements in the QWL process, must know the profile of their workers in depth. Thus, through a diagnosis, organizations are able to identify the characteristics that interfere in the life and work of each employee, and then create action plans in order of priorities.

## SEARCH RESULTS

### PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

As a starting point, in order to identify the sample, personal and professional data of the respondents were used. Personal characteristics correspond to: age group, gender and level of education. While the professional characteristic used was: time in the company.

The questionnaire applied has four alternatives with intervals of the following age groups: 18 to 25 years; 26 to 35 years old; 36 to 45 years old and over 45 years old. After tabulating the data, we could infer that 56% of those surveyed are over 36 years old, therefore, this CREAS unit, for the most part, is composed of more mature civil servants; while 44% of those questioned are younger civil servants, people between 18 and 35 years old.

Regarding the gender of the respondents, we noticed a predominance of the female gender. Of the 16 surveyed, four are male (totaling 25%) and twelve female (totaling 75%). This difference is probably due to the fact that historically/culturally in the division of labor according to gender, social work was considered an activity only for women, with men being responsible for work that used force. However, over the years, this dichotomy has been overcome, since men have been gradually inserting themselves in the social area.

Regarding the level of education, five answer alternatives were used: complete high school; incomplete higher education; complete higher education; incomplete master's or doctorate and complete master's or doctorate. After tabulation, we found that one respondent has only completed high school, while four are attending higher education and



eleven already have completed higher education. None of those questioned has or is studying for a master's or doctorate. The concern of the respondents regarding academic training is noticeable, as it is a specialized job that requires higher education for most positions. However, it was found that 6% have not yet started a higher education course.

The time in the company was also considered, with the availability of four alternatives, namely: less than 1 year; 1 to 5 years; 6 to 10 years and over 10 years, fourteen respondents claim to have been with the company for less than 1 year, while one respondent has been with the company for 1 to 5 years, one respondent is between 6 and 10 years old, and none said they have been with the company for more than 10 years. The predominance of respondents with less than 01 year in the company, totaling 88%, is due to the type of hiring, which in the specific case, corresponds to Public Selection, of a temporary nature.

### ANALYSIS OF THE VARIABLES OF THE QWL STUDY

The variables and their respective dimensions are arranged according to the Walton Model. Table 2 summarizes the categories and the respective indicators of the Walton Model.

Chart 2: Walton's Model – Categories and Indicators.

WALTON MODEL	
CATEGORIES	INDICATORS
I. Fair and Adequate Compensation	a) Adequate income for work
	b) Internal Equity
	c) External Equity
II. Working Conditions	a) Working hours
	b) Safe physical environment and healthy
III. Capacity Utilization and Development	a) Autonomy
	b) Meaning of the task
	c) Identity of the task
	d) Variety of skill
	e) Feedback
IV. Opportunities for Growth and Security	a) Career Possibility
	b) Personal growth
	(c) Job security
V. Social Integration in the Organization	(a) Equal opportunities
	b) Relationships
	c) Sense of community
VI. Constitutionalism	a) Respect for labor laws and rights
	b) Personal privacy
	c) Freedom of expression



	d) Norms and routines
VII. Work and the Total Space of Life	a) Balanced role at work
	b) Entry and exit times of the work
VIII. Social Relevance of Work in Life	a) Company image
	b) Social responsibility of the institution
	c) Social responsibility for the Employees
	d) Social responsibility for the Products and Services

Source: Oliveira, 2006, p.39. (adapted by the author)

- I. **Fair and Adequate Compensation (-):** predominance of dissatisfaction, namely: 15% of respondents are satisfied, however, it is worth noting that the majority, in total 83%, have some level of dissatisfaction.

Table 3. Results of the indicators of the category: Fair and Adequate Compensation

INDICATORS	Adequate Income for Work	Internal Equity	External equity
RESULTS	The results were negative, 94% signaled some level of dissatisfaction. The respondents declare that the proceeds received are not compatible with the responsibility and importance of the work developed.	It was presented as negative, because aspects such as working time and experiences are not taken into account. consideration for access to financial incentives.	It was evidenced as negative, since, 94% of those surveyed stated that The remuneration received is incompatible with that paid in the market to professionals of the same category.

Source: Prepared by the author

- II. **Working Conditions (-):** predominance of dissatisfaction, namely: high rate of dissatisfied respondents, totaling 73%, while only 23% feel satisfied.





Table 4. Results of the indicators of the category: Working Conditions

INDICATORS	Working Hours	Safe and Healthy Physical Environment
RESULTS	Predominance of levels of satisfaction, totaling 75%. The respondents stated that they do not are required for journeys beyond what is determined for its category.	75% declared dissatisfaction in this dimension, due to the fact that insecurity in the development of their activities, many times, in risk areas. Added to work overload and disability in materials and equipment for the carrying out the activities.

Source: Prepared by the author

- III. **Use and Development of Capacities (+):** balanced aspects, but with a concentration on dissatisfaction, namely: 55% consider themselves dissatisfied, while 43% feel satisfied and 2% occupy the intermediate position (moderately satisfied).

Table 5. Results of category indicators: use and development of capacities

INDICATORS	Autonomy	Task Meaning	Task Identity	Variety of Abilities	Feedback
RESULTS	Indication of dissatisfaction totaling 75%, indicating that the Management equipment not encourages initiative of the employees, in in other words, does not offer autonomy for that the servers can solve The problems relating to your workstation.	Predominance of dissatisfaction totaling 75%. Or high level of dissatisfied people in relation to the meaning of your work possibly comes from the fact that that the servers have little autonomy as described in the previous dimension, the that can cause the demotivation of these professionals.	The results Demonstrate 55% satisfaction. The Searched Consider Important The activities Developed .	100% of Interviewed Declare satisfaction Evidence that CREAS stimulates acquisition of Other Skills beyond those that they do part of the day to Day of the Servers.	Sharp dissatisfaction, with 76%. Possibly The flow of information in the company does not occur in a the contribute to or good progress of the services and for the Better performance of each server, Being able compromise thus, QWL.

Source: Prepared by the author

- IV. **Opportunities for Growth and Security (-):** The results highlight higher rates of dissatisfaction, namely: 80% dissatisfaction and 14% satisfaction. It is relevant to



note that 6% of those surveyed answered that they are moderately satisfied, occupying a central position.

Table 6. Results of the indicators in the category: Opportunities for Growth and Security

INDICATORS	Career Possibility	Personal Growth	Job Security
RESULTS	The indexes correspond to 100% dissatisfaction. It is observed that the totality of respondents showed dissatisfaction with the possibilities of professional growth in CREAS, possibly due to the fact of hiring be carried out through Public Selection, which in its regulations discriminates the validity of the contract, that is, the date of employee dismissal.	The institution has a deficiency in incentive systems for the permanent education of professionals.	Predominance of dissatisfaction, totaling 81%. The respondents do not have job security and stability, as it is a temporary contract, through public selection.

Source: Prepared by the author

V. **Social Integration in the Organization (+):** The results highlight higher levels of satisfaction, totaling 79% against 17% dissatisfaction. It is worth mentioning the rate of 4% of respondents who opted for an intermediate position.

Table 7. Results of the indicators of the category: Social Integration of the Organization

INDICATORS	Equal Opportunities	Relationships	Sense of Community
RESULTS	94 % from satisfaction. Ahead Of answers obtained, it is perceived that a considered a portion of respondents are Satisfied do not identify discrimination related to appearance, lifestyle, gender, race or religion, this one that raises QWL levels.	Predominance in satisfaction, with a percentage of 75%. It is observed that the relationship between the civil servants is positive, which is a very important factor for QWL, although with some occasional dissonances.	The results were 69% satisfaction. Thus, what has been described is reaffirmed in previous dimension, in the sense that companionship is part of interpersonal relationships, and can be considered predominantly good in the researched company, favoring QWL levels.

Source: Prepared by the author

VI. **Constitutionalism (-):** The survey shows a high rate of dissatisfaction, namely: while 38% are satisfied with the variable analyzed, 56% of the respondents are



dissatisfied. It is important to mention that 6% of those surveyed answered that they are moderately satisfied, opting for an intermediate position.

Table 8. Results of the indicators of the category: Constitutionalism

INDICATORS	Respect for Labor Laws and Rights	Personal Privacy	Freedom of Expression	Standards and Routines
RESULTS	<p>Predominance of dissatisfaction, with 88% of responses Negative. Possibly the high level of Searched Dissatisfied As for this Dimension is due to to the type of Hiring Now mentioned, to Public Selection, that does not check To the employees</p> <p>the same rights such as formal contract, vacation, etc.</p>	<p>Positive result, because 56% Declared satisfaction in this dimension. Checks- if the percentage agreement is significant revealing the conviction of the researched as with respect to the organization demonstrates by its Privacy within and outside the company. This finding contributes to or well-being of the functionary Reflecting positively in the QWL.</p>	<p>63% indication of Searched Satisfied. Barnacle- If most of the respondents states have the freedom to express about the Affairs: work, it is about a positive point, Since, the lack of freedom of Manifestation of opinion can generate revolt in the functionary interfering with his performance and well-being being, suggesting the existence of procedures arbitrary and authoritarians in the Environment of work, what Harms seriously to QVT in any organization.</p>	<p>Predominating from dissatisfaction, with 62%. Most of the respondents are dissatisfied with the Dimension in question probably the rules and routines of the company are not clear, defined and accepted by all servers, a fact that may interfere with the QWL.</p>

Source: Prepared by the author

VII. **Work and Total Life Space (+):** The results highlight high satisfaction rates, namely: 66% satisfaction, higher than the 28% dissatisfaction. It is important to mention that 6% of those surveyed answered that they are moderately satisfied, occupying a central position.



Table 9. Results of the indicators of the category: Work and Total Life Space

INDICATORS	Balanced Role at Work	Work Entry and Exit Hours
RESULTS	69% of those surveyed indicate a balance between professional commitments and family life.	Predominance in satisfaction levels, with 63% of people indicating positive aspects in this dimension.

Source: Prepared by the author

VIII. **Social Relevance of Work in Life (-):** the results highlight higher levels of dissatisfaction, namely: 67% of the respondents are dissatisfied, and only 28% are satisfied. It is important to mention that 5% of those surveyed answered that they are moderately satisfied, opting for an intermediate position.

Table 10. Results of the indicators of the category: Social Relevance of Work in Life

INDICATORS	Company Image	Social Responsibility of the Institution	Social Responsibility for Employees	Social Responsibility for Products and Services
RESULTS	Highlight of Accentuated levels of dissatisfaction totaling 62%. Or fact that most of the Respondents No feel proud of work at company must be detached, taking into account view is an aspect What it reveals the dissatisfaction of the collaborator with the organization that the Employs. So the company must prioritize actions in order to change the negative image that passes to his servers and for the society in general.	69% dissatisfaction. Corroborating with the Result of the previous dimension, It is observed that a Significant plot of those surveyed do not recognize the Company performance as to the responsibility and support for projects community, which is contradictory with the Nature of the role of CREAS.	High levels of dissatisfaction measured in its 82%. Checks- I know which part significant of the researched has A picture negative enterprise.	Predominance of dissatisfaction, with 56% of people Dissatisfied. It is clear that the Searched are dissatisfied with the quality of services provided to population possibly for the lack of a structure that the Allow run a Efficient work and effective.

Source: Prepared by the author

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

QWL is directly related to motivation, the more motivated the employee is, the higher his degree of self-esteem, and consequently he will be more willing to generate positive



results in his work. Therefore, the challenge for companies as well as the objective of QWL is to promote conditions that meet people's needs, such as a comfortable and safe work environment for their employees to perform their activities without risk to their health and more motivated.

The case study focused on measuring the QWL of the employees of a CREAS, a social assistance facility, in the city of Fortaleza. Analyzing the data in its entirety, it is observed that 38% of those surveyed are satisfied according to the model and the variables used. However, it is worth noting that most respondents are not satisfied, of these, 58% are dissatisfied and 4% opted for an intermediate position.

The variable responsible for the highest percentage of satisfied respondents was "Social Integration in the Organization" with 79% of satisfaction. It was found that a considerable portion of respondents indicate that there is no discrimination in the company related to appearance, lifestyle, gender, race or religion; that there is respect and companionship among co-workers and integration outside of work, while the rest of those surveyed disagree with this opinion.

On the other hand, the variable responsible for the highest percentage of dissatisfied respondents was "Fair and Adequate Compensation" with 83% of dissatisfaction. It was found that the majority of employees are not satisfied with the salary received, nor with internal and external equity, while a minority agrees. According to the result of the research, we can conclude that possibly the high share of dissatisfied respondents is due to the type of hiring to which they are submitted - Public Selection - which, unlike the Public Competition, has a lower salary, and fixed equally for all higher education professionals, regardless of their academic background and time of experience in the area of activity.

After the data analysis, it is possible to state that when applying the QWL variables according to the Walton Model, in the researched company, it is possible to perceive respondents dissatisfied in all variables. That said, it is worth noting that the present work acquires relevance in the social plan by bringing to the academic environment a real contribution through research in the care context of Ceará, regarding concerns with QWL, and in the context of CREAS an academic research that verifies how employees perceive QWL in the equipment.

Therefore, considering that the results of this research are configured as collaboration for the implementation of a quality of life program; it would be opportune for the institution to extend this study to its entire staff, that is, to all six CREAS existing in the city of Fortaleza, in order to obtain a broader and more detailed panel, in addition to identifying the other factors that influence the perception of its employees regarding QWL,



thus defining, in a qualitative study perspective, the guidelines for the formulation of an effective quality of life program within the social assistance facilities of the city of Fortaleza.

For future research, it is recommended that the researcher propose improvements, based on the results achieved, which subsidize administrative measures that can change possible deviations not identified in daily life, as well as intensify the positive aspects evidenced through the investigation.



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