

ABSTRACT

Introduction : With the increase of elderly population, work engagement by the elders is inevitable. Hence, the Quality of Work Life (QoWL) of the elderly worker becomes an important concept which needs to be assessed and improved. In the absence of valid tools to measure QoWL, its prevalence and associated factors among the elderly workers are unknown entities in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, in improving the QoWL of the elderly worker, their perception on health and social implications of working in late life is important.

Objective : To develop and validate an instrument, Quality of Work Life Scale – for Elderly Worker (QoWLS-E), to assess QoWL among the elderly workers, determine the QoWL and the factors associated with good QoWL among elderly workers in the district of Gampaha and to explore the perception of the elderly workers on their health and social implications of working in late life.

Methods : Interviewer administered „Quality of Work Life Scale – for elderly workers“ (QoWLS- E) was developed and judgmental validity was ensured. It was validated among 525 elderly workers selected through stratified cluster sampling from three selected Divisional Secretariat Divisions (DSD) in Colombo, by assessing construct validity and reliability. A cross sectional study was conducted including 835 elderly workers selected using multistage cluster sampling from Gampaha district. Prevalence of QoWL was assessed using validated QoWLS-E and associated factors through interviewer administered questionnaire. Quality of Work Life was dichotomized in to „good“ and „poor“ using pre-determined cut offs and factors associated with good QoWL were determined initially through Chi square test followed by binary logistic regression. Elderly workers“ perception on health and social implication on working in old age were gathered through Focus Group Discussions (FGD).

Results : Adequately fitting nine factor model comprising physical health, psychological, facilities, safety, job content, co-worker, supervisor, flexibility and autonomy in exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis with well correlated hypothesized scaling structure confirmed the validity of QoWLS-E and a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.77 and good test – retest reliability of 0.82 confirmed reliability.

Prevalence of good QoWL among the elderly workers was 32.1% (95% CI: 29.0 – 35.3). Personal factors positively associated with good QoWL were earning more than 30,000/- LKR per month (AOR= 2.1, 95%CI: 1.42 - 3.12) and having properties as an income generation method (AOR= 2.2, 95%CI: 1.16 - 4.17) while spending on own food (AOR= 0.16, 95%CI: 0.07-0.38) and having arthritis (AOR= 0.65, 95%CI: 0.43-0.98) were negatively associated with good QoWL. Of the work-related factors, engaging in a job before 60 years (AOR=1.12, 95%CI: 1.04 – 1.20) was positively associated with good QoWL, while experiencing work related accidents (AOR= 0.39, 95%CI: 0.21-0.74) and occupational engagement to support the family (AOR= 0.68, 95% CI: 0.46-0.98) were negatively associated with good QoWL. Out of the psychosocial factors, job helping to have social interaction (AOR= 4.03, 95% CI: 1.48 –10.95), having adequate social support (AOR=1.76, 95%CI: 1.05 – 2.96) and engaging in political activities (AOR= 2.02, 95%CI: 1.08- 3.78) were positively associated with good QoWL. Non – health influences of working in late life and health influences of working in late life were the two main themes generated from FGD’s.

Conclusions and Recommendations : QoWLS-E is a valid and reliable tool to determine the QoWL among the elderly workers. Prevalence of good QoWL was low among the elderly workers and was associated with multiple factors in their personal, family and work life. „Elderly friendly work“ should be incorporated as a policy, to enable the elderly workers to gain the economic and social benefits of work whilst accommodating for their physical and psychosocial limitations.

Keywords : Elderly worker , Quality of Work Life , Factors associated with Quality of work life among elderly, Perception on working in late life.