Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment on the Relationship between Quality of Work Life and Job Performance: A Study on Station Masters in Sri Lanka Railways

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This paper is a systematic study based on the hypothetical deductive method carried out to glean empirical evidence with regard to organizational commitment and its mediating effect on the relationship between the quality of work life and job performance. This study was correlational and cross-sectional in the time horizon and the unit of analysis was the individual. A stratified random sample of 280 Station Masters was selected from the Railways Department in Sri Lanka. A pre-tested, structured, self-administered questionnaire was used to collect primary data. Correlation and regression analyses were conducted to test mediation. The results were consistent with the formulated hypotheses, establishing that organizational commitment successfully mediated the relationship between quality of work life and job performance of Station Masters who work in the Railways Department in Sri Lanka. Implications for theory and practice have been discussed.

Key Words: Job Performance, Organizational Commitment, Quality of Work Life, Sri Lanka, Station Masters

INTRODUCTION

Job Performance (JP) is a multifaceted concept for determining outcome of an organizational success. It is considered to be an important construct in industrial and organizational psychology (Campbell, 1990; Austin and Villanove, 1992; Schmidt and

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Hunter, 1992; Murphy and Cleveland, 1995, Koopmans, Bernaards, Hildebrandt, Schaufeli, de Vet Henrica, and van der Beek, 2011; Ramawickrama, Opatha, and PushpaKumari, 2017b). According to Opatha (2015), JP can be defined as the quantity and quality of the output of an employee in an organization. Organizations expect to sustain a better outcome from their workforce throughout their period of employment. Organizational Commitment (OC) is an important factor need to decide the organizational overall performance (Abdul-Nasiru, Mensah, Amponsah-Tawiah, Simpeh and Kumasey, 2014). Peak level organizational performance cannot be achieved unless each employee is committed to the organizational objectives (Dixit and Bhati, 2012). Therefore, employee wellbeing is an essential element that needs to be improved in modern organizations. According to Schouler and Youngblood (1986), Quality of Work Life (QWL) contains both job design and work environment. Recently, many scholars have paid their attention to the construct of QWL and JP, and they have found a positive relationship between both concepts representing various sectors in different countries (Beh and Rose, 2011; Gayathiri and Ramakrishnan, 2013; Shekari, Monshizadeh, and Ansari, 2014; Muindi and K'Obonyo, 2015; and Mohammadi, 2016). Further, Totawar and Nambudiri (2014) highlighted the importance of QWL factors to a particular organization and they reviewed that fairness of the organization causes for employee satisfaction through the mediation of existing QWL factors in the organization.

Sri Lanka Railways (SLR) is a department functioning under the Transport Ministry. A major transportation service provider, it is the only rail transport organization in Sri Lanka. The rail transportation system was introduced to Ceylon in 1864 during the British Colonial Era. Having the mission of "Providing a safe, reliable and punctual rail transport service for both passengers and freight traffic, economically and efficiently", this organization provides, even now, a huge service to the country. According to the Performance Report of SLR (2017), its number of current employees is 15,413. Hence, employees who are in the organization have become the backbone of this organization and the level of their performance is highly important to the organization. Station Master is one of the employment categories among the employees of the Railways department. The Station Master (SM) is an officer appointed by the General Manager Railways to be in over-all charge of the station. Since the work is physically very demanding and stressful in this special job category, only males are employed as Station Masters in SLR. Accordingly, the main purpose of this study is to examine the mediating impact of OC on the relationship between QWL and JP.

PROBLEM CONTEXT AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Kesavan, Chandrakumar, Kulatunga, Gowrynathan, Rajapaksha, Senewiratne, and Laguleshwaran (2015) and Halpita and Thelijjagoda (2011) have revealed many of obstacles faced by SMs and suggestions for overcoming them. As they mention, though the Railway is 150 years old, current facilities and service levels are not operating at

satisfactory levels. The writer and novelist, Ellis (1994, p. 3), as a regular user of railway transport in Sri Lanka, has penned his feelings as follows, "I am grateful to the railway men, particularly the Guards, Drivers and Station Masters who are proud of the Railways and have always been helpful with information and advice." The above statement provides evidence that the three parties, i.e., Guards, Drivers and Station Masters (SMs) are more responsible related to the operating and service providing activities of the railway. Among them SM is the most responsible person for handling all the tasks related to operations and administration of a particular station. Though there are many other important professions in the railway, they are performing their tasks behind the scenes. But the profession of SM is too close and popular among the passenger and other related parties. Within his limits, he works as a manager. Due to a lack of adequate empirical findings showing the relationship between QWL and JP, it is necessary to find empirical evidence from SMs who work in the Railway Department, Sri Lanka (SL).

Many scholars have defined JP differently in several decades and they have used various measurements for measuring JP in a wide range of professions in different disciplines around the world (Ramawickrama, Opatha, and PushpaKumari, 2017b). Further, they have highlighted the necessity of obtaining empirical findings for measuring JP. As a result, the current researchers faced difficulties in applying clear-cut measurement dimensions for measuring JP. Hence, this study seeks to establish appropriate dimensions for measuring the JP of SMs who work in SLR.

Walton (1975) highlighted that "QWL in an organization is a multifaceted concept that consists of humanistic values and social responsibilities". The concept of QWL is a subjective construct, that having difficulties for measuring and observing properties than a concrete concept. Ramawickrama, Opatha, and PushpaKumari (2017a) reviewed more suitable measurement dimensions for the variable QWL for different careers in multiple sectors in various country contexts, and concluded that measurement dimensions vary according to the selected profession, organization, and industry, as well as the country concerned. Further, Beh (2011, p. 30) pointed out "there is no one size of QWL that fits all organizations in any country. Every organization needs to develop its own QWL to represent its employees, customers and organizational needs. Consequently, it is necessary to find suitable measurement dimensions of QWL".

Empirical evidence proves that QWL is a predictor of job satisfaction (Totawar and Nambudiri 2014; Ramawickrama, Opatha, and PushpaKumari, 2017a), QWL relates significantly with JP (Gayathiri and Ramakrishnan, 2013; Shekari, Monshizadeh, and Ansari, 2014; Taghavi, Ebrahimzadh, BhramZadh, and Masoumeh, 2014; and Rai, 2015). The above evidence depicts that there is a relationship between QWL and JP in relation to multiple work groups in various types of organizations in different countries including SL. Therefore, due to a lack of exact evidence from empirical findings, further research is essential to identify the relationship between QWL and JP of a

specific profession in a particular organization in a given country. Further, some researchers have conducted studies in relation to QWL and OC (Louis, 1998; Normala, 2010, Ahmadi, Salavati, and Rajabzadeh, 2012; Parvan, 2013; Ali and Zilli, 2015; and Omugo, Onuoha, and Akhigbe, 2016). Hence, a research gap can be identified to investigate the relationship between QWL and OC related to SMs work in SLR.

Though the above findings show a positive relationship between the variables, studies were done on different work groups and were organization-specific as well as country-specific. Hence, the fourth research gap exists in the need to clarify the association between QWL and OC with reference to a specific profession in a particular organization for a particular country. Alternatively, a higher level of OC helps to reduce employee related negative behaviors including tardiness, absenteeism and turnover. McShane, Glinow and Sharma (2008) mentioned "employees with high affective commitment also have higher work motivation and organizational citizenship, as well as higher JP." Uthayakumar and Opatha (2003) also highlighted that OC is a strong predictor of JP. Though the above findings show the numerous relations between OC and JP, the findings have come from different work groups, in various types of organizations worldwide. Hence, further evidence is needed to clear up the relationship between OC and JP with particular reference to SMs in the railway sector in Sri Lanka.

Further, findings show that some researchers have used OC as an independent variable in their studies (for example Van Maanen, 1975; Porter et al., 1976; Porter et al., 1977; and Steers, 1977; as cited by Reichers, 1985). Some other researchers considered OC as a dependent variable (for example Hall et al., 1970; Buchanan, 1974; Farrell and Rusbult, 1981; and Morris and Sherman, 1981; as cited by Reichers, 1985). This trend is further noted by Louis (1998), Normala (2010), Ahmadi, Salavati, and Rajabzadeh (2012), Parvan (2013), Ojedokum, Idemudia and Desouza (2015), Ali and Zilli (2015) and Omugo, Onuoha and Akhigbe (2016), who have also conducted studies on the concept of OC as a dependent variable. However, a few researchers such as Varghese and Jayan (2013), Kim, Koh and Kim (2014), Nayak, Sahoo and Mohanty (2015) and Nayak and Sahoo (2015) have found that OC works as a mediating variable in their research.

As a result, it can be seen that plenty of studies have been conducted OC as both form of dependent independent type of variable. This reveals that a lack of sufficient evidence for OC as a mediating variable in the research archives. Therefore, evidence is needed to ensure the mediating impact of OC on the relationship between QWL and JP, especial reference to SMs in the SL context. With reference to the above empirical findings, authors directed four specific research questions.

1. Does QWL have a significant relationship with JP among the SMs who are working in SLR?

- 2. Is QWL positively and significantly related to OC for SMs who work in SLR?
- 3. Is OC positively and significantly related to JP among the SMs who work in SLR?
- 4. Does OC intervene significantly in the relationship between QWL and JP of SMs who work in SLR?

The broad objective of the study is to investigate how OC could influence the relationship between QWL and JP of Station Masters in Sri Lanka Railways. The four specific objectives are as follows:

- 1. To empirically investigate the relationship between QWL and JP among SMs who work in SLR.
- 2. To empirically investigate the relationship between QWL and OC with regard to SMs who work in SLR.
- 3. To empirically investigate whether the OC is positively and significantly related to JP of SMs who work in SLR.
- 4. To empirically investigate the mediating effect of OC on the relationship between QWL and JP among SMs who work in SLR.

LITERATURE REVIEW

JOB PERFORMANCE

Individual ability, effort and skills in a given situation can be considered as a function of JP (Porter and Lawler, 1967). Other researchers introduced several important features to this concept such as individual behavior that is closely linked with goals of the organization. Murphy (1989) highlighted that JP should be viewed in terms of behavior rather than interms of results. Except the findings of Borman and Motowidlo (1993) have been mentioned as a multidimensional concept that is related to the organizational goals. Viswesvaran and Ones (2000) defined "JP as scalable actions, behavior and outcomes that employees engage in or bring about that are linked with and contribute to organizational goals". Further, different authors have defined various types of JP taxonomies. A few of them are; the 13 types of pro-social organizational behaviors (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986), both concepts of organizational citizenship behavior and pro-social behavior (Organ, 1988), eight performance components for measuring JP (Campbell, McHenry, and Wise, 1990), in-role work performance and extra-role performance (Borman and Brush, 1993), and generic work behavior and adaptive performance behavior (Hunt, 1996). Recently, Rotundo and Sackett (2002) discussed three types of measures, including Task performance, Citizenship performance, and Counterproductive performance. Koopmans, Bernaards, Hildebrandt, Schaufeli, de Vet Henrica, and van der Beek (2011) proposed four theoretical dimensions as taxonomies of JP, including Task performance, Contextual performance, Adaptive performance, and Counterproductive work behavior. As far as this study is concerned, the working definition for JP is:

"Job performance is the extent to which the employee has shown his or her traits, engaged in behaviors and produced results which are appropriate to task performance, and has engaged in citizenship performance and counterproductive performance during a particular period of time." (Ramawickrama, Opatha, and PushpaKumari, 2017a). According to this definition, the three dimensions of JP are *Task Performance*, *Citizenship Performance* and *Counterproductive Work Behavior*.

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

Louis Davis introduced the concept Quality of Work Life (QWL) prior to 1970, and at the first International Conference on QWL held in Toronto in 1972. The International Council of QWL was established in 1973. Hence, QWL has been studied for nearly five decades. Therefore, diverse literature could be found by different scholars. A few of them are: "a set of beneficial consequences of working life for the individual, the organization and society" (Boisvert, 1977), "a situation in which all members of the organization, through appropriate channels of communication set up for this purpose, have some say about the design of their jobs in particular and the work environment in general" (Shouler and Youngblood, 1986). In 1993, Bernadian and Russell stated that "QWL is the degree to which individuals are able to satisfy their important personal needs". Paying attention to the above definitions, researchers developed a working definition for QWL which is given below:

QWL is "the degree of availability of features for ensuring a humane working life for each employee of the organization". Eight dimensions of QWL were selected for this study; they are: balance between work and non-work life; basic salary and fair compensation; constitutionalism in work organization; development of human capacity; safe and healthy work environment; social integration in work organization; social relevance of work life; and work conditions.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

In 1966, Grusky, as cited in Dixit and Bhati (2012), stated that "OC involves the level of the relationship of the members to the whole system". Kanter (1968) characterizes commitment as "the readiness of social entertainers to give their energy and loyalty to social frameworks, the connection of personality frameworks to social relations, which are viewed as self-expressive". Luthans (2005) explained "OC is an attitude reflecting employees' loyalty to their organization and is an ongoing process through which organizational participants express their concern for the organization and its continued success and well-being". Accordingly, the working definition of OC for this study and its dimensions are presented below:

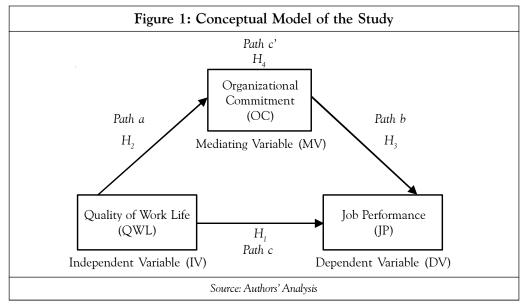
"The degree to which the employee is loyal to the organization" (Opatha, 2015). The three component model of OC which comprises of Affective Commitment (AC), Normative Commitment (NC) and Continuous Commitment (CC) was considered for this study (Allen and Meyer, 1996; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch and Topolnytsky, 2002).

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE VARIABLES OF JP, QWL AND OC

According to the research findings, the main variable of IP has been used by many researchers as a dependent variable in their studies (Sonnentag and Frese, 2001; Beh, 2011; Dixit and Bhati, 2012; Taghavi, Ebrahimzadh, BhramZadh, and Masoumeh, 2014; Rai, 2015; Tolentino, 2013; Hettiarachchi and Jayarathna, 2014; Muindi and K'Obonyo, 2015; and Hafeez and Akbar, 2015). Schmidt and Hunter (1992) highlighted that IP as the most popularly used Dependent Variable in their studies. However, many researchers have used the construct of QWL as the Independent Variable (Beh and Rose, 2011; Gnanayudam and Dharmasiri, 2007; Ganguly, 2010; Ahmadi, Salavati, and Rajabzadeh, 2012; Parvan, 2013; Varghese and Jayan, 2013; Ojedokum et al., 2015; Ali and Zilli, 2015; Muindi and K'Obonyo, 2015; Omugo, Onuoha and Akhigbe, 2016). The other construct, i.e., OC has been used for different purposes by different researchers. This means that many authors have used OC as an independent variable, while others have used it as a dependent variable. In contrast, Varghese and Jayan (2013), Kim, Koh and Kim (2014) and Nayak and Sahoo (2015) have used OC as a mediating variable. The above empirical evidence that are related to different job categories from different sectors including baking, manufacturing, garment, education in different countries. Consequently, the conceptual model is as shown below:

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The conceptual model exhibits the relationship network among QWL, OC and JP. General system theory provides a strong support for this framework. While human qualities and abilities are treated as resources from the environment, employee behaviors are treated as throughputs and employee performance is treated as output. QWL may be considered as one of the input resources. QWL helps build a balance between



personal and work life, and ensures productivity of the organization and job satisfaction of employees. As a result, QWL practices in an organization may create attitudinal changes in employees' minds. The attitudinal variable, i.e., OC, predicts and may lead to organizational citizenship behavior. This means that committed employees working as volunteers for extra job activities, like helping peers and making constructive comments towards the company (Organ and Ryan, 1995 as cited in Luthans, 2005). Thus, the three main concepts of this study were positioned in Figure 1, i.e., QWL as the predictor (independent) variable, JP as the outcome (dependent) variable and OC as the mediating variable.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

In light of the hypothetical and observational proof in the current literature and author arguments a deductive approach was used to build hypotheses to be tested.

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND JOB PERFORMANCE

Kim, Malnerney and Alexander (1999) noted a safe and secure workplace is instrumental and makes a positive contribution to employees' work performance. Nayak and Sahoo (2015) mentioned that employees with high QWL tend to have lower job stress, stressful working conditions and negative health outcomes ultimately leads to poor QWL. Beh and Rose (2011) observed at different levels the positive relationship between QWL and employee JP at different levels among individual, group and organizations. Gayathiri and Ramakrishnan (2013) emphasized the linkages among QWL, job satisfaction and performance. Significance of the relationship between the overall QWL and organizational citizenship behavior was reviewed by Sandhya Nair (2013). Accordingly, it is hypothesized that:

H₁: Quality of work life of station masters in Sri Lanka Railways has a significant and positive relationship with their job performance.

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Louis (1998) found that QWL is strongly linked with the dependent variables of commitment and sense of efficacy. Normala (2010) proved that there is a significant relationship and cohesiveness among employees in the working environment, which would enhance with their sense of commitment. Ahmadi, Salavati, and Rajabzadeh (2012) confirmed that QWL helps to build an upper level of OC. Parvan (2013) and Omugo, Onuoha and Akhigbe (2016) found a positive and significant impact of QWL on OC among employees. Hence, QWL provides a favorable support for better OC. Based on the facts supporting the positive impact of QWL on OC, the hypothesis 2 positioned as below:

H₂: There is a positive and significant relationship between the quality of work life of station masters in Sri Lanka Railways and their organizational commitment.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND JOB PERFORMANCE

As a result of the psychological contract of employees discussed in the systems perspective, OC may occur and employees may try to bind to the organization

affectively, normatively and continuously. Further, expectancy theory shows that employees' efforts may result in better performance and rewards. Other motivational theories also highlight a positive interrelationship between OC and JP. A study conducted by McShane, Glinow and Sharma (2008) revealed that "employees with high affective commitment also have higher work motivation and organizational citizenship behavior, as well as higher JP." Further, OC is related to higher QWL, lower rate of absenteeism, and increased productivity (Nelson and Quick, 1997). Uthayakumar and Opatha (2003) found that OC is a strong predictor of JP. Dimensions of OC significantly correlate with the key determinants of organizational citizenship behavior (Rehan and Islam, 2013). In the same year, Tolentino (2013) observed the relationship between OC and JP and revealed that OC significantly correlates with the key determinants of organizational citizenship behavior. Employee-related work attitudes have a significant impact on the JP of employees (Hettiarachchi and Jayarathna, 2014). With reference to this situation, Dixit and Bhati (2012) also clarified that committed workers may perform superior to less dedicated ones. Accordingly, the third hypothesis is formulated as:

H₃: Organizational commitment of station masters in Sri Lanka Railways is positively and significantly related to their job performance.

MEDIATING EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND JOB PERFORMANCE

It is logically arrived at that QWL affects JP positively through OC. Thus, QWL is the Independent Variable (IV) while JP is the Dependent Variable (DV). OC is labeled as the intervening variable. QWL, JP and OC are the predictor, outcome and mediating variable, respectively. OC surfaces between the times QWL operates to influence JP and its impact on JP. Therefore, OC has a temporal quality and it works as a function of QWL and helps to explain the influence of QWL on the variability of JP. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is positioned as follows:

H₄: Organizational commitment of station masters in Sri Lanka Railways has a significant mediating effect on the relationship between their quality of work life and job performance.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

A quantitative study was conducted to achieve the expected objectives, and its main focus was on explaining the QWL that contributed to the JP of railway workers in SL through OC. The sample frame is considered based on the target population. The sample begins with precise definition of the target population (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). Hence, the target population might be all the SMs in the railway department throughout the country. That is, the entire group of people to whom the researcher

wishes to generalize the study findings. It was also considered as the accessible population of this study. Thus, without any limitation, 1003 of SMs who are attached to the SLR were included in the population. 280 SMs were selected by a stratified sampling technique based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970). There are three main strata including Grade I, Grade II and Grade III members who are working in different stations among the seven train lines in SLR. Hence, the stratified sampling technique helped to estimate the population parameters among the above identifiable sub-groups. Survey questionnaires were administered among the respondents working in SLR. Initially the questionnaire was developed in English, and it was later translated into Sinhalese to capture data accurately as required. The techniques of data analysis of this study involved univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analysis using the IBM SPSS Version 22.0. The proposed hypotheses were tested using Pearson's correlation, regression analysis and multiple regression analysis.

Exhibit 1: Dimensions Used for the Main Variables and the Number of Question Items				
Dimensions Used for Main Variables	References			
Job Performance: 46 of Question Items				
Task Performance - Task performance-result based - Task performance-behavior based - Task performance-trait based	Murphy (1989); Borman and Motowidlo			
Counterproductive performance - Organizational level citizenship behavior - Interpersonal citizenship behavior	(1993); Viswesvaran and Ones (2000); Rotundo and Sackett (2002); Stokes (2008); Stewart and Brown (2009); Koopman			
Counterproductive performance - Production related deviant behavior - Property related deviant actions - Political deviant actions - Personal aggression	Bernaards, Hildebrandt, Schaufeli, de Vet Henrica, and van der Beek(2011); Safety Rules of Railways (SRR)			
Quality of Work Life: 31 Question Items				
QWL 1-Basic salary and fair compensation QWL 2-Work conditions QWL 3-Safe and healthy work environment QWL 4-Development of human capacity QWL 5-Social integration in work organization QWL 6-Constitutionalism in work organization QWL 7-Balance between work and non-work life QWL 8-Social relevance of work life	Walton (1975), Saklani (2004), Stephen and Dhanapala (2012), Tabassum (2012) and Mirvis and Lawler (1984)			
Organizational Commitment; 12 Question Items				
CC- Continuous Commitment AC- Affective Commitment NC- Normative Commitment	Allen and Meyer (1996); Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch and Topolnytsky (2002), Opatha (2015)			
Source: Authors' Analysis				

INSTRUMENTS AND MEASURES

The three variables, i.e. JP, QWL and OC were measured using the multi-item interval scales, and validated prior to final data collection. Conceptualization of variables was done based on the theories from previous literature to develop the questionnaire items. A summary of the number of dimensions, elements and evidence for references are given in Exhibit 1. These elements were used to develop question items in order to capture primary data from participants. The responses were captured on a 5-point Likert scale, which had scores ranging from 1 to 5—strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5) – respectively. Twelve questions were related to the demographic profile of respondents. Ninety questions were itemized, together with an open ended question for respondents' feelings, suggestions and comments related to the main variables. Pilot study was conducted by the researchers administering questionnaires among 30 respondents. The result of the internal consistency was considered. The test-retest reliability test was conducted after three weeks. This test was conducted for randomly selected 15 respondents who participated in the pilot study to attest to the stability of the measures.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE INSTRUMENTS

As mentioned by Sekaran and Bougie (2013), different types of validity tests were used for the Goodness of Fit measures. Internal consistency was considered, and Cronbach's alpha was 0.923 for the overall value of JP, was 0.879 for QWL, and 0.817 for OC. Moreover, a reliability coefficient value of above 0.7 is statistically acceptable for a study (Nunnally, 1978). The test-retest coefficient was 0.931, which is significant at the 99% confidence level. This result suggests that the instruments possess a high degree of test-retest reliability. The values of KMO were above the cut-off point of 0.5, which also indicates a good range of sample adequacy, and the values of constructs were significant as per Bartlett's Test of Sphericity.

DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

Four hundred questionnaires were distributed as part of the survey, of which 280 questionnaires were returned, reporting a 70% response rate. Data were coded, cleaned and treated for missing values and outliers in order to ensure the accuracy of the conclusions drawn from the study. Frequencies and descriptive analyses were conducted to present the main characteristics of the sample. The data analysis part is basically divided in to two. The first part includes the relationships among the variable, i.e., predictor, mediator and outcome relationships. The Pearson product-moment correlation technique (one-tailed test) was used to test the relationships among the variable and the second part includes fourth hypothesis that was checked for the mediating effect of employee OC on the relationship between QWL and JP. Multiple regression analysis and procedures recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986) were used to test the mediating effect of Hypothesis Four.

RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

The uniqueness of this sample was its homogeneity. This is because the majority of railway employees were males who have represented all stations in SL. 200 respondents out of the 280 had a service experience of more than five years and had worked at more than four stations during their service period. While a majority of the respondents (236) were in the 25-55 year age category, 24 of the respondents were over 56 years.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1 indicates the measurement scales, number of items and Cronbach alpha values of each and every variable. All the variables are in the acceptable level. According to the perception level of the respondents It shows the overall perception level of the QWL dimensions considered in this study. The average mean value is 3.235 and SD is 0.399. which indicates neutral level. Further, the lower level of SD (0.399) confirms the lower degree of dispersion of ideas. Therefore, respondents are agreed to a particular extend with the QWL dimensions. Further findings helped to order their preference of QWL dimensions. Accordingly, the most important dimension is social relevance and importance of QWL, the next two (second and third) are social integration in the work organization and basic salary and extra benefits. The fourth is the balance between work and non-work life and in the fifth place is constitutionalism. The dimensions with the lowest importance, namely, the sixth, seventh and eight dimensions, respectively, are working conditions, the opportunity for development of human capacity and safe and healthy work environment.

Table 1: Scale Wise Descriptive Statistics							
Scale	No. of Items	N	Reliability (Alpha)	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
QWL	31	280	0.879	1.00	5.00	3.235	0.399
OC	12	280	0.817	1.00	5.00	3.070	0.490
JP	46	280	0.923	2.00	5.00	4.3714	0.626

Note: Responses of all items were measured on a five point Likert Scale

Source: Authors' Analysis

According to the overall average score of the respondents' perceptions of OC, the mean is 3.07 and the standard deviation is 0.49. The overall average is in the neutral level, but this value is higher than the average mean value of 2.5 on the five point scale. Further, the lower SD (0.49) confirms a lower degree of dispersion of respondents' ideas. Further findings showed that SMs in SLR are very favorably disposed towards affective commitment. Next, they perceive a high level of continuous commitment. The least importance is given to normative commitment.

The overall mean value of JP for the respondents in Table 1 is 4.3714 which was in satisfactory level of the five-point scale. The SD is 0.626 which indicates a low degree of dispersion. Consequently, the overall statistics indicate that SMs who work in the railway are aware that they are able to fulfill their assigned tasks very well.

Table 2: Results of the Direct Relationships between the Study Variables						
	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig.	Results
H_{1}	QWL	JP	280	0.704**	0.000	Accepted
H_2	QWL	OC	280	0.731**	0.000	Accepted
H_3	OC	JP	280	0.835**	0.000	Accepted
Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
Source: Authors' Analysis						

HYPOTHESES TESTING

Four hypotheses were conceptualized in this study. Basically, the analysis part of this study took two forms. The first was to measure direct relationships in Table 2. Pearson product-moment correlation technique was used to test the direct relationships of the conceptual model, i.e., hypotheses 1-3. The second part measured the mediating effect of H_a , as shown in Table 3.

Table 2 gives a correlation coefficient value between QWL and JP of 0.704, ** significant at the 99% confidence level as an outcome of testing H_1 . This result substantiates the existence of a strong positive and significant relationship between the variables. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Results for testing H_2 indicated a significant relationship (p< 0.01) that was positive, strong and linear (r= 0.731). Statistical results justified existence of a strong positive and significant relationship exists between QWL and OC. Hence, while rejecting the null hypothesis, the alternative hypothesis is formulated for this study.

Pearson product-moment correlation for testing H_3 in Table 2 indicated a correlation coefficient of 0.835^{**} (Significant at 0.01) for the relationship between OC and JP. The statistical results substantiated the existence of a positive and significant relationship between OC and JP at the 99% confidence level. Thus, H_3 was statistically established.

The second part of this analysis was to test the mediating effect of OC on the relationship of QWL and JP. Baron and Kenny (1986), and Frazier, Tix and Barron (2004) proposed four steps to be performed when testing this relationship. They are:

- **Step 1:** To show that the predictor variable (QWL) is significantly related to the outcome variable (JP): path c
- **Step 2:** To show that the predictor variable (QWL) is significantly related to the mediator variable (OC): path a

Step 3: To show that the mediator variable (OC) is significantly related to the outcome variable (JP): path b

Step 4: To show that the strength of the relationship between the predictor and the outcome is significantly reduced when the mediator is added to the model: comparing path C with c'.

Statistical results of the above steps are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Testing the Mediating Effect of OC on the Relationship between QWL and JP				
Tested Steps	Unstandardized Regression Coefficient	Sig.	R-Square	
Step 1: path c Outcome (JP), Predictor (QWL)	1.115	0.000	0.495	
Step 2: path a Mediator (OC), Predictor (QWL)	0.380	0.000	0.534	
Step 3 : path b Outcome (JP), Mediator (OC)	2.545	0.000	0.697	
Step 4 : Path c' Outcome (JP), Mediator (OC) Predictor (QWL)	0.318	0.000	0.715	
Source: Authors' Analysis				

The unstandardized regression coefficient value (B=1.115) associated with the relationship between QWL and JP (path c) was significant (p<0.01). This indicated mediation in Step-1. Regression of QWL on OC (path a) was performed in order to establish significance of the relationship between the predictor and mediator (Step-2). The regression coefficient (0.380) associated with this relation was also significant at the p < 0.01 level, and thus the requirement for mediation in step 2 was met. The requirement of step-3, the relationship between JP and OC (path b) was also met, i.e., the coefficient value was 2.545 at the significance level of p < 0.01. The path c of this model was measured simultaneously, while controlling the mediator (OC) in step 4. According to Frazier, Tix and Barron (2004), when 'Path c" is zero, there is a complete mediation, while otherwise, a partial mediation exists. Here, path c' was 0.318 and this is still significant (p<0.01). As this value was smaller than the value of Step 1 (which was 1.115), there is said to exist a partial mediation. Further, the R-Square value of 0.715 is indicated in Step-4 of 'Path c". It is higher than in the other steps. Thus, it reveals that as an intervening variable, OC enhances the relationship between QWL and JP by 71.5%. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is accepted while the null hypothesis is rejected. It is possible to claim that OC is a significant and partial mediator of the relationship between QWL and JP of SMs in SLR (see Table 3).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study developed a conceptual model for measuring the mediating effect of OC on the relationship between QWL and JP among SMs who work in SLR. Four hypotheses were developed, addressing four specific research questions leading to the accomplishment of four specific research objectives.

This objective related to the direct relationships among the variables were achieved in Table 2. The statistical results showed that QWL was strongly and significantly related to the JP of SMs who work in SLR. The finding for this second objective is that there is a significant and positive relationship between QWL and OC and the strength of the relationship is high. This predicts that when SMs have high QWL their OC will be high (when other things remain constant). The finding of the third objective showed that OC is positively and significantly related to JP and that the strength of the relationship is "high". This high strength of the relationship shows that the more SMs are committed to the organization, the higher their JP is going to be. The statistical results of the mediation analysis of the objective four in Table 3 revealed that OC significantly and partially mediated the relationship between QWL and JP.

Accordingly, this study emphasized upon the positive relationship between QWL and JP among the SMs in SLR. Many research findings have concluded that QWL positively influences on JP. None of them has presented any opposite idea in relation to QWL and JP. Each and every finding showed a positive relationship between both variables. Beh and Rose (2011) studied the relationship between QWL and JP and generalized that any culture depends on the performance of its employees.

As a result of the global findings, railway employees agree with the existing QWL practices provided to them, and they perceive well the existing working condition and work environment (Hosmani, Shambhushankar and Bindurani, 2014; and Mazloumi, Kazemi, Nasl-Saraji and Barideh, 2014) but in the Sri Lankan context it seems to have an inconsistent to a certain extent. Though the employees have favorable feelings towards QWL they have given lower priority for constitutionalism, working conditions, opportunity for development of human capacity and a safe and healthy work environment. Further, this situation is highlighted through the local literature as below. Halpita and Thelijjagoda (2011) conducted a study regarding the Sri Lankan context of Railway and suggested that the manual system is inappropriate for the modern situation and creates numerous problems for workers and passengers and they mentioned that work related environment should be changed with advanced technology. Kesavan, Chandrakumar, Kulatunga, Gowrynathan, Rajapaksha, Senewiratne and Laguleshwaran (2015) found that employees have their own grievances related to the work and work related facilities faced by the employees in Sri Lanka context. This study is unique for findings related to employees who work in SLR and emphasized that OC mediated the relationship between QWL and JP.

ORIGINALITY AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE EXISTING LITERATURE

A detailed discussion of QWL, OC and JP uncovers the fact that all concepts are employee related, and are essential for the achievement of goals of a particular organization. The researchers cleared conceptual confusion by means of an extensive literature review (Ramawickrama, Opatha, and PushpaKumari, 2017a and 2017b), and clearly and separately presented working definitions, importance, dimensions and question items of the three constructs. Moreover, the questionnaire was validated appropriately. The conceptual model (Figure 1) has also contributed theoretically as well as empirically to the existing literature.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study revealed, vital managerial implications related to the impact of the existing QWL practices on JP of SMs working in SLR. Findings of this study highlighted the fact that the existing QWL practices play a vital role in JP and that QWL significantly relates to OC. OC significantly and positively relates to JP as well. Hence, these direct relationships are enhanced further due to the mediating effect of OC. In order to enhance JP of SMs in SLR, it is vital that QWL is enhanced by the relevant responsible top managers. According to the descriptive statistics, SMs have neutral level of perception for QWL practice of the organization. SMs seem to have become dissatisfied with certain aspects of their QWL, and without addressing those aspects it will not be possible to enhance the OC of SMs and consequently, their JP. Therefore, the OC must be enhanced through the enhancement of the existing QWL practices of the Railway; that is, it should be modernized for the satisfaction of both internal and external customers who now live in a dynamic environment. More specifically, SMs are not satisfied with their existing salaries, work conditions and work environment, archaic rules and regulations and insufficient career development opportunities. Therefore, the existing human resource management practices should be modified and enriched with current, dynamic practices.

LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research study was limited to the railway sector in Sri Lanka, specifically to SMs who are multi task handlers. The study sample was homogenous, being restricted to males. Hence, other studies are needed in relation to QWL and JP in different settings without gender bias, in a variety of industries, in different organizational settings in other countries, in alternative economic systems and during different time periods of an organizations life-cycle. Further, Likert type scaling was included throughout the questionnaire, except in the demographic factors. The study respondents were contacted at only one time (cross-sectional), and therefore the research was not conducted as a longitudinal study. Since the research was a behavioral study, a longitudinal research design would have been more appropriate. Therefore, the researchers suggest further studies to be done employing the qualitative method and the mixed method in sectors other than the one used in this study.

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