

Quality of Work Life and Work Engagement among IT Employees

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to understand quality of work life and work engagement among IT employees. The sample for this study consisted of IT employees with a minimum of bachelor's degree and two years of work experience who were not at managerial position belonging to the age group of 23-35 years. The sample size was 13 IT employees. Telephonic semi structured interview was used to collect the data. Before conducting the interview and collecting the data informed consent and demographic details were taken from the participants through Google form in which detailed information was given regarding the purpose of the study. Thematic analysis was done for the purpose of data analysis. The findings revealed seven themes which revolved around the different aspects of quality of work life and work engagement and they were positive aspects of the organisation, motivating factors for employees, challenges in the organisation, achievements and learning experience of employees, perspective of employees regarding the job, bond between employees and skill development in the organisation.

Keywords: *Quality of Work Life, Work Engagement, IT Employees*

Quality of work life can be defined as the consideration for the exigency and longing of an employee with regards to the working conditions, remuneration, and chances of professional development, work-family role balance, safety and social interactions at workplace and social relativity of employee work. Quality of Work Life is combination of policies, procedures, strategies and ambience relating to the workplace in order to achieve employee satisfaction by improving working conditions in the organizations. (Nazir et al., 2011).

Quality of work life (QWL) as a term was not used in the late 19th century but certain efforts were made to improve the conditions for the workers for example some companies shared profits with their employees. From a contemporary perspective, these initiatives can be viewed as an attempt to improve QWL (Goode, 1989). It is well acknowledged that QWL is a multidimensional construct. As of now, the fundamental ideas governing workplace environments and conditions include, among others: family-work balance (Huang, Lawler, & Lei, 2007); skill level, autonomy, and challenge (Lewis et al., 2001); job security and job stress (Saklani, 2004); management and supervisory style; satisfactory physical

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surroundings; job safety; satisfactory working hours; and meaningful tasks (Ivancevich, 2001); nature of the job; stimulating opportunities; and co-workers (Wyatt & Wah, 2001).

Turcotte (as cited in Martel and Dupuis, 2006) has defined four major dimensions of a QWL program that give clear indications as to the items that must be included when measuring QWL. These dimensions are the nature of the job itself, physical context, psychosocial context, and organisational context.

Measuring Quality of Work Life

Although many criteria evolved Walton's eight factors are considered as most comprehensive criteria for measurement of QWL which are indicated as:

- Adequate and Fair compensation
- Safe and Healthy Working Conditions
- Opportunity to Develop Human Capacities
- Opportunity for Career Growth
- Social Integration in the Work Force
- Constitutionalism
- Work and Quality of Life
- Social Relevance of Work

Work Engagement

Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance enthusiasm and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work. In short, engaged employees have high levels of energy and are enthusiastic about their work. Moreover, they are often fully immersed in their work so that time flies (Shimazu & Schaufeli, 2009; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

Antecedents of Work Engagement

Prior research has repeatedly demonstrated a positive relationship between job resources and personal resources and work engagement (Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011, Halbesleben, 2010 & Mauno et al., 2010). Job resources are those organisational, social, or physical features of a job that can: (a) lessen job demands and associated physical and psychological strain on employees; (b) help them accomplish their goals at work; or (c) promote individual development, learning, and growth (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Personal resources, which refer to people's perceptions of their capacity to successfully influence and manage their surroundings, are positive self-evaluations that are connected to resiliency (Hobfoll et al., 2003).

Opportunities for growth, performance evaluation, autonomy, skill variety, transformational leadership, justice, and social support from co-workers and superiors are all crucial resources. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that factors such as organizational-based self-esteem, the capacity to identify and control emotions, and personal resources like self-efficacy, hope, and optimism are precursors to work engagement.

Determinants of Work Engagement

Work engagement is positively correlated with job characteristics such as social support from co-workers and superiors, performance feedback, coaching, job autonomy, task

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variety, and training facilities (Demerouti et al., 2001; Salanova et al., 2001, 2003; Schaufeli, Taris & Van Rhenen, 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, in press). Additionally, it appears that employees who take away the positive feelings from their work home or who vice versa take the positive experiences at home to their work show higher levels of engagement compared to those where there is no positive cross-over between the both domains (Montgomery et al., 2003).

Bakker and Demerouti (2007) explain that three factors can create work engagement in an employee, namely job resources, the salience of job resources, and personal resources. Job resources are social aspects in which individuals are stimulated to achieve the target of work and stimulate their growth and development. Individuals own the salience of job resources. Personal resource refers to the characteristics of the employee, such as age and personality traits.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Quality of Work Life

The development of QWL can be traced way back to the earlier management era. Management theories such as Frederick Taylor and Elton Mayo suggest that human is important in determining firms' performance (Bagtasos, 2011).

Studies on QWL were diverse. Some attempts have been made to show how QWL affects customer satisfaction (Lau & May, 1998), while others have focused on how QWL affects productivity (Bagtasos, 2011). These authors found out that QWL benefits firms in the long run as it increases long term relationship with customer and because of which the firms' grow. In other studies, by Normala (2010) and Ma et al. (2011) QWL is found to have a significant relationship with organizational commitment. Sinha (2012) found out the three emerging factors which were "relationship-sustenance orientation", "futuristic and professional orientation" and "self-deterministic and systemic orientation". The findings show that these factors play important roles in satisfying employee needs and how, at the middle managerial level, various aspects are valued and used to create a distinctive and singular quality of working life within their socio-technical systems in order to elicit positive job-related responses. Bhatia and Valecha (1981) and Kavoussi (1978) who suggest that with the increase in QWL absenteeism rate decreases. In another study by Koonmee et al. (2011), QWL mediates the relationship between institutionalization of ethics in firms with job related outcome.

Similar to this, Greenhaus (1987) proposed a link between QWL and employee satisfaction and work-related behaviours. When employees are happy where they work, it affects their devotion to their daily activities and makes them feel pleased. Additionally, Noor and Abdullah (2011) found that job satisfaction, job security and job involvement have a significant relationship with quality of work life. Furthermore, Bhatnagar and Soni (2015) in their study showed that there is a significant relationship between job satisfaction and quality of work life and suggested that if QWL is at good level in the organisation, employees would be highly satisfied with their jobs.

Work Engagement

Engaged employees have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work activities, and they see themselves as able to deal completely with the demands of their job (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010). Similar to this Manning (2016) found out that transformational leadership style in nurse managers was a positive predictor of staff nurse

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structural empowerment and work engagement. In contrast, transactional leadership style was both a positive and negative predictor for staff nurse structural empowerment and work engagement. Passive avoidant leadership style was a consistent negative predictor of staff nurse structural empowerment and work engagement.

Employees who are engaged put forth a lot of effort (vigour), are dedicated (dedicated), and are happily immersed (absorbed) in their work. They appear to be comparable to workaholics in this regard. However, engaged workers don't have the typical compulsive desire like workaholics do. According to the findings of a qualitative study conducted among 15 engaged workers, for them, work is enjoyable rather than an addiction (Schaufeli et al., 2001). Additionally, prior research has demonstrated that work engagement may be distinguished from Type-A behaviour, as well as from job involvement and organisational commitment (Hallberg et al., 2007).

Furthermore, Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008) shown that work engagement and job embeddedness can be distinguished. In addition, a sample of women managers and professionals working for a major Turkish bank were analysed by Koyuncu, Burke, and Fiksenbaum (2006) to determine any potential causes and effects of work engagement. According to the findings, of the six work life domains (Maslach & Leiter, 1997), job control, incentives and recognition, and value fit were the only three that significantly predicted each of the three-engagement measure.

According to Angin et al. (2020), job happiness has a favourable and considerable impact on employee performance because of work engagement. Age, education, and experience all have a favourable impact on work engagement. However, it's fascinating to note that only gender and education, i.e., highly educated people, may accurately predict work engagement. High levels of work engagement are seen among IT employees and male employees (Sharma et al., 2017).

Quality of work life and Work engagement

According to Kantan and Sabdullah (2012) did empirical research on marble firm workers of various positions like blue- or white-collar workers to see the association between quality of work life and work engagement in Turkey found out that quality of work life affect work engagement; (b) work engagement level of blue-collar employees differentiates from white collar employees; (c) blue collar employees perception of quality of work life differentiates from white collar. Similarly, Wardani and Anwar (2019) indicated that there was a positive relationship between psychological capital and work engagement, psychological capital and quality of work life and work engagement and quality of work life.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Qualitative research is done to comprehend how individuals see their surroundings. It can be utilised to uncover intricate details about a situation or to spark fresh study concepts.

Statement of the problem

To understand quality of work life and work engagement among IT employees.

Objectives

- To understand the factors that influence quality of work life among IT employees.

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- To understand the factors that lead to influence work engagement among IT employees.
- To understand how quality of work life and work engagement are related.

Sample and procedure

For the purpose of the study 13 IT employees who were not at managerial role with minimum work experience of two years and belonged to the age group of 23 – 35 years were chosen. The consent form and the demographic sheet was sent through Google form along with the detailed information about the study. The questions for the interview schedule were prepared and validated by the expert. Semi structured telephonic interview was done with the participants on mutually decided date and time. With the permission and the consent of the participant, the audio of the interview was recorded and then transcribed. After the transcription, the codes, sub themes and themes were created from the data which was collected for the purpose of thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to summarize the data and identify the themes and sub themes of quality of work life and work engagement among IT employees.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Themes and sub themes derived from the interviews

THEMES	SUB THEMES
Features of the organisation	1.1 Good Aspects of The Organisation 1.2 Organisation as Democratic 1.3 Open to New Ideas 1.4 Work Life Balance
Motivating Factors for employees	2.1 Motivators for employees 2.2 Inspiration for employees
Challenges in the organisations	3.1 Monotonous work 3.2 Miscellaneous factors
Work appreciation	4.1 Skill-based learning 4.2 Achievements at work
Employee job perspective	5.1 Job role 5.2 Meaningful work involvement
Employee relation	6.1 Social support 6.2 Health support
Skill development in the organisation	7.1 Training and Certification 7.2 Learning opportunities in the organisation

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to understand quality of work life and work engagement among IT employees. For the purpose of research thematic analysis was used which is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Various themes and sub themes were generated for the same.

The first major theme generated was Features of the organisation which had the sub themes of good aspects of the organisation, organisation as democratic, open to new ideas and work life balance.

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Good aspects of the organisation – various positive aspects were given by the participants about the organisation which included how the organisations does not fire the employees and the number of leaves given to pregnant women along with the medical facility provided by the organisation to its employees. Also, learning new and different things helped the employees to gain experience and practical knowledge. Another aspect was the work culture and the work environment in which an employee works and plays important role in any organisation was found to be suitable for most of the employees. Furthermore, working with colleagues, the pay and approachable leader where they can solve problems with healthy communication were seen as other positive features of the organisation. Additionally, the participants discussed about the flexibility in the organisation like flexible timings, flexibility given to explore new options and in solving problems which played important role for the participants.

Organisation as Democratic – the equal opportunities and the equal treatment given by the organisation were mentioned by the participants where employees from all the grades have opportunity to upgrade themselves. It was also found that physically disabled employees were also given equal chances and other than that women were also given more opportunities in projects. One of the participants discussed about the freedom of using tool, the style of working and the freedom of choosing between offline and online mode. Additionally in some organisations the tasks were assigned to the employees based on their skills. So, treating everybody equally and equal opportunities was given importance by the organisation.

Open to new ideas – Most of the participants found that their organisations encourage new ideas and many of them even implement them and make use of them. The organisations also organised competitions for example Hackathon for the employees where they come up with ideas and submit them where they can win prizes. Some companies encourage new suggestions during meetings and creative ideas were appreciated by the leaders.

Work Life balance – work life balance was considered as one of the important factors of organisation by the participants. Working environment, limited working hours, hybrid model and supportive managers were few of the things mentioned by the participants as part of the work life balance. Some participants mentioned about the time they get to focus on personal life. Similarly, V. Madhusudhan et al. (2013) in their study identified several factors which were responsible for work life balance and found that role clarity, co-worker support, time flexibility, family culture, head support and working hours are responsible for work life balance for which management has to pay attention on time flexibility, role clarity, co-worker support, working hours and head support for having proper work life balance.

The second major theme was Motivating Factors for employees which included two sub themes motivators for employees and inspirations for employees.

Motivators for employees – many of the participants found learning new things as the motivation for them to work in the organisation. Some of them also gave importance of meeting new people and networking in the organisation. Another motivational factor was finishing work on time and rewards which employees get.

Inspiration for employees – some of the participants were inspired by the leaders and seniors and wanted to become like them. It was also found that growing in the career and learning

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new things was also inspiring for the participants as they wanted to gain more achievements in the careers.

In a research study by Baskar (2013) it showed that different strategies can be employed by managers to motivate employees, but that it is also important that different strategies would have a different motivational impact on different people which managers should keep in mind. Therefore, to get maximum results from a motivational strategy, the manager has to understand and realize issues, which requires recognition of each individual's unique beliefs, values, and practices.

The third theme was Challenges in the organisation which contains sub themes of monotonous work and miscellaneous factors.

Monotonous Work - The participants found the same kind of work as monotonous and if there was no work at times even those days were boring for them.

Miscellaneous factors – the participants discussed about the various challenges they faced while working in the organisation like working hours as challenging for the participant. Working environment was also found to be a challenge for some of the participants. Furthermore, some participants mentioned about less opportunities were given for new ideas and along with it some employees faced challenges in their job role.

The fourth theme was found to be Work appreciation which had sub themes skill-based learning and achievements at work.

Skill based learning– most of the participants mentioned about how they learned working in teams and socializing with people. Some of the participants even mentioned about the technical skills which they had learnt and improved in them. Additionally, office politics was found to be another domain which the few of the participants mentioned about.

Achievements at work- various types of platform and ways were described by the participants in which they were recognised in the organisation. Appreciation and rewards were found to be the major ways in which participants were recognised like getting appreciated from the managers and getting rewards in different forms. Some participants even mentioned about the appraisal and promotion as the other ways in which their work was recognised. Similarly, Baskar (2013) discovered that there is a direct and positive relationship between rewards and recognition and job satisfaction and motivation. As a result, if the rewards and recognition given to employees were changed, work motivation and satisfaction would also change.

The fifth theme was found to be Employee job perspective which encompasses two sub themes under it which were job role and meaningful work involvement.

Job role – Some of the employees found that their job role allowed them in solving new and different kind of problem which they found to be interesting and they took it as a challenge. Decision making was found to be the other aspect where employees were given freedom to take decision by the superiors. Furthermore, most of the employees had role clarity in their job role and did not have ambiguity as expressed by the participants. This showed that the participants knew what they have to do in the organisation and without any confusion in their roles. It could be seen in a study where important part of managerial work is making

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sure that all the members in the organisation understand their roles. The absence of role clarity (i.e. role ambiguity) for individual employees, is a stressor that is negatively associated with several relevant organizational outcomes such as in- organizational citizenship behaviours (Eatough et al., 2011), role performance (Gilboa et al., 2008), organizational commitment, and job satisfaction (Ngo et al., 2005; Slattery et al., 2008).

Meaningful work involvement – in this sub theme most of the participants mentioned that their work has an impact on the organisation and helps to resolve their problems. Many of the participants discussed about how they don't realize time while working and it was found that when the deadlines were close and the workload was more the participants get much more involved with their work. Additionally, when the participants were fully focused and intensely involved with work, they felt good about it. But some of the participants also found it tiring and exhausting. Furthermore, most of the participants found it manageable to work for extra hours and staying back in the organisations sometimes but not always. The participants also talked about when there was requirement for them to stay back, it was manageable as it was part of their job.

Contradictory to this Lee et al. (2017) found out among white-collar workers in one Korean company that long working hours are significantly related to psychosocial stress responses. The sixth major theme was Employee relation which had social support and health support as two sub themes under it.

Social support– many participants had good interpersonal relation with their colleagues and superiors. Most of the participants discussed about how the managers encourage employees to move ahead as well as the colleagues or the co-workers also helped each other if anybody faced any problem.

Health support – participants discussed about the various ways in which employee health is given importance in their organisation like insurance and leave policies and the health of an employee was prioritized by the managers. Some employees also mentioned that their family's health was also given importance. Furthermore, the organisation also provided facilities to the employees and some of them were Mediclaim facility, monthly check-ups, Zumba classes, wellness room, ambulance service etc.

Similarly, research showed that promoting positive interpersonal relationship at work can aid in lowering the likelihood that workers will experience depression. Additionally, factors which are on the organizational level and are associated to the interpersonal relationships appear to differentiate companies with low levels of sickness absence from companies with average levels (Stoetzer, 2010)

The seventh theme was found out to be skill development in the organisation which encompasses sub themes training and certification and learning opportunities in the organisation.

Training and certification – the participants discussed about various ways in which company helps the employees to improve their skills and most of them mentioned about the certification and courses which the organisation provides. Some of the participants mentioned about collaboration with other teams as a way to learn and improve skills. Upskilling and overall skill development were also found to be dominant factors and some of the employees also gave importance to updating themselves with new technology.

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Learning opportunities in the organisation- the participants discussed about how the organisations gives opportunities to the employees to learn new things and it was found that mostly the organisations gave ample of opportunities to the employees to learn new things this showed that the organisation provided the resources and tools which are new to the market to the employees for the to learn. The other way which was found was bonding with other teams and learning.

Research conducted by Tahir et. al (2014) found out that for improved performance, it is crucial for an organisation to hire capable and skilled workers, and employees will be than competent when they have the skill and knowledge of doing the task. This would provide opportunities to the employees to make a better career life and get into better position in organization which will increase organizations efficiency.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present study was aimed to understand quality of work life and work engagement among IT employees. The objectives of the study were to understand the factors that influence quality of work life among IT employees, to understand the factors that lead to influence work engagement among IT employees and to understand how quality of work life and work engagement are related. The sample targeted for this study were 13 IT employees with a minimum of bachelor's degree and two years of work experience who were not at managerial position belonging to the age group of 23-35 years.

The data was collected through telephonic semi structured interview. Informed consent and demographic details of the participant was taken before conducting the interview through Google form in which detailed information was given regarding the purpose of the study. Only after getting the consent from the employees the interview was done on a mutually decided date and time. Thematic analysis was done for the data analysis in which seven themes were found out the first theme was Features of the organisation which had sub themes of good aspects of the organisation, organisation as democratic, open to new ideas and work life balance. The second theme was Motivating factors for employees which had two sub themes motivators for employees and inspiration for employees. The third theme was Challenges in the organisation which encompassed two sub themes of monotonous work and miscellaneous factors. The fourth theme was Work appreciation which contained sub themes of skill-based learning and achievements at work. The fifth theme was Employee job perspective which has sub themes job role and meaningful work involvement. The sixth theme was Employee relation which had sub themes of social support and health support. The last theme was Skill development in the organisation which had sub themes of training and certification and learning opportunities in the organisation.

Implications

The study can help to understand the important factors which can help to improve the quality of work life and work engagement among employees this in turn will aid to increase the employee satisfaction and commitment towards their work and the organisation. Also, work engagement and quality of work life will help to decrease turnover rate and increase productivity and efficiency of the employee which can benefit the organisation to grow. Also, increased work engagement will help the organisation to reduce absenteeism rate. Further, the study can help the organisations to plan interventions which will help to foster a positive working environment.

Limitations

The present study was done on a sample size of 13 participants which was less due to time constraints, which makes the findings difficult to generalize to larger populations. The results and inference may not be applicable other sectors since the responses were gathered only from IT employees who were not at managerial role.

Suggestions for Future Research

A mixed approach including both quantitative and qualitative method can also be done to investigate quality of work life and work engagement in much more detail which can provide unique outputs. Further research can be done on other sectors and job roles and the sample size can be increased to expand the generalizability of the findings.

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Conflict of Interest

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