CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The research context and its significance

In a hotel, the services offered by an employee (producer of the service) and experience of that service by the guest (consumer of the service) are often instantaneous (Carlzon 1987). It is thus challenging for the hospitality managers to motivate their employees to stay on the job and to offer efficient and good services which the guest expect (Cheng, 1995). In fact the resourcefulness of the employees in an organisation depends largely on the environment at the workplace, and it has been suggested that due attention be paid in providing a satisfying and a high quality work environment for the employees commensurate with other associated factors (Mumford 2006). Quality of work life invites attention mainly to the worker’s need for a meaningful and satisfying work and participation in decisions that affect their work situation (Delmotte & Walker 1974). Prior research has recognised the association between Quality of Work Life (QWL) of the service providers and the quality of service offered. Triveni et al. (2000) studied organizational climate as an attribute affecting the quality of work life. Raduan et. al.(2006) found that QWL is affected by organizational climate, career achievement, career satisfaction and career balance.

Considering the hospitality industry, hotel staff work round the clock and the normal shift hours varies from 9-11 hours at a stretch. Since the past decade hotel management colleges are professionally training their students in developing the specific skills needed
for a job in the hotel. Also, the old notion of only males opting for hotel jobs is changing, with increasing number of female students enrolling in professional hospitality degree course to make a career in hotels. This has brought in a change in the hotel work place demography and aspirations prompting for a review of the overall quality of the work life of these employees rather than just focusing on the organizational climate.

Indian economy is witnessing growing businesses, greater purchasing power and the surge in business and leisure travel has resulted in a flourishing and booming Hospitality industry. Citing the need to churn out greater number of hotel professionals the union budget 2006 proposed a capital investment of Rs. 10 crores (Express Hospitality 2006). But with such opportunity comes difficult challenges, as hotels in India are witnessing high employee turnover rate (Mehra, 2006) and the direction of employee turnover is also varied. It is found that employees keep quitting one hotel to join other hotel, or join some other industry like cruise liner, airlines etc. or sometimes quit the profession altogether. This may be attributed to the highly complex, competitive and labour-intensive nature of the hospitality industry and the change in the academic background of the employees in the hotel industry. On the other hand there are many star hotels vying with each other for profitability and facing stiff competition from other hotels. Since ‘employees’ are the ‘resources’ at the forefront to provide excellent services that differentiates one hotel from the other, the need of the hour is to provide a good quality of work life for the hotel employees so that they deem it fit to stay with the hotel and provide the best services to their guest. Also the change in work place demography
demands understanding of the qwl expected by the employees. This is why there is an urgent need to develop the construct of QWL, in the present context.

Studies have increasingly recognized the importance of Quality of Work Life (QWL) in reducing turnover (Ference, 1982; Louis and Smith, 1990) and employee well being impacting the services offered by them(Schneider & Bowen 1985). In particular, the hotels in India, are reeling under the crisis of high turnover (Mehra, 2006), that is adversely affecting the quality of products and services offered (Pizam and Thornburg, 2000). The concept of the quality of working life has been seen as not only descriptive, but also normative, implying that studying it entails eventual attempts at “corrective” action (Boisvert, 1977).

Though research suggests a causal link between poor working conditions and employee turnover (Yu, 1999) and commitment to service quality (Varca, 1999). Yet, despite the fact that hotels have the most stressful work environments (Karatepe and Kilic, 2007, p.2), it is surprising that little research has been carried out in the hospitality industry compared to other industries (Lucas and Deery, 2004). For example, little is known about the hotel employees’ expectation of work life attributes that contributes to qwl. Nor is the influence of qwl on employee commitment and/or turnover intention understood.

The search for relevant literature in this field confirmed a shortage of research in this area, especially in the Indian context. Against this background, the need to understand expected qwl for the hotel employees and its impact on ecsq and turnover intention became significant.
1.2 Objectives of the study

The primary research objectives are:

1. To investigate the expected attributes of Quality of Work Life (QWL) that are significant to the employees in a hotel work place.

2. To investigate the gap between employee’s perception and expectation of the qwl attributes and how they are related to employee’s commitment to service quality (ECSQ).

3. To investigate the gap between employee’s perception and expectation of the qwl attributes and how they are related to employee’s turnover intentions to other hotel, to other service industry, other profession.

4. To formulate recommendations towards future research as well as suggestions for effective worklife in each of the three organizations considered in this study.

1.3 Research questions

The formulation of research questions is considered critical in the process of refining the thesis topic (Sarantakos, 1993). The primary questions addressed in this study have been identified as follows:
a. What are the expected QWL attributes for hotel employees?

b. How does the gap between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes influence ECSQ, based on gender

c. How does the gap between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes influence ECSQ, based on age

d. How does the gap between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes influence ECSQ, based on tenure?

e. How does the gap between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes influence ECSQ, based on department?

f. How does the gap between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes influence ECSQ, based on organization?

Additionally, in light of the foregoing concerns in the hotel industry, management need to motivate employees to stay on the job, by ensuring measures at enhancing the working conditions to counter turnover (Yu, 1999). This is addressed in the following query:

g. How does the gap between perception and expectation (p-e) influence TI- H / SI / P — based on gender?

h. How does the gap between perception and expectation (p-e) influence TI- H / SI / P — based on age?

i. How does the gap between perception and expectation (p-e) influence TI- H / SI / P — based on tenure?

j. How does the gap between perception and expectation (p-e) influence TI- H / SI / P — based on department?
k. How does the gap between perception and expectation (p-e) influence TI- H / SI / P — based on organization?

1.4 Hypothesis development

A hypothesis is defined as a logically conjectured relationship between two or more variables expressed in the form of testable statements (Sekaran, 1995; Sarantakos, 1993). The formulation of hypothesis enables the researcher to build a clear framework and guide the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data (Sarantakos, 1993).

Service executives have recognized that no strategy aimed at retention of external customers can be considered complete unless it includes programs for reaching and winning over internal customers (Schnieder and White, 2004), since good feelings by employees translate into warmer, more courteous behaviour towards their customers. To test this supposition, we propose that the gap between perception and expectation (met/unmet expectation) of qwl attributes / variables is likely to affect employee’s commitment to delivering excellent service, underpinning the accompanying hypothesis. Additionally, biographical variables, such as occupational level and tenure, have long been systematically correlated with turnover (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). Mathieu & Zajac (1990) studied tenure as predictors of work attitudes, such as commitment and turnover. Age and gender also affects individual expectations (Brown and Yoshioka 2003) and also affects employee performance, turnover intentions and related human resource decisions.
(Sturman 2003). Hence hypotheses are framed, taking into consideration these impacting characteristics.

**H1:** The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of QWL attributes has an effect on ECSQ based on gender.

**H2:** The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of QWL attributes has an effect on ECSQ based on age.

**H3:** The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of QWL attributes has an effect on ECSQ based on tenure.

**H4:** The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of QWL attributes has an effect on ECSQ based on department.

**H5:** The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of QWL attributes has an effect on ECSQ based on organization.

Further, one of the primary challenges that the hospitality industry faces today, is the high level of turnover with the most significant problem being, “brain drain”, because the skills and qualifications gained in hotel sectors are easily transferable to other service industry (Powell and Wood, 1999). Past studies have purported that overall satisfaction in worklife was negatively correlated to the intent to leave one’s profession reinforcing the importance of a satisfying work environment to retain workers in the profession (Blau and Lunz, 1998; Cotton and Tuttle 1986). And as claimed by Aiken et. al. (2002) that the creation of a quality work environment has relevance to low staff turnover. The hypothesis follows thus:
H6: The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes has an effect on turnover intention to other hotel based on gender.

H7: The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes has an effect on turnover intention to other hotel based on age.

H8: The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes has an effect on turnover intention to other hotel based on tenure.

H9: The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes has an effect on turnover intention to other hotel based on department.

H10: The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes has an effect on turnover intention to other hotel based on organization.

H11: The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes has an effect on turnover intention to other service industry based on gender.

H12: The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes has an effect on turnover intention to other service industry based on age.

H13: The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes has an effect on turnover intention to other service industry based on tenure.

H14: The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes has an effect on turnover intention to other service industry based on department.

H15: The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes has an effect on turnover intention to other service industry based on organization.

H16: The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes has an effect on turnover intention to other profession based on gender.

H17: The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of qwl attributes has
H18: The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of QWL attributes has an effect on turnover intention to other profession based on tenure.

H19: The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of QWL attributes has an effect on turnover intention to other profession based on department.

H20: The gap score between perception and expectation (p-e) of QWL attributes has an effect on turnover intention to other profession based on organization.

1.5 Preface to key terms

Whenever a research is undertaken, the key terms used needs to be defined in order to minimize ambiguity and confusion. This is done to give a concrete meaning to the variables that the researcher has chosen to study.

Quality of Worklife: An individual's assessment of several characteristics affecting them (Kiernan and Marrone, 1997) as they hope to "co-ordinate, synchronize and integrate work and non-work aspects of their lives" (Felstead et al., 2002:56), and the degree of an individual's satisfaction in the workplace (Kiernan and Marrone, 1997, p. 64-65).

Employee Commitment to Service Quality (ECSQ): ECSQ involves a personal, affective commitment to improve the firm's service quality (Hartline and Ferrel, 1996).
**Turnover Intention:** The phenomenon of individuals voluntarily quitting or resigning from an organization (Mobley, 1997; Price, 1997). For this study 'professional turnover intent' is used interchangeably with 'occupational turnover intent' and professional turnover intention refers to the voluntary intention to leave the profession to work in another profession or occupation. Turnover intention to other service industry refers to the voluntary intention to leave the hotel industry to work in another service industry like airline industry, cruise liners etc.

**Hospitality workplace:** According to the Hotel proprietors Act 1956, 'hotel' means an establishment held out by the proprietor as offering food, drink, and, if so required, sleeping accommodation without special contract to any traveler presenting himself who appears able and willing to pay a reasonable sum for the services and facilities provided and who is in the fit state to be received. The term hotel has common root with the words 'hospitality', 'hoteliery' and 'host'...(Negi 1997)

The hospitality services involves the interaction between the guest and the host employee, where employees need to establish human connection, give effective and efficient service, and make an effort to fix problems (Russ-Eft, 2004), along with services such as safety and meeting of guest needs and wants (King, 1995). There are four core operational departments in any hotel are (i) Front office department (ii) House Keeping department (iii) Food & Beverage service department (iv) Food & Beverage production department.
The staff in the front office are often the first people, new guests meet on arrival. Front office staff deal with reception, reservations and handling guest inquiries/complaints in conjunction with all other departments in the hotel like room service, housekeeping, maintenance departments (Malhotra 2002). Housekeeping department is vital for any hotel and plays a key role in the organization (Bhar 2006). Housekeeping staff daily comes across guests and they work as the front line of defense (Bhar 2007). The staff of the housekeeping rely on a team of room attendants to clean bedrooms and bathrooms, replenish consumables such as toiletries and beverage items and service public areas. Their work involves ensuring that appropriate standards of cleanliness are achieved and that the fabric and fixtures of guest rooms and public areas are well maintained (Malhotra 2002). In the food and beverage service department, the employees have to coordinate with the production department and guest for providing prompt and quality services to the guest. They have to be calm and pleasing at all times during their interaction with the guest. They need to be tactful in dealing with guest moods and complaints and provide quality services at all times. The role of the staff in the food and beverage production department is changing. He is business manager, cost controller, image builder, brand ambassador etc. of the hotel he represents. They have a role in deciding about the kind of equipment to be used in kitchens. They have to develop fresh menu, schedule expertise and have to cultivate a slick flow of merchandise and supplies in the kitchen and has to be vigilant about hygiene and cleanliness (Gill 2007).
1.6 Assumptions

According to Polit and Hungler (1999: 88), assumptions are propositions or statements whose truth are considered self-evident or have been satisfactorily established by earlier research. The following assumptions are relevant for this research:

a. This study captures the reality from the perspective of those associated with and experiencing the worklife in each hotel.

b. Respondents will honestly answer all questions independently and to the best of their knowledge.

c. The employment scenario in the hospitality industry has changed in recent times (in terms of gender, educational level etc.) leading to a change in employees’ expectation of worklife, that needs to be investigated.

1.7 Limitations

a. While drafting the survey tool a researcher has to maintain a reasonable length. If it is too long, the respondents will be hesitant to fill the survey tool. Conversely, if it is too short, the respondents may see it as insignificant and choose not to respond on the grounds that it will not provide adequate information necessary for change. On the basis of this background, the length of the survey may have influenced the study results.

b. Participants were skewed based on gender, with males predominating, resulting in unmatched gender ratio.
c. The conclusions based on the results of this study were dependant on the views expressed by the respondents.

d. The limitation of this study is that it has to be completed within a finite period of time from the perspective of the doctoral program within which it was conducted.

e. A primary limitation of the study relates to the selection of 3 hotel management institutes and 3 hotels located in Mangalore city due to the difficulties in getting appointment with hotel managers and getting permission for meeting their employees. This implies that the results emanating from the research cannot be confidently extrapolated, as circumstances in other environments may differ from the current sample that was selected.

1.8 Phases of the study

This study was carried out in three phases. It starts with a qualitative phase (I) preceding quantitative phase (II) and then articulating the findings of this phase with a qualitative phase (III) elucidating interpretations on the results of the phase II from Hotel managers and employees. The objective of each phase of the study being as follows;

Phase I is a qualitative study that was framed with the objective of finding out the expected Quality of Work Life (qwl) attributes for the hotel employees.

Phase II is a quantitative study, involving administration of the questionnaire to employees of 4 core departments in 3 hotels. The questionnaire comprised of sections
pertaining to expectation and perception of qwl attributes, ecsq, turnover intentions and employee information

Phase III is a qualitative study, wherein, based on the empirical findings of the phase II study, Human Resource manager and hotel employees were interviewed to get a better understanding of the findings.

1.9 Organization of the report

This dissertation consists of five chapters;

Chapter one serves to introduce the study by highlighting the background and significance of the study, the central research questions, and hypothesis along with assumptions and limitations of the study.

This study comprises of two phases; first a qualitative study followed by a quantitative study. The second chapter provides a detailed look at the qualitative study that formed the Phase I. This chapter explores and identifies the expected attributes of worklife for hotel employees.

Chapter three offers an overview of Phase II, the quantitative phase dealing with instrument development, data collection and factor analysis.

Chapter four is devoted to hypothesis testing and analysis.
Chapter five presents a discussion on the findings that emerged from this study, significance and limitations associated with the study and the scope for future research.

The References section lists all the works cited by the researcher.

The Appendices include the survey questionnaires used in each phase of the research.