CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the research results of the quantitative phase of the study have been discussed. This chapter briefly summarizes the research findings. Recommendations are presented based on the findings from the study. The limitations of this research work is listed followed by suggestions for future research as the final part of this study. The objective of this chapter is to draw conclusions from Phase I study regarding expected QWL attributes of the hotel employees and to bring forth observations and recommendations from the Phase II quantitative study relating the independent variables with the outcome variables. The sections that follow discusses the implications, limitations and scope for future research.

5.2 Observations and conclusions from Phase I study

a. The objective of this phase was to answer the question, "what are the expected dimensions of QWL for the hotel employees?" To uncover the pertinent attributes of expected QWL, this study adhered to Portes's (1998) recommendation that HRD scholars and practitioners take a measured approach to incorporate social capital into the research and practice of HRD. Thus drawing upon the essence of grounded theory, this study investigated the expected attributes that were indicative of a good work life quality from the stakeholders (i.e. the present and potential employees). The content analysis yielded 42 sub dimensions under eight dimensions of QWL. The dimensions being job
characteristics, person-job fit, company image, HR policies, work group relationship, physical working conditions, work-life balance, and interaction with customers. It was observed that there was no pronounced deviation in responses between the hotel management students and the hotel employees, considered in this study. This could be attributed to the students’ experience of the ground reality of the hotel workplace and their profound interaction with other employees during their industrial training, which might have influenced their views.

b. A striking observation in the first phase of the study is that ‘job security’ barely found any mention as an impediment to the QWL for the respondents. This perhaps pronounces the observation envisioned by Lawler (2005), that we have entered a new era in the relationship between organizations and their employees in terms of loyalty. Some dimensions captured in this study resonate in parts with prior definitions (Walton, 1975; Cunningham and Eberle, 1990; Lau and Bruce, 1998), rather than in entirety. Specifically, job security as an attribute of QWL, found in prior studies was largely absent in the responses gathered in this study. Whereas, dimensions like ‘company image’ and ‘interaction with customers’ emerged as dimensions of QWL in this study. Thus it can be concluded that QWL being a subjective phenomenon, incongruence of the observed dimensions of this study with prior definitions may not simply be an error, rather a reflection of systematic contextual differences.

5.3 Observations and recommendations from Phase II study:

Retaining hotel employees and obtaining their commitment to service quality initiatives is always important, as they are the people who are going to perform the day to day hotel
operations. Therefore, this section presents the relationship between gap score of the qwl attributes and ecsq, turnover intentions.

a. Past studies have found that autonomy allows employees to respond promptly to the needs of individual customers (Hartline & Ferrell, 1999) and would be particularly appropriate while performing complex tasks as service delivery (Houlihan, 2002). But the result of this study concerning female employees contradicts this finding. A practical explanation to this being that female employees generally work in front office and prefer to have good social relation with co-workers and avoid taking financial risk following any independent or wrong decisions (HR manager from org 3). This findings resonate with the findings of Konrad et. al. (2000) that, women may have stronger preferences for social relationships and network resources at work. But, given the disproportionate gender ratio in this study, it may not be appropriate to use the results of this study to support differential treatment for women and men in the hotel workplace, rather a study based on proportional gender ratio may do justice to the findings.

b. Findings from this study indicate that transportation facility, accommodation facility, relaxation facility, ergonomically designed work station contributed to ECSQ, concurring with prior findings that when employees perceive themselves as treated well by the organization, they tend to respond with extra-effort, positively contributing to their job performance (Organ, 1988), and results in quality services from the employees (Roadhes and Eisenberger, 2002).
c. The results of the study show that employees regardless of gender/age/tenure/department/organization attributed co-worker relationship and qualities to positively contribute towards CSQ, supporting evidences that good relationship within a work-group contributes to better service efforts at the workplace (Odden and Sias 1997), enhancing their performance, which means that events such as family picnics and get-togethers are recommended to allow employees of the hotel and their families to come together paving way for better relationship among all. It was found that organization 1 held events meant for social interactions and hosted get together for family members of the employees (HR manager from hotel coded as 1).

d. A comparison of ECSQ among the 3 organizations revealed that employees from organization 1 experienced QWL attributes conducive for highest commitment in providing service quality whereas this was least in case of organization 3 with organization 2 offering satisfactory work life for their employees. It is proposed that managers may reorient and establish training and development programs while offering employees challenging task, autonomy and provide workstation and equipments that are convenient to handle and work with, since concern for employees by the leadership strongly influences their performance and the level of service quality, as found by Zeithaml et al. (1990).

e. It is observed that salary/compensation and workload did not figure as an attribute affecting ECSQ, probably since hospitality professionals are groomed to unconditionally
provide excellent services through the exercise of their professional knowledge and training. Also, the prevalence of the practice to treat the hospitality guest as god, could be a reason for the commitment observed by the employees. These findings support the contention that, an excellent service that delights a guest provides a sense of satisfaction that takes precedence over economic imperatives (Friedson 2001) as the employees are being professionally trained to provide the best services and hence their focus is more on co-worker and technical support to perform their task to the best possible extent. Whereas salary/compensation figured as an attribute affecting turnover intention. It means that the turnover intention among employees begins with their comparing salaries with those offered in other hotels, first as a reason to quit the present hotel that they work for. Also the employees evaluate the salary offered by organization in other service industry that motivates them to leave the hotel industry, as low salaries promotes dissatisfaction and frustration (Morrison, 1993:126). This is a challenge for the hospitality industry, since it generally pays less than other industries for comparable jobs. Hotel managers of these organizations may draft a compensation plan that is comparable with other hotels in order to retain their employees who ultimately provides the competitive edge. Also the practice by the hotel industry to pay comparably less compared to other service industry may need some rethinking and possible ways to improve the compensation offered.

f. The attribute performance appraisal frequently figured as contributing to ECSQ and turnover intention to other hotel. Constructive appraisal feedback promotes positive employee attitude and commitment (Bannister & Balkin, 1990). As one of the employee from hotel 3 mentioned that, "... we look forward to an effective PA system, which
would identify our weakness and strengths ... we expect this to be communicated to us along with appropriate measures to train and support us to do our best ..."

It may thus be contended that performance appraisal should have a focus on employee development aimed at imparting skills and offering training programs, which would improve employee performance (Milliman et al. 2002), as effective appraisal system increases employee’s productivity (Rodgers & Hunter, 1991; Schay, 1988; Taylor & Pierce, 1999). Thus this study adds to Chang’s (2005) finding of a significant positive influence of performance appraisal on employees’ commitment level, reiterating that effective use of performance appraisal can make employees more committed. Ineffective performance appraisal contributes to employees' perceptions of unfairness and they were more likely to consider leaving the organization (Dailey and Kirk, 1992), which is reinforced in the findings of this study.

g. It is observed that safety and hygiene standards, appears as an attribute affecting employee’s commitment to service quality and turnover intention to other hotel. In general, hotels are expected to comply with strict safety and hygiene standards. According to Walcsak and Reuter (2004), kitchen managers and supervisors sometimes make decisions out of negligence, quest for profit, or commit willful violations of food safety standards placing customers’ health at risk. When a hotel constantly violates these regulations, employees feel frustrated and guilty of not providing quality services and believe that they are cheating their customers and hence look out for employment in other hotels that follow standardized practices. This calls for retrospection into the safety and
hygiene practices followed by the hotels and a need to adequately monitor it and abide by the prescribed safety and hygiene standards for the hotel industry.

h. It is observed that new employees attributed orientation as a factor affecting their CSQ and turnover intention to other hotel. It was found that the reason for newly hired employees resigning within 30 days is because they just got off to a poor start and orientation process can help employers and employees to establish trust in one another (Kavanaugh and Ninemeier 2001), by providing important information about the organization and their roles in it (Young and Lundberg 1996). Hence it is recommended that hotel organization carry out a formal orientation program to relieve the employees of the initial anxiety. This would lay the foundation for the new recruits to familiarize themselves with the workplace and the organization, thereby reducing stress and allowing them to gain a foothold in their new job environment (Waters 2003).

i. Cafeteria facility featured as a prominent attribute affecting ECSQ and in some cases of turnover intention to other hotel. In many hospitality operations, employees receive one free/subsidized meal/tea/coffee/snack on duty and employees regard spending their break time in canteen as a central activity of their workday and foodservice is regarded as part of the incentives offered by companies (Mikkelsen, 2004), as expressed by HR manager from hotel 1:
"... our employee cafeteria is the best with light music being played, so that employees can de-stress themselves while having their food and this is particularly vital for hotel employees as their job is very strenuous ..."

These observations highlight the importance of providing high quality cafeteria by the organization’s as suggested by Kirketerp(2000) to retain the employees.

j. Most participants in this study perceived the importance of training and development relating it to ECSQ and turnover intention to other hotel. In fact, providing employees with opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge shows that the organization is willing to invest in the employee (Allen et al., 2003), and training being an important activity for any hospitality organization (Powers and Barrows 1999), an employee gains confidence of producing high quality output (Burke, 1995; Saks, 1996) that influences an employees’ commitment (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). As employees continue to be the most important asset, training and development remains an imperative, for the hotel employees, as lifelong learning and training is a significant part of the work life at all levels (Cetron et al. 2006). However, these practices are not taken up by organization 3 as the management fail to see the benefits of training, as elucidated by an employee from this organization. This translates into limited expenditure on training and development, lower employee commitment and higher turnover intention, affecting the competitive advantage for the hotel organization (Gassenheimer & Ingram, 1999). Hotel proprietors of organization 3 need to understand the benefits of training and, importantly, the outcomes of not training.
k. The models predicting turnover intention to other profession identifies attributes like workload and customer disrespect that has significant influence on the employee's turnover intention. Workers who are overloaded are more likely to feel that they lack control over their working conditions and in turn may be less likely to develop and use new skills (Holman & Wall, 2002) that may subsequently force the employee to leave the hotel industry, where the shift hours are long and weekends are the busiest period. Shift-work has been labeled as a major occupational stress factor affecting motivation at work (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997). Further, the hotel employees faces frequent customer hostility that requires constant regulation of emotions (Harris & Reynolds, 2003) having its impact on employee performance and turnover intentions. Research suggests training employees in behavioral skills to improve their capability in dealing with varying customer needs (Bettencourt and Gwinner 1996; Hart et al. 1990). Thus organizations need to provide training to employees as a means to provide them with greater control over customer interactions and handle the unfair treatment they receive (Schat & Kelloway, 2000). But the low value of the model predicting turnover intention to other profession indicates that there may be many other cues that can influence the relationship, which probably may not have been captured in this study or perhaps may be factors unrelated to QWL attributes. Similar research on a large scale would enhance clarity in this aspect.

l. Turnover is one of the most prevalent, longstanding concerns in the hotel industry, which has been characterized as having a "turnover culture" (Deery & Shaw, 1997, p.
377; Wasmuth & Davis, 1983a, 1983b, 1983c). In this regard, employers need to understand that employees' being primarily responsible for providing a sustainable competitive advantage for the organization, success in the hospitality industry depends on managing and retaining their employees (Woods, 1992). And it is in the best interest of employer and employees to improve the work life for the employees.

The findings of this study are consistent with the notion that QWL attributes has an impact on employee commitment to service quality and turnover intentions. Given that research is a gradual process, and can be taken as 'half full or half empty' depending on the epistemological standpoint (Spini, 2003), the researcher concludes the study at current state of being and discusses implications, limitations and scope for future research based on this study.

The results of the study identified a number of implications for theory and practice.

5.4 Implications for theory

1. Results of the study confirm the existence of significant relationship between ECSQ, turnover intentions and QWL.

2. This study complements the existing QWL literature by contributing an empirical study on the hotel employees' expectation of QWL.
3. More specifically, it is hoped that the QWL attributes/dimensions identified in this study would provide the researchers some more insights for theoretical development in the area of turnover and ECSQ particularly for the hospitality industry.

4. As it is important to ensure that lessons learned with respect to the research method are shared with future researcher, it may be noted that this study could not emerge with empirically meaningful clustering of qwl attributes gathered from the phase I study.

5.5 Practical implications

The future success of the hospitality industry may rest in part on its ability to improve the image of service employment (Waryszak & King, 2001), while this study provides information about quality of work life attributes, which could benefit the human resources department and those in leadership or supervisory role to pay attention to the :-

1. QWL attributes that impact ECSQ and turnover intentions. For example, service managers may consider the efficacy of having a transparent and effective performance appraisal system, scheduling the shift as per employee’s convenience as being done in organization 1, providing training and development opportunities etc. In knowing these variables, managers can implement the planning process in order to retain and improve the performance of the employees.
2. It is recommended that organizations take action to reduce and eliminate the gap between perceived and expected QWL attributes by carrying out a systematic and continuous assessment of employee's perception and expectation of QWL offered by the organization in order to provide employees with a work life that is conducive for the employees' performance and retention.

3. Service quality being an important criterion that differentiates one hotel from the other, efforts should be directed at understanding how employees perceive the QWL attributes, since enhanced perception of quality of working life lead to better performance (Katz et al., 1983).

4. As workers are quick to move on to more attractive employment situations, when they are dissatisfied with any aspect in the present organization (Lawler III, 2005), it is important that policy makers understand the existing gap (p-e) with respect to QWL attributes and set strategies to minimize it in order to retain their employees.

5. This research found that behaviour of the customer affects the quality of the work life of the hotel employees, entailing a need to map out techniques to train employees to interact confidently and intelligently in order to draw positive outcome for the employees during the customer-employee interaction.

6. Managers need to understand the importance of providing relaxation facilities for their employees in order to rejuvenate them and to endure the strain of the hotel workplace.
7. Finally, one of the key finding from the current research is the increased desire by some employees to have access to the decision-making processes by endowing employees with the required autonomy. This is understandable in the context of a busy and demanding worklife which translates to encountering and resolving unpredictable customer demands.

8. It is further suggested that training and development is a significant area for developing employee commitment and retention, which creates competitive advantage for hospitality organizations (Ingram, 1999).

9. Employees from organization 3 felt that managers do not understand the relationship between employee retention and company profitability, and accept turnover as a necessary evil (Hinkin and Tracey, 2000). This study reinforces the need for training the employees in order to reduce attrition and produce motivated and satisfied employees (Carey and Franklin, 1991), which holds significance for organization 3.

10. From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that organizational climate does matter. In this respect, organizations need to pay great attention to their policies and practices like performance appraisal, training and development opportunities etc., as these have an important bearing on the level of QWL.
5.6 Limitations and suggestions for future research

It should be noted that although this study contributes to our knowledge base, it has limitations and viable prospects for further research.

First, it is not clear whether employee responses to the expectations of QWL in the present study represented more, 'the level of QWL the employee hopes to receive', 'the level of QWL the employee will accept', or 'the level of QWL employees believe they are likely to get'. Second, participants in this study were drawn from institutes and hospitality organization located in Mangalore city in India. This may delimit generalizations. Substantial research needs to be carried out in order to fully develop a complete understanding of this important QWL construct. Additionally, potential applications of the findings to other service contexts require testing. Third, qualitative data such as emerged from this study is only one contribution and research could be pursued further, for instance relating and understanding this study from data gathered across all categories of hotels. As more and more hospitality organizations consider how to augment employee commitment to service quality and counter turnover, future research can dwell into similar research based on socio-cultural background, which could provide a holistic picture of the relationship between the study variables. Further, the results of this study must be interpreted with caution due to the small number of study participants and disproportionate ratios among groups during comparison, especially in case of gender comparison. Future researchers may consider broadening this study to congregate proportionate ratios across various categories, in order to improve its statistical validity of findings among different categories. Five, additional research is
needed to substantiate the validity and reliability of the instrument used in the phase II study. Six, an in-depth research considering only the relevant independent variables with dependent variable involving the departments would refine the results further. Finally, another avenue for research would be to develop empirical research designed to link the outcomes of this study to firm-level performance.

5.7 Summary

The study was exploratory in that the expected qwl attributes and its impact on ecsq and turnover intentions for the hotel employees is a relatively under-researched area and this research endeavored to gain new insights into this research problem besides various limitations. The main objective of this study was to explore the hotel employees' expected QWL attributes and examine its relationship with ECSQ and turnover intentions in terms of the gap between perception and expectation (p-e). This study was taken up in 2 phases. The first phase being a qualitative study to investigate the QWL attributes. Phase II study was carried out to examine the relationship between the qwl attributes identified in Phase I with ECSQ and turnover intentions. This relationship was examined based on step wise regression and explanation sought on the empirical results from HR managers and employees. The findings, contributions, implications and limitations were discussed as a means to extend research in this field by researchers from the related field and for practical applications by policy makers in the hospitality industry. It is hoped that other researchers deem it fit to include the qwl variables identified in this study for the hotel employees so as to develop a greater understanding of its effects on ecsq and turnover intentions.