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Perception of quality of life at work in a secretariat of the Federal District Government

Percepção da qualidade de vida no trabalho de uma secretaria do Governo do Distrito Federal

Percepción de la calidad de vida en el trabajo en una secretaría de Gobierno del Distrito Federal

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ABSTRACT

Background: Quality of Life at Work (QLW) can provide benefits for personal and professional life, as well as generating conditions for greater productivity and organizational effectiveness.

Purpose: Identify the perception regarding the quality of life at work in a Secretariat of the Government of the Federal District, as well as verifying whether there is a difference in perception between managers and employees of the organization and in people who participated in quality of life actions offered by the organization.

Method: The quantitative research, in a non-probabilistic convenience sampling, obtained a sample of 291 civil servants of a GDF Secretariat who answered an electronic questionnaire to evaluate, using a Likert scale, 35 items grouped into 10 QLW dimensions, in addition to profile questions. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were performed.

Results: Only 49.3% indicated a degree of agreement in having QLW. The dimensions of telework and opportunity to use and develop capabilities were the best evaluated, and fair and adequate compensation as well as chance of growth and job security were the worst evaluated. There is no significant difference regarding occupation of management positions in the QLW dimensions, and there is a significant difference except in the dimension of QLW in general of those who participated in the QLW program.

Conclusions: The study corroborates findings from the literature on research in public organizations regarding the most satisfactory and unsatisfactory dimensions of the QLW model, highlights the need to adopt teleworking in the organization to improve the QLW of civil servants, and indicates the relevance of public organizations investing in QLW programs. The article contributes by advancing group comparison studies, in studying the perception of QLW in public organizations. A diagnosis that can be useful for public organizations was presented, when establishing their quality of life programs at work.

Keywords: quality of life at work; Federal District; public sector; telework; statistical analyses.

RESUMO

Contextualização: A Qualidade de Vida no Trabalho (QVT) pode proporcionar benefícios para a vida pessoal e profissional, além de gerar condições para maior produtividade e eficácia organizacional.

Objetivo: Identificar a percepção quanto à qualidade de vida no trabalho em uma Secretaria do Governo do Distrito Federal, além de verificar se há diferença na percepção entre gestores e servidores da organização e nas pessoas que participaram de ações de qualidade de vida ofertadas pela organização.

Método: A pesquisa quantitativa, em uma amostragem não probabilística por conveniência, obteve amostra de 291 servidores de uma Secretaria do GDF que responderam um questionário eletrônico para avaliar, com escala likert, 35 itens agrupados em 10 dimensões de QVT, além de questões de perfil. Foram realizadas análises estatísticas descritivas e inferenciais.

Resultados: Apenas 49,3% indicaram grau de concordância quanto a ter QVT. As dimensões de teletrabalho e oportunidade de uso e desenvolvimento de capacidades foram as melhores avaliadas, e de compensação justa e adequada e de chance de crescimento e segurança no emprego as com piores avaliações. Não há diferença significativa quanto à ocupação de função de gestão nas dimensões de QVT, e há diferença significativa apenas na dimensão de QVT em geral de quem participou de programa de QVT.

Conclusões: O estudo corrobora achados da literatura referente a pesquisas em organizações públicas quanto às dimensões mais satisfatórias e insatisfatórias do modelo de QVT, evidencia a necessidade da adoção do teletrabalho na organização para melhorar a QVT dos servidores públicos, e indica a relevância das organizações públicas investirem em programas de QVT. O artigo contribui ao avançar nos estudos de comparação de

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grupos, em estudar a percepção de QVT em organizações públicas. Apresentou-se um diagnóstico que pode ser útil às organizações públicas ao estabelecer seus programas de qualidade de vida no trabalho.

Palavras-chave: qualidade de vida no trabalho; Distrito Federal; setor público; teletrabalho; análises estatísticas.

RESUMEN

Contextualización: La Calidad de Vida en el Trabajo (CVL) puede brindar beneficios para la vida personal y profesional, además de generar condiciones para una mayor productividad y efectividad organizacional.

Objetivo: Identificar la percepción sobre la calidad de vida en el trabajo en una Secretaría de Gobierno del Distrito Federal, además de verificar si existe diferencia en la percepción entre directivos y empleados de la organización y en las personas que participaron en las acciones de calidad de vida ofrecidas por la organización.

Método: La investigación cuantitativa, en muestreo no probabilístico por conveniencia, obtuvo una muestra de 291 funcionarios de una Secretaría del GDF que respondieron un cuestionario electrónico para evaluar, con escala Likert, 35 ítems agrupados en 10 dimensiones de CVL, además de preguntas de perfil. Se realizaron análisis estadísticos descriptivos e inferenciales.

Resultados: Sólo el 49,3% indicó un nivel de acuerdo con respecto a tener CVL. Las dimensiones de teletrabajo y oportunidad de utilizar y desarrollar capacidades fueron las mejor evaluadas, y la remuneración justa y adecuada y las posibilidades de crecimiento y seguridad laboral fueron las peor evaluadas. No hay diferencia significativa con respecto a la ocupación de un rol directivo en las dimensiones CVL, y hay una diferencia significativa solo en la dimensión CVL en general para quienes participaron en un programa CVL.

Conclusiones: El estudio corrobora hallazgos de la literatura sobre investigaciones en organizaciones públicas sobre las dimensiones más satisfactorias e insatisfactorias del modelo CVL, destaca la necesidad de adoptar el teletrabajo en la organización para mejorar la CVL de los servidores públicos e indica la relevancia de que las organizaciones públicas inviertan en Programas CVL. El artículo contribuye avanzando en estudios de comparación grupal y estudiando la percepción de la CVL en las organizaciones públicas. Se presentó un diagnóstico que puede ser de utilidad para las organizaciones públicas, al momento de establecer sus programas de calidad de vida en el trabajo.

Palabras clave: calidad de vida en el trabajo; Distrito Federal; sector público; teletrabajo; análisis estadísticos.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Considering the importance of civil servants in the functioning of the state and in the delivery of services to society, it is essential to understand the factors that influence their quality of life. There has been an increase in citizenship awareness in the public sector, particularly in Latin America, which positively impacts the relationship between the state and its citizens. However, this organizational change presents challenges for public managers, who must address emerging new demands (Ferreira, 2017).

With the changes occurring in the market, organizations, through their Human Resources departments, seek to develop and refine their management models. People are the cornerstone of all the transformations taking place in a globalized world. Amid these changes, Quality of Life at Work Programs (QLW) have been increasingly gaining prominence within organizations, assuming a key role in their strategic planning. QLW is a relevant field of research and of great interest to organizations; studies on this subject began in the 1950s in England and in Brazil in the 1970s (Ferreira, Alves & Tostes, 2009).

QLW is an initiative that has gained importance in both the private and public sectors, as it fosters motivation in the execution of work and offers various benefits to the personal and professional lives of the members of the organization. For a holistic approach to the civil servant, it is necessary to address emotional, physical, professional, social, and spiritual dimensions. The work can be seen as a place where individuals reaffirm their performance, self-esteem, skills, emotions, and where they construct their personal history and identity (Sanchez & Nalini, 2023). Orsiolli et al. (2024) state that research on QLW in the public context has advanced in recent years and that public organizations need to provide a conducive work environment to the civil servants so that they can be productive and effective.

Scientific and academic studies on QLW play a role in enhancing the actions of public agencies concerned with both their employees and the outcomes of the services provided to the population. Albuquerque et al. (2022) note that public administration is an extremely important instrument for managing society, serving as a fundamental tool for achieving the objectives of the state, as it consists of a set of agencies and entities responsible for this task. According to the authors, When civil servants feel respected and enjoy quality life at work, it reflects positively in citizen services and overall societal well-being. Gemelli et al. (2020) found that individuals with a positive QLW are more effective in organizations, which can lead to increased motivation, satisfaction, and commitment, as well as reduced stress (Camargo et al., 2021).

Given the importance of QLW, the Government of the Federal District (GDF) implemented the Quality of Life and Well-being at Work Program in the DF, outlined by the I District Quality of Life Plan (Distrito Federal, 2022). This program aims to improve the quality of life of the GDF civil servants through initiatives such as strengthening telework or on-site working, promoting participation in retirement programs, creating orientation and integration programs for new employees, organizing innovation meetings in public management, training leaders and successors, and establishing programs for conscious consumption and financial education, as well as allocating budget provisions for health and QLW, among other measures. The context of study in the district executive branch allows us to investigate potential particularities in this type of organization, given the predominance of publications on federal public organizations and those in the education or health sectors, as analyzed by Orsiolli et al. (2024).

Although the inherent characteristics of public organizations make achieving quality of life at work challenging, the public sector is beginning to value employee satisfaction and well-being (Klein et al., 2019). However, despite this shift in focus and the advances in studies on the subject (Orsiolli et al., 2024), further research is still needed on QLW in the public context, particularly regarding the implementation of Quality of Life Programs (Amâncio et al., 2021; La Falce et al., 2020). The literature recommends the need for additional studies on QLW in the public sector (Andrade et al., 2019; Ferreira, 2015; Pacheco & Ferreira, 2020; Klein et al., 2019).

In light of the foregoing, this study aimed to identify the perceptions of managers and employees regarding quality of life at work in a Secretariat of the Government of the Federal District. Through the application of an electronic questionnaire, the QLW dimensions were identified, and differences in perception between managers and employees of the organization were examined, in line with the recommendation proposed by Amâncio et al. (2021), as well as differences among those who participated in quality of life initiatives offered by the organization.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Huse and Cummings (1985), QLW (Quality of Life at Work) is defined as a mindset involving people, work, and the organization, highlighting two distinct aspects: first, the concern for the well-being of workers and organizational effectiveness, and second, the participation of workers in work-related decisions and issues. For this concept, the authors identify four important aspects for the implementation of a Quality of Life program, among which improving the work environment stands out—encompassing factors such as flexible hours and changes in equipment layout. They assert that people become happier with their work when there are good conditions for performing it, and consequently, QLW indirectly has a positive impact on productivity.

Quality of life at work has proven to be a benchmark for organizations in achieving their goals, as it serves as a tool to measure and enhance employee satisfaction, thereby making them more productive through a focus on health and well-being. In Brazil, several large and medium-sized companies have been adapting quality of life program models from companies in the United States with the aim of reducing costs related to healthcare, absenteeism, and accidents, while also improving worker safety and well-being through a holistic approach (Silva & Lima, 2007). According to Limongi-França (2019), QLW is characterized as a set of initiatives implemented by an organization aimed at continuously introducing improvements and innovations in management processes, working conditions, and the internal culture of the organization.

According to Ferreira (2015), with the purpose of promoting individual and group well-being, personal development of workers, and the exercise of organizational citizenship in the workplace, QLW is a management principle expressed through a set of norms, guidelines, and practices regarding work conditions, organization, and socio-professional relations. In view of this, QLW comprises a set of best practices that generate benefits for both workers and organizations.

Quality of life at work is a fundamental concept for the well-being of employees and the success of organizations. Fernandes (2017) states that quality of life at work can be seen as a way to promote human maintenance and improvement in the work environment, emphasizing two aspects: the concern for the well-being of the employee and aiming for the improvement of the institution.

Investing in QLW policies and programs that restructure the work environment and address employees' needs is also essential, as well as carrying out constant assessments to promote continuous improvements in the work reality (Andrade et al., 2019; Ferreira, 2015; Klein et al., 2019; Pacheco & Ferreira, 2020). According to Pantoja et al. (2020), the development of public human resource management policies that consider the new organizational reality, the specificities of managerial profiles, and promote rapid and effective adaptive capacity is crucial for organizational success. The provision of information and communication systems, technological and organizational support, organizational communication, leadership, training, development and capacity-building actions, as well as the promotion of health and quality of life, are fundamental aspects. In this study, the authors analyzed the levels of QLW among Brazilian public managers in six organizations within the executive and judicial branches. The results indicated a predominance of well-being and obligation, but also revealed challenges such as workload, conflicts between personal and professional life, scheduling issues, and work disconnection. These challenges may be greater for managers, who must oversee activities and teams remotely while ensuring QLW outcomes.

Aruldoss, Kowalski, and Parayitam (2021), when studying the perception of quality of life among Indian civil servants, found that QLW is positively related to job satisfaction and commitment, and negatively related to work stress. In addition, work autonomy and an innovative culture positively influenced the quality of life of Korean civil servants (Park, Lee, & Park, 2022).

In recent years, flexible work arrangements and the use of new technologies have grown significantly. This has led to a blending and confusion of these aspects, as it is possible to work from home and use the internet to extend work hours or attend to personal matters. Aderaldo et al. (2017) reinforce the idea that telework enables greater interaction between workers and their families, offering various advantages such as improved quality of life, work-life balance, increased productivity, flexibility, the creation of performance metrics, cost reduction, lower stress levels, reduced commuting time, and a better understanding of work demands.

Andrade, Pantoja, and Figueira (2020) conducted a literature review on QLW and telework, highlighting that remote work creates different working conditions for civil servants, resulting in varied perceptions of quality of life at work. According to the authors, QLW involves producing with quality by focusing on emotions and a positive mood, and it is achieved outside the physical confines of the organization, through the use of communication and information technologies to provide personal and professional satisfaction and fulfillment. This concept is adopted in the present research for its contemporary relevance and consistency with the theoretical framework. Paschoal et al. (2022) demonstrated that telework contributes to the quality of life and well-being of civil servants, and Orsiolli et al. (2024) argue that technological advancements have been considered an important factor influencing quality of life.

In the study by Antloga et al. (2023), it was found that quality of life affects employee engagement, with some dimensions—such as recognition and professional growth—having a greater influence, while working conditions have a lesser impact. The authors also identified that variables such as gender, age group, position, and work location influence the perception of quality of life. The study by Camargo et al. (2021) also identified significant differences in the perception of quality of life at work dimensions among health professionals according to their area of practice (administrative, care, and medical). In that study, the authors found high ratings in the dimensions of socio-professional relationships and the work–social life link, while working conditions, work organization, and recognition and professional growth yielded average results. Finally, the authors recommend that the organization offer differentiated quality of life actions to meet the diverse needs of groups within the public organization. In the specific case of managers' perceptions of QLW in the context of a public organization during the pandemic, Oliveira et al. (2022) found that managers perceive a work overload while also feeling satisfied with the activities performed.

In a literature review on quality of life at work in public organizations, Amâncio et al. (2021) analyzed 21 articles published from 2010 to 2020 and found that in 86% of the studies, QLW was evaluated positively by respective research participants. They also demonstrated that QLW contributes positively to work commitment and satisfaction. The main quality of life dimensions that were positively evaluated included the social relevance of work, social integration, and work–life balance. On the other hand, the dimensions that were most negatively evaluated were related to constitutional aspects, remuneration, growth opportunities, and working conditions. The primary QLW model adopted in the articles was Walton's (1973). In a literature review on the instruments used to evaluate quality of life at work in the public sector, Orsiolli et al. (2024) found that Walton's (1973) model was the most frequently used to support the development of tailored instruments for research.

Walton's (1973) model takes into account the fulfillment of individual needs and emphasizes humanization in work practices (Orsiolli et al., 2024). To this end, the model includes eight conditions that impact the quality of life of the worker, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1

QLW Variables from Walton's (1973) Model

QLW Condition Variables	Description
1. Work Safety and Health Conditions	Refers to maintaining physical integrity through the careful management of working conditions that reduce the risk of illnesses and accidents.
2. Fair and Adequate Compensation	Refers to the equivalence between remuneration and the physical/mental effort and the set of skills applied in the service.
3. Opportunity for Immediate Use and Development of Capabilities	Involves the worker's autonomy in performing tasks and the application of complex knowledge and skills.
4. Continuous Growth Opportunities and Job Security	Concerns career development and the level of stability within the organization.
5. Social Integration	Regarding interpersonal relationships and the identification with the organization.
6. Constitutionalism	Refers to interpersonal rules and norms as well as the sense of identification with the organization.
7. Work and Overall Life Balance	Addresses the impact of work on the worker availability for other areas of life, such as leisure and family.
8. Social Relevance of Life and Work	Refers to the organization's position and significance in society, including its social image and how it is perceived by its employees.

Source: Walton (1973).

Paula et al. (2022) argue that Walton's (1973) model is directly related to motivation, self-esteem, and satisfaction of individuals. It addresses the needs and aspirations of workers, as well as their social responsibility. Moreover, it considers the political, economic, and social factors that influence quality of life at work and is capable of highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses of this quality from the employees' perspective.

Considering the recurring use of Walton's (1973) model in studies measuring QLW in the public sector, next are some research results based on this model. La Falce et al. (2020), while studying federal civil servants, found perceptions close to neutrality in the dimensions, with values ranging from 0.491 to 0.628 (on a scale of 0 to 1). The highest-rated aspects were social integration and constitutionalism at work, while the lowest-rated was work opportunities. The average quality of life at work score was 0.571, indicating a moderate perception.

Nogueira et al. (2022) identified that public higher education institution employees exhibited greater dissatisfaction with dimensions such as remuneration and rewards, work environment, training and development, safety, and overall job satisfaction. Conversely, aspects related to health and well-being, interpersonal relationships and cooperation, culture, and organizational climate were evaluated with higher degrees of satisfaction.

Souza et al. (2023) studied public health sector employees and found that the highest percentages of dissatisfaction were related to the dimensions of fair and adequate compensation, working conditions, growth opportunities and job security, and work–life balance. The item with the greatest dissatisfaction was the incentive for qualification. On the other hand, the dimensions that received the highest satisfaction ratings were the use and development of capabilities and social integration, the items with the highest levels of satisfaction were relationships with colleagues and pride in one's work.

Finally, Barros et al. (2024) investigated the teleworkers quality of life at work in a federal public organization using Walton's (1973) model, finding an overall quality of life at work index of 3.61. Additionally, they identified that the dimension contributing most to quality of life at work was social relevance, followed by social integration. Conversely, growth opportunities received the lowest average score regarding its contribution to quality of life at work, due to a lack of transparency in the criteria for career progression.

Based on this theoretical framework, the following research hypotheses can be tested:

- Civil servants in a Secretariat of the Federal District have a neutral perception of overall quality of life at work, as identified by La Falce et al. (2020).
- Civil servants in a Secretariat of the Federal District perceive telework as the dimension that most contributes to quality of life at work, as suggested by Andrade et al. (2020), Paschoal et al. (2022), and Orsiolli et al. (2024).

- The civil servants surveyed do not agree that the fair and adequate compensation dimension of Walton's (1973) model contributes to quality of life at work, as indicated by Souza et al. (2023) and Nogueira et al. (2023).
- There are significant differences between the perceptions of quality of life at work among managers and non-managers, considering that Antloga et al. (2023) indicated differences across job positions and Oliveira et al. (2022) pointed out dimensions where differences might occur for managers.

3 METHODOLOGY

The present study was designed as theoretical-empirical, descriptive, cross-sectional, and quantitative, as it aimed to investigate the current perception of quality of life at work at a specific moment in time.

As this article is part of a larger research project on quality of life at work in the public sector—which sought to identify both the perception of quality of life at work and the potential outcomes perceived as resulting from it—an electronic questionnaire was developed using Google Forms. The questionnaire was structured into six parts: (i) a presentation of the research with a question regarding agreement to participate voluntarily; (ii) items concerning the perception of QLW; (iii) items evaluating the degree of agreement with the actions of the quality of life at work program; (iv) items addressing the perceived outcomes of QLW; (v) a general occupational health profile; and (vi) a socio-professional profile for sample characterization. Participation in the study was anonymous, meaning that no identifying questions were asked, thus ensuring the confidentiality of the responses.

For the purpose of this article, the focus is on the second section of the questionnaire, which consisted of 35 items grouped into 10 dimensions, as presented in Table 2. Eight of these dimensions were constructed based on Walton's (1973) model, one new category was created to address aspects related to quality of life at work in telework—considering the literature that indicates the influence of this work modality (Paschoal et al., 2022) and one dimension on the overall perception of quality of life at work. It is important to highlight that the choice to develop an original instrument based on Walton's (1973) model follows the standard adopted in the field (Orsiolli et al., 2024), in addition to advancing studies recommended by Amâncio et al. (2021) regarding the use of this model in isolation or combined with others to evaluate QLW in public organizations. A five-point Likert scale was used to assess the items, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 2

Distribution of questionnaire items by qlw dimension

Dimension	Questionnaire Items
1. Occupational Safety and Health Conditions	3, 8, 27, 33
2. Fair and Adequate Compensation	7, 21, 23
3. Opportunity for Immediate Use and Development of Capabilities	2, 6, 15, 17, 29, 31
4. Continuous Growth Opportunities and Job Security	9, 11, 34
5. Social Integration	13, 14, 35
6. Constitutionalism	12, 16, 18
7. Work and Overall Life Balance	1, 4, 5, 19, 22, 28, 30
8. Social Relevance of Life and Work	20
9. Telework	24, 25, 26
10. Overall Perception of QLW	10, 32

Source: Walton (1973).

The target population for the study consisted of 1,025 employees working in a Secretariat of the Government of the Federal District (GDF), including 759 permanent employees and 267 commissioned staff. This Secretariat was chosen as the research locus because it was one of the first within the GDF to implement a quality of life policy, in addition to its accessibility for the research. The survey was disseminated via email and WhatsApp, and data were collected between February 1 and 22, 2024. Using a non-probabilistic convenience sampling method, a total of 291 individuals voluntarily responded to the survey, resulting in a sample with a 95% confidence level and a sampling error of 4.86%.

The data were processed as follows: the dataset was exported from Google Forms into an Excel spreadsheet, and variables for the QLW dimensions were created by calculating the arithmetic mean of the items within each dimension. The data were then imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) to generate frequencies for the profile questions, as well as means, standard deviations, and frequencies for the QLW items. Subsequently, normality tests (Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk) were conducted, both of which yielded significance values of zero. Consequently, non-parametric Mann-Whitney U tests were performed to compare groups regarding the perception of quality of life at work between managers and non-managers, as well as between those who participated in quality of life initiatives offered by the organization. The data were later exported to Excel to calculate coefficients of variation. Additionally, Harman's single-factor test was conducted to avoid incorrect interpretations of the results (Fuller et al., 2016); the first factor explained 38.6% of the variance, indicating that common method bias is not a significant concern in this study.

Regarding the sample profile, most participants were female (62.5%), married (56.7%), had children (69.1%), and were in the age group of 40 to 49 years old (55.7%). A majority held postgraduate degrees at the specialization level (70.8%), were permanent employees without commission (48.1%), and did not hold management positions (62.9%). Regarding tenure at the Secretariat, the highest frequencies were observed for 1 to 5 years (24.4%) and 16 to 20 years (23.4%).

In terms of health profile, 72.5% reported engaging in regular physical activity, 68% indicated that they sleep well, and 59.8% had experienced work-related health problems. Additionally, 83.5% do not use controlled medications, only 25.4% participate in therapy, and 78.7% undergo some form of medical monitoring. Moreover, 54% did not participate in any quality of life initiatives offered by the organization.

4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

To achieve the proposed objective examining the perception of quality of life at work data from the 291 civil servants from a Secretariat of the Government of the Federal District who participated in the survey were consolidated into descriptive statistics (minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, and frequencies) for all scale items, as shown in Table 3. In an initial analysis of this table, 33 of the 35 evaluated items had a coefficient of variation greater than 25%, indicating that respondents perceive the aspects of quality of life at work differently; in other words, there is dispersion around the mean. Only two items had a coefficient below 25%: “access to immediate superiors is easy” and “telework provides me with greater schedule flexibility to balance my professional and personal life.” This suggests that, for these two aspects, participants share a more homogeneous perception that is close to the mean.

Overall, when analyzing the QLW items, it was observed that in 54.3% of them the mean ranged between 2.68 (SD = 1.28) and 3.46 (SD = 1.15). This indicates that the majority of items were rated, on average, as aspects with which respondents neither agreed nor disagreed—suggesting a certain neutrality regarding whether these aspects contribute to quality of life at work, yet they are not perceived as detracting from it either. In 45.7% of the items, the mean ranged between 3.52 (SD = 1.07) and 4.37 (SD = 1.05), indicating a tendency toward agreement that the evaluated aspects contribute to the quality of life at work of the employees. These findings diverge from those of Amâncio et al. (2021), since despite some items being evaluated positively, the majority of the items were not rated satisfactorily by the participants.

Regarding the specific item “I have quality of life at work,” 49.3% indicated a degree of agreement with this statement, 25.1% expressed disagreement, and the remainder reported neutral positions. This data shows that the majority do not agree that they have quality of life at work. When comparing this result with the QLW diagnostic report published by SEQUALI (Distrito Federal, 2022) which presented a QLW level of 61.36%, considered to reflect some degree of satisfaction—it is evident that although the instrument used in the present study was different, the level of QLW suggests a reduction in the degree of satisfaction. This, in turn, highlights the need to review aspects of quality of life at work within the organization, as the 2022 diagnostic was intended to establish actions for improvement that have been implemented, yet for the surveyed public, the perception has decreased.

In a more specific analysis of the quality of life at work items, five of them had means above 4, indicating that these aspects are perceived as the most influential on quality of life of employees. The work environment with colleagues and superiors (M = 4.02; SD = 1.02) is also highlighted as a relevant aspect by Fernandes (2017). The ease of access to immediate superiors was another aspect that received a positive evaluation (M = 4.33; SD = 0.96). All items related to the telework dimension, which contributes to quality of life at work, obtained means above 4, corroborating the literature on the importance of this work modality in generating greater quality of life at work (Aderaldo et al., 2017; Fernandes, 2017; Paschoal et al., 2022). Moreover, the two items with the highest means were the only ones with coefficients of variation below 25%, indicating a more homogeneous perception among participants in relation to the average.

On the other hand, five items had means below 3, indicating the aspects with the greatest dissatisfaction and that may negatively affect the quality of life of employees. These aspects are associated with the perception of tiredness and exhaustion at work, work overload, dissatisfaction with the training provided, perceived injustice regarding offered benefits, and remuneration. These findings are in line with the dissatisfactions also identified by Nogueira et al. (2022).

When analyzing in a consolidated way, as presented in Table 4, it can be observed that only the telework dimension contains aspects that are agreed to contribute to the quality of life at work of the surveyed sample, reinforcing the findings of Paschoal et al. (2022). Thus, the telework dimension has a mean of 4.34, indicating that in this case employees emphasize the importance of telework in achieving quality of life at work, as there is a degree of agreement.

The findings of this research align with the results of La Falce et al. (2020), who adopted Walton’s (1973) model to study the quality of life at work of federal servants and also found a generally neutral perception of the QLW dimensions. This suggests that the sphere of power does not appear to be a factor that justifies the perception of better or worse quality of life at work, but rather other factors influence this perception.

Table 3

Consolidated descriptive statistics for the quality of life at work items

QLW Items	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of Variation	1 – Strongly Disagree	2 – Disagree	3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 – Agree	5 – Strongly Agree
My workload (quantity) allows me to have quality of life	1	5	3.44	1.223	36%	7.56	19.93	13.40	39.52	19.59
Regarding the pride I feel in performing my work, I feel accomplished	1	5	3.81	1.039	27%	4.12	7.22	18.90	43.30	26.46
I am satisfied with the working conditions	1	5	3.30	1.184	36%	8.25	20.27	19.59	37.46	14.43
Regarding the fatigue that my work causes me, I feel exhausted	1	5	2.79	1.132	41%	12.37	32.30	25.77	22.68	6.87
I feel accomplished with the influence of my work on my leisure opportunities	1	5	3.03	1.121	37%	10.31	21.99	30.24	29.21	8.25
I am satisfied with the autonomy (opportunity to make decisions) I have in my work	1	5	3.37	1.132	34%	6.87	17.53	21.31	40.21	14.09
I am satisfied with the importance of the task/work/activity I perform	1	5	3.75	1.004	27%	3.44	8.59	19.24	46.74	21.99
I feel overloaded at work	1	5	2.76	1.175	43%	14.09	32.65	24.74	19.93	8.59
I am satisfied with the training I receive	1	5	2.92	1.167	40%	14.09	21.99	29.55	26.46	7.90
I have quality of life at work	1	5	3.25	1.134	35%	9.62	15.46	25.09	39.52	10.31
Regarding the encouragement the Secretariat offers for studying, I feel accomplished	1	5	3.28	1.106	34%	7.22	16.15	31.27	32.30	13.06
I find that the Secretariat has implemented non-discriminatory policies (social, racial, religious, sexual, etc.) in my work	1	5	3.10	1.134	37%	11.00	14.78	38.83	23.71	11.68
I believe I have a good working environment with colleagues and superiors	1	5	4.02	1.019	25%	3.44	6.87	9.28	44.67	35.74
Regarding the commitment of my team and colleagues, I perceive team engagement	1	5	3.96	1.018	26%	3.09	8.25	10.65	46.05	31.96
I am satisfied with the appreciation of my ideas and initiatives at work	1	5	3.52	1.068	30%	5.15	12.03	25.43	40.55	16.84
I perceive that the Secretariat respects the rights of employees	1	5	3.53	1.061	30%	4.47	12.37	26.80	38.49	17.87
I am satisfied with my freedom of expression (opportunity to share my opinions) at work	1	5	3.63	1.096	30%	4.47	11.68	23.71	37.11	23.02
I feel comfortable with the norms and rules of my work	1	5	3.60	1.056	29%	4.12	12.03	22.34	42.27	19.24
I am content with the respect for my individuality (individual characteristics and uniqueness) at work	1	5	3.78	1.047	28%	4.81	7.56	16.49	47.08	24.05
I am happy with the influence of work on my family life/routine	1	5	3.40	1.107	33%	6.53	14.78	26.12	37.80	14.78
I feel accomplished with my salary (remuneration)	1	5	2.76	1.224	44%	18.56	26.80	21.31	26.46	6.87
I like my work and rest schedules	1	5	3.46	1.154	33%	6.87	15.46	20.27	39.52	17.87
I find the extra benefits (food, transport, leave, bonuses, etc.) provided by the Department to be fair for my career	1	5	2.68	1.280	48%	22.34	26.80	19.59	22.68	8.59
I believe that telework contributes to my quality of life at work	1	5	4.32	1.097	25%	4.81	3.09	11.00	17.53	63.57
Telework provides me with greater flexibility to balance my professional and personal life	1	5	4.37	1.047	24%	4.12	2.75	9.97	18.21	64.95
When I was working remotely, it positively impacted my mental/emotional and physical health	1	5	4.20	1.148	27%	5.50	3.78	13.40	19.93	57.39
The level of lighting is sufficient to perform my tasks	1	5	3.87	1.084	28%	4.81	8.25	12.37	44.33	30.24
The physical space is satisfactory	1	5	3.40	1.228	36%	9.28	17.18	16.49	38.83	18.21
The distribution of tasks is fair	1	5	3.37	1.189	35%	8.59	16.84	19.59	38.83	16.15
My workstation is adequate for performing my tasks	1	5	3.52	1.149	33%	6.87	13.75	19.24	41.24	18.90
The management of tasks is flexible	1	5	3.61	1.072	30%	5.50	10.31	20.62	45.02	18.56
I see positive results from the implementation of the quality of life at work program instituted by SEQUALI	1	5	3.37	1.123	33%	7.56	13.40	28.52	35.40	15.12
I have adequate technological tools (hardware and software) to perform my work	1	5	3.27	1.214	37%	11.00	17.53	18.21	40.21	13.06
In the Secretariat, the demand for results is adequate	1	5	3.39	1.091	32%	7.56	12.03	27.15	40.55	12.71
Access to immediate superiors is easy	1	5	4.33	0,961	22%	3.44	2.75	6.19	32.99	54.64

Source: Own elaboration

In addition, Table 4 presents the consolidated means and standard deviations for the QLW dimensions from the perspectives of managers, non-managers, and the overall perception of the entire sample.

Table 4

Consolidation of quality of life at work dimensions from different perspectives (manager, non-manager, and overall)

QLW Variables	Manager (N=108)		Non-Manager (N=183)		Overall (N=291)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Occupational Safety and Health Conditions	3.47	0.729	3.31	0.823	3.37	0.792
Fair and Adequate Compensation	3.17	0.870	2.97	0.969	3.04	0.937
Opportunity for Immediate Use and Development of Capabilities	3.58	0.866	3.5	0.966	3.53	0.929
Continuous Growth Opportunities and Job Security	3.23	0.903	3.16	0.923	3.19	0.915
Social Integration	3.48	0.814	3.41	0.979	3.44	0.920
Constitutionalism	3.44	0.920	3.27	1.012	3.33	0.980
Work and Overall Life Balance	3.39	0.695	3.34	0.768	3.36	0.741
Social Relevance of Life and Work	3.53	0.971	3.32	1.176	3.40	1.107
Telework	4.27	1.056	4.38	0.998	4.34	1.019
Overall Perception of QLW	3.34	0.898	3.36	0.978	3.35	0.947

Source: Own elaboration

Note: M – Mean / SD – Standard Deviation

Even though the mean values for most aspects indicate a neutral stance—neither agreeing nor disagreeing—with the exception of the telework dimension, the best-rated aspect (with a mean above 3.5, indicating a tendency toward agreement) was “Opportunity for Immediate Use and Development of Capabilities” (M = 3.53; SD = 0.929), which aligns with the results of Souza et al. (2023) and diverges from Paula et al. (2022). Following this, the next two highest-rated aspects were “Social Integration” (M = 3.44; SD = 0.920), consistent with studies by Amâncio et al. (2021), Barros et al. (2024), La Falce et al. (2020), and Souza et al. (2023), and “Social Relevance of Life and Work” (M = 3.40; SD = 1.107), corroborating the findings of Amâncio et al. (2021) and Barros et al. (2024). The dimensions with the poorest evaluations were “Fair and Adequate Compensation” (M = 3.04; SD = 0.937) and “Opportunities for Continuous Growth and Job Security” (M = 3.19; SD = 0.915), which aligns with what was pointed out by Amâncio et al. (2021), Barros et al. (2024), and Souza et al. (2023).

Thus, it can be confirmed that the hypotheses are supported: civil servants hold a neutral perception of overall quality of life at work, as evidenced by the consolidated results in Table 4 and the fact that the majority of items in Table 3 also have means indicating neutrality. It was also possible to confirm the literature-aligned hypotheses regarding the dimensions that civil servants most agree contribute to quality of life at work (telework) and those they disagree contribute (fair and adequate compensation). This result highlights the need for the public organization to invest in improvement actions to provide greater quality of life at work, including reinforcing telework practices to enable greater flexibility and a better work-life balance, as recommended by the literature (Paschoal et al., 2022; Orsiolli et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the low perception of fair and adequate compensation remains one of the inherent challenges in human resource management practices within the public sector, which must advance in overcoming the limitations of reward mechanisms and personnel valuation, as also noted by Montezano (2024).

Upon observing Table 4, although the numbers indicate differences in the average perceptions between managers and non-managers, these differences were not statistically significant according to the Mann-Whitney U test ($p > 0.05$), evidencing that there are no differences in the perceptions of all participants regarding the dimensions of quality of life at work. Thus, the hypothesis that there are differences in quality of life at work dimensions can be refuted. In addition, comparative tests were performed on the items comprising the dimensions to verify whether there is truly no difference related to the last hypothesis. In this case, significant differences were identified in only four items: (i) at a significance level of 0.017, non-managers have a higher perception that their workload allows for quality of life at work (M = 3.56; SD = 1.225) than managers (M = 3.23; SD = 1.197), indicating that managers consider that the workload is not contributing to their quality of life at work; (ii) managers feel more overloaded (M = 2.95; SD = 1.122) than non-managers (M = 2.65; SD = 1.194), with a significance level of 0.026; (iii) managers have a greater perception of feeling accomplished and proud of their work (M = 4.07; SD = 0.872) than non-managers (M = 3.65; SD = 0.??), with a significance level of 0.001; (iv) managers feel more satisfied with the importance of the work they perform (M = 3.99; SD = 0.848) than non-managers (M = 3.61; SD = 1.062), with a significance level of 0.003. These results corroborate the findings of Pantoja et al. (2020) and Oliveira et al. (2022) in relation to the perception of greater work overload among civil servant managers, which adversely affects their quality of life at work. Thus, although the majority of the items lead to a refutation of the overall hypothesis, there are certain items that confirm aspects in which differences in perceptions between managers and non-managers do exist.

When comparing the groups of those who did or did not participate in any quality of life at work initiatives offered by the organization, only the overall QLW dimension showed statistically significant differences ($p = 0$), with participants having

a higher perception ($M = 3.59$; $SD = 0.825$) than non-participants ($M = 3.15$; $SD = 0.999$). This reinforces the importance of establishing QLW programs in public organizations and facilitating employee engagement in initiatives that promote improvements in their well-being and satisfaction—not only to provide a more humanized set of benefits for professionals, but also to contribute to enhancements in individual performance that ultimately result in higher-quality service delivery to society.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The article achieved its objective by identifying the perception of quality of life at work among civil servants in a Secretariat of the Government of the Federal District, demonstrating the importance of social interaction, open communication with superiors, and engagement in lectures and quality of life at work programs. The dimension most highly perceived by the employees was telework, with a mean of 4.34, while the dimension least perceived was fair and adequate compensation, with a mean of 3.04. This highlights both the need for the adoption of telework in the organization and a review of compensation aspects to improve the quality of life at work of the civil servants studied. The study corroborates the findings in the literature considering the most satisfactory and unsatisfactory dimensions of Walton's (1973) QLW model in public organizations.

The study advances research on comparing managers and non-managers, revealing that there are no statistically significant differences in the QLW dimensions between these groups. However, it indicates that managers perceive their workload as a variable that does not contribute to their quality of life, and that items related to pride and satisfaction with the work performed influence their quality of life more than they do for non-managers. Moreover, the study shows that individuals who participate in QLW programs offered by the organization have a higher perception of quality of life than those who do not, underscoring the relevance for public organizations to invest in QLW programs and to actively engage their employees in such initiatives.

Thus, QLW emerges as an essential factor for the well-being of civil servants and for achieving the objectives of public organizations. Investment in well-structured and effective QLW programs can contribute to job satisfaction, increased productivity, and talent retention. Therefore, investing in policies and programs that restructure the work environment and address the needs of employees is crucial, as is conducting regular evaluations to promote continuous improvements in the work setting.

The research contributes to academia by advancing comparative group studies and by identifying the perception of QLW in public organizations that have implemented Quality of Life at Work Programs. It also offers insights that certain QLW dimensions tend to occur satisfactorily or unsatisfactorily in line with the literature, suggesting that there are aspects of quality of life at work that, regardless of the type of public organization—whether federal or district—or the area of activity, tend to occur similarly.

From a managerial perspective, the study provides a diagnosis that can be useful for public organizations when establishing their quality of life at work programs, prompting them to reconsider aspects related to reinforcing and increasing the satisfaction of dimensions that are positively influencing quality of life at work, as well as to include new initiatives that improve the perception of aspects where employees hold neutral or unsatisfactory evaluations. Therefore, it is recommended that public organizations invest in the implementation of quality of life at work programs and continuously monitor the results obtained. The implementation of QLW in the public sector can lead to a reduction in absenteeism, unproductivity, insecurities, a turbulent work environment, lethargic, exhausted, and dissatisfied personnel, thereby reducing costs and improving service delivery to citizens.

Among the limitations of the research is the fact that, despite the sample being representative, the study is a case study of a single public organization, which does not allow for the generalization of the results. There is also a risk of response bias in the telework dimensions, due to demands from employees to return to telework practices.

For future research, it is recommended that investigations be conducted on the following aspects within the context of public organizations: (i) the outcomes of implementing quality of life at work initiatives in public organizations; (ii) variables that influence quality of life at work, including socio-professional profile, health profile, and organizational aspects; (iii) the relationship between QLW and work modalities telework, hybrid, and in-person; (iv) the relationship between the perception of QLW and indicators of turnover and absenteeism, as well as other organizational behavior variables (e.g., engagement, job satisfaction, individual performance); (v) practical experiences of actions implemented in quality of life at work programs that can serve as a reference for other organizations; (vi) the identification of facilitators and barriers to the adoption of quality of life at work programs.

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