

Quality of Work-life Analysis of Kuwaiti Nationals during the Covid-19 Outbreak

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Abstract:

COVID-19 pandemic has affected the very functionality of organizations across the world, as it has necessitated either complete lockdown or partial lockdown in the country, leading to newer methods such as working from home. In this context, the conventional models of Quality of Work Life (QWL) may not be reflecting practical realities completely. So, this research is undertaken to investigate the existing models, so as to identify the most significant antecedents of the QWL. The research adopts positivist paradigm of research and the quantitative approach to test six hypotheses built on the basis of existing models of QWL. The sample size chosen is 211 employees working in various organizations in Kuwait, based on purposive sampling. Structural Equation Modelling has been adopted to perform the analysis. The results have indicated that among the six antecedents considered, *health and wellbeing*, *social support*, and *work-life balance* are the significant antecedents of QWL during the crisis situation. Based on this result, theoretical and practical implications have been drawn, which could be beneficial to academics and human resource managers in product and service organizations.

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Introduction

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), a declared global pandemic has completely changed the Quality of Work-life (QWL) of people round the globe. Complete Lockdown was imposed by the governments in some of the countries and some went for partial lockdown during the outbreak of this disease. The QWL took a new perspective as some of the employees started working from home, whereas, some went to work partially on few days, and some were on duty throughout the working days depending upon the geographical location of the employees.

It is a known fact that QWL is a multi-dimensional construct and there are many different views on which one of its antecedents play a dominant role. In early seventies when the term QWL was introduced, initially it was observed that skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback form the basic antecedents (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). Later the dimensions - salary and compensation, employee welfare, talent utilization, employment security and growth, socialization, formalization, life space and importance of work-life were considered as the antecedents to QWL (Saklani, 2003). Also in late seventies extrinsic and intrinsic job factors, authority given to the employees, participative management, equity, social support, self-development, scope of future work, and extra work activities were identified to be the additional dimensions (Mumford & Cooper, 1979). Lewis et al., (2001) considered monetary benefits and all physical and tangible rewards as the extrinsic traits; whereas, skills, autonomy, ability to accept challenge, task ownership, sense of accomplishment and ambition as intrinsic traits. Serey (2006) emphasized the need to include opportunity to apply competencies, face challenges, situations which promote self-direction, interesting set of work activities, linking the tasks to the overall objectives, and a sense of pride through work accomplishment in measuring the QWL. Tabassum, Rahman & Jahan (2011) have emphasized upon fair compensation, life space, growth potential, flexible work schedule, and employee relations to be the key dimension of the QWL. Yadav & Khanna (2014) have emphasized the need to use - job satisfaction, organizational commitment, remuneration, participative management, work-life balance, equity, employee welfare, and challenging work environment in the measurement of the QWL. Normala (2010) considered future prospects, involvement, physical environment, class of supervision, monetary benefits, and workplace integration to be the dimensions of the QWL. Rahiman & Kodikal (2017) have considered pay and privileges, infrastructure, attitude towards work, and employee expectations to be the important dimensions of the QWL. Sumathi & Velmurugan (2017) have specified that remuneration, growth potential, leadership, work environment, and work-life balance to be the important dimensions of the QWL. Leitão, Pereira & Gonçalves (2019) have considered supervisor support, work environment,

professional respect, work-life balance, and skill development opportunity to be the dimensions of the QWL. Almarshad, Toukabri & Yillah (2019) categorized the QWL into three basic needs of employees as: survival need, belonging need and knowledge need. Sahni (2019) consider that the QWL comprises – job satisfaction, working conditions, growth opportunity, work-life balance, stress management, social relationships, organizational culture, and communication. Thus, it is evident from these studies that the researchers do consider that the QWL is a multi-dimensional construct; however, there is no common consensus on the antecedents of it. It is understandable that the while there are many common dimensions which have been used by these researchers, the process of adding newer dimensions is continuous and never ending as the very definition of quality of life keeps changing with the expectations of the employees which is in turn based on the social, cultural and economic changes encountered by them from time to time. Having gone through these research articles the scope of this research has been limited to the six prominent antecedents of QWL -*health and wellbeing, job security, job satisfaction, career prospects, work-life balance, and social support.*

The QWL is a research construct which is not only multi-dimensional as mentioned before, but at the same time its definition also keeps varying from time to time and to geographic location to location, for the simple reason that all its dimensions are relative in nature. Thus, there is a need to measure these dimensions over a period of time, particularly during the crisis such as COVID-19, which has disturbed the very nature of work and induced tremendous pressure leading to stressful situation in many countries. The record of the state of the QWL during this period of crisis would be a very good source for the policy makers to strengthen its critical dimensions significantly influencing the QWL. This is because the QWL has a direct bearing on work outcome of employees which mainly includes job performance and organizational commitment (Usha & Rohini, 2018), productivity (Horst, Broday, Bondarick, Serpe & Pilatti, 2014; Jayakumar & Kalaiselvi, 2012), and organizational performance (Leitão, Pereira & Gonçalves, 2019). Thus, the overall objective of this paper is to study the QWL of the employees in service organizations in Kuwait during the COVID-19 outbreak, and further, investigate its relationship its antecedents, so as to identify the critical dimensions which have significant impact on the QWL. The outcome of the study could provide the implications to the HR managers so as to improve the QWL during the crisis situations.

Literature Review

The literature is rich in research work on QWL since its inception in early 70s. There are two main streams of research, among which, one group has tried to establish the relationships of the antecedents with the QWL, while the other group has made attempts to find the organizational impact

of QWL. Mirkamali & Thani (2011) through a stratified sample of 2944 professors chosen from two universities in Iran found that *social integration* and *cohesiveness* were the critical factors in deciding the QWL. Sinha (2012) conducted an empirical research with a randomly chosen sample size of 100 middle level managers in a cross section of service organizations in India and found that *relationship-sustenance orientation*, *futuristic professional orientation* and *systemic orientation* had significant influence on the QWL. Salajegheh et al., (2015) used a sample size of 132 bank employees in Iran using random sampling and established relationships between QWL and *organizational performance* and also its sub-dimensions -*effectiveness*, *efficiency*, *productivity*, *quality* and *innovation*. Khetavath (2015) using a sample size of 238 employees from Indian private sector organizations based on random sampling found that *work complexity and conditions*, *human relations*, *employee commitment*, and *career prospects* had the significant impact on QWL. Kelbiso, Belay & Woldie (2017) conducted a cross-sectional study on 253 nurses randomly chosen from of two hospitals and nine health centers in Ethiopia and found that *qualification*, *salary*, *working unit*, and *work environment* were key determinants of the QWL. Huda (2017) interviewed 112 market representatives from different pharmaceutical companies based on random sampling and found that the *development factors*, *motivational factors*, *fairness factors* and *occupational stress* were the key determinants of the QWL. Nasirizade et al., (2017) used a sample size of 225 nurses in teaching hospitals in Iran using random sampling and established statistically significant empirical relationship between QWL and *organizational effectiveness*. Leitão, Pereira & Gonçalves (2019) used the stratified random sample of 514 managers from 15 private companies from six European countries using a scale comprising 24 items and found that QWL had an impact on *organizational performance*. The recommendation of the study was that better focus on training and development would enhance the QWL.

All the above mentioned studies are significant contribution to the body of knowledge in the QWL. However, it can be observed that there is a dearth of literature which provides the type of impact that can be created on the QWL relative to *time* and *geographical location*. Time refers to the state of being such as economic boom or a crisis due to unavoidable circumstances such as war, famine or the outbreak of a pandemic. A record of the state of QWL during these most defining moments would help the managers to focus on those specific components of QWL and be prepared for future crisis situation. The COVID-19 is one such pandemic which has taken the world by storm, where the very human existence was at stake and the study of the QWL during this period becomes not just a need, but a compelling necessity. Thus, the research in focus is an attempt to fill this research gap.

Research Methodology

The research Problem

The QWL is a very well researched area; nevertheless, the conventional theories of QWL were not designed for a situation like COVID-19 pandemic that introduced newer ways of functioning like working from home. So, the research problem is to use the positivist paradigm of research and explore the newer variables which may affect the QWL and empirically validate the model that can account for such unforeseen circumstances.

The Conceptual Framework

Researchers have identified several antecedents of QWL. Rubel and Kee (2014) have identified supervisory behavior, compensation, job characteristics, and work-life-balance to be the antecedents of the QWL. Mosadeghrad (2013) have identified participation, job promotion, disturbance handling, communication, motivation, job security, wages and salaries, job pride, and job stress to be the antecedents of QWL. Tayfur (2012) has considered motivational deficits, cognitive deficits, and emotional deficits also to be the antecedents of QWL. There are other studies that have considered many other similar factors to be the antecedents of QWL. With these studies as the basis, the conceptual model of this research has been developed in which the factors that could be more significant have been considered. These factors include health and wellbeing, job security, job satisfaction, career prospects, work-life balance, and social support. A closer look at these factors indicates that these factors are likely to have a major impact on the QWL especially during a pandemic like COVID-19, and hence they constitute the antecedents of QWL in the conceptual model.

The Hypothetical Model

The hypothetical model has been developed based on the contemporary research in the field of the QWL. Following linkages have been developed between the antecedents and the QWL.

Relationship between Health & wellbeing and QWL

Health and Wellbeing (HWB) has been linked to the QWL by many researchers in various contexts of service and product organization. Al-Qutop & Harrim (2011) have conceptualized that HWB and QWL are interwoven concepts at physiological and psychological levels. Stress levels of employees has been directly linked to the QWL (e.g., Hans, Mubeen, Mishra & Al-Badi., 2015; & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2014; Schacher, 2007). Leitão, Pereira & Gonçalves (2019) through the empirical study found that when the employees feel satisfied with their life and are content, their QWL will be automatically bettered. Kashyap, Joseph & Deshmukh (2016) conducted a descriptive research and found that HWB gives a holistic approach to life and make them generate a feeling of higher level of

existence, rather than being a machine which produces work in return to pay, and this in turn enhances the QWL experienced by the employee. Hassan, Maamor, Razak & Lapok (2014) conducted an empirical study with a sample of 179 employees randomly chosen from multinational companies in Malaysia and proved that emotional wellbeing was a major predictor of QWL. These studies have linked HWB and QWL; however, there is no evidence for the investigation on this linkage during the crisis situation such as COVID-19. Hence, the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H₁: *Health and wellbeing* has a significant relationship with the *quality of work-life*.

Relationship between Job security and QWL

Lau, Wong, Chan & Law (2001) found that through Job Security (JBS) the QWL can be operationalized. Rethinam (2008) includes JBS in the very definition of QWL and claims it is not possible to provide a good QWL to the employees without providing them the JBS. Shahbazi, Shokrzadeh, Bejani, Malekinia & Ghoroneh (2011) used the Walton's QWL questionnaire with a sample size of 99 with 60 Chairpersons of the department of Esfahan University and Esfahan Medical Sciences University in Iran based on stratified random sampling and found that JBS as one of the predictors QWL. Kaur (2016) using a sample size of 195 employees selected based on random sampling from Jihad-e-Keshavarzi Organization, Iran found a positive significant relationship between JBS and QWL. In addition to these studies several other researchers have proved the association between JBS and QWL (e.g. Martel & Dupuis, 2006; Rose, Beh, Uli & Idris, 2006; Zare, Haghgooyan & Zahra, 2012). But, there is no evidence for the study of QWL during the pandemic such as COVID-19 which may completely change the orientation of the QWL, and hence, to test this relationship the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H₂: *Job security* has a significant relationship with the *quality of work-life*.

Relationship between Job satisfaction and QWL

The relationship between job satisfaction (JST) and QWL is somewhat controversial. For instance, in one of the earliest studies by Taylor (1977) had proved that higher levels of JST led to the deterioration in the QWL. There are also studies which consider that the JST and the QWL are synonymous, while there are studies which claim that they are not the same (Sh & Sh, 2014). There are studies which claim that JST is the end result of QWL (Perangin-Angin, Lumbanraja & Absah, 2020; Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel, & Lee, 2001) and some studies claim that JST has a positive impact on QWL (Bhavani & Jegadeeshwaran, 2014; Rao, Sahyaja, Lahari & Vasavi, 2018). However, it is clear from these studies that both JST and QWL are having a relationship with each other. But, the relationship

may vary during the pandemic such as COVID-19 because the requirements of job satisfaction may be different depending upon the gravity of the crisis; thus, there is a need to test the following hypothesis.

H₃: *Job satisfaction* has a significant relationship with the *quality of work-life*.

Relationship between Career prospects and QWL

Kwahar & Iyortsuun (2018) applied Delphi-technique on a sample size of 355 managers selected based on random sampling from the five 5 -star hotels in Nigeria and extracted the key factors which formed the QWL and *career prospects* (CRP) emerged out to be the one among the five factors. Saraji & Dargahi (2006) through a sample of 908 hospital employees in Medical University in Iran, chosen on random sampling basis, found that CRP was one among the 14 factors which significantly influenced the QWL of the employees. In a study conducted by Kaur (2016) with a sample size of 195 employees selected based on random sampling from Jihad-e-Keshavarzi Organization in Iran, CRP emerged as a major factor that defines the QWL. Sojka (2014) proved that CRP is a key antecedent of QWL through a random sample of 721 respondents chosen from several business organizations in Slovakia. Mensah & Lebbaeus (2013) chose a stratified sample from 70 service institutions, 50 financial institutions and 80 educational institutions in Ghana and proved that CRP is an important variable which can provide a better QWL. While all these studies provide evidence to the relationship between CRP and QWL there is a need to find if the relationship holds good during the pandemic outbreak, and hence, the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H₄: *Career prospects* has a significant relationship with the *quality of work-life*.

Relationship between Work-life balance and QWL

Bhola (2016) conducted a research in which through quota sampling 379 samples of working women from service industry were chosen for the study. The results of the research indicated that work-life balance (WLB) had a positive significant relationship with the QWL. Allen, Herst, Bruck & Sutton (2000) have found that the problems associated with WLB can affect QWL adversely. Belwal & Belwal (2014) have identified WLB to be a significant predictor of QWL. Sojka (2014) developed an empirical relationship in which WLB was associated with QWL and *job satisfaction* and *type of employment contract* constituted the other two dimensions. There are several researchers who have provided evidence for the fact that difficulties in maintaining WLB end up with stressful situations to the employees and it brings down the QWL (Brough, O'Driscoll, & Kalliath, 2005; Hill, 2005; Layous, Chancellor, Lyubomirsky, Wang & Doraiswamy, 2011). While most of these studies provide theoretical association between WLB and QWL there are not many studies which have provided empirical evidence for the relationship between these variables, and there is no evidence for the study

of the relationship between these two variables during the crisis. Thus, the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H₅: *Work-life balance* has a significant relationship with the *quality of work-life*.

Relationship between Social support and QWL

Ali, Badri, Noordin & Omar (2019) using a sample size of 210 participants from two universities in Malaysia, based on stratified sampling, found that social support (SSP) significantly influenced the QWL. While the samples differed significantly in terms of job satisfaction (JST), there was no significant difference in the QWL in the two strata of the sample. It is also found that SSP is one of the prominent factors which need to be considered for improving the QWL (Altunel, Kocak, and Cankir, 2015). Amini & Chinaveh (2016) with a randomly chosen 215 environmental guards of Mazandaran province in Iran proved empirically that SSP has a positive association with QWL. A cross-sectional study with a sample size of 215 employees of hospitals in Portugal proved that SSP was a significant predictor of QWL (Orgambídez-Ramos & Borrego-Alés, 2017). In a study involving employees of a marble firm in turkey (sample size = 180), it was found that social support and integration had a positive significant relationship with the QWL. While there are many such research studies which have related SSP to QWL most of them are during the normal circumstances and not during the crisis period such as COVID-19 which can affect QWL significantly. Hence, the following hypothesis has been formulated,

H₆: *Social support* has a significant relationship with the *quality of work-life*.

The Figure 1 depicts the hypothetical model.

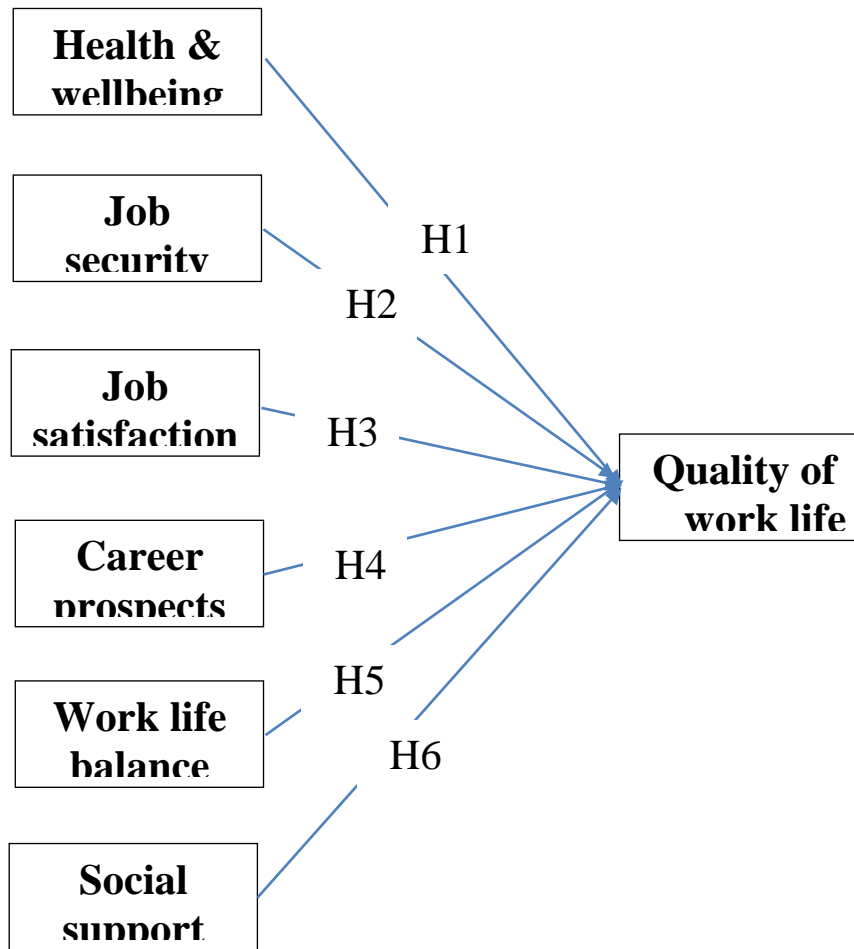


Figure 1: The hypothetical model

Research Design

This research fundamentally adopts the *positivist paradigm* of research with *quantitative approach*. The *questionnaire survey* method has been used and the instrument used for data collection is a tested and validated *questionnaire* derived from earlier studies. The questionnaire preparation is as per the standard procedure to be adopted when scales of individual items are available from earlier studies. The specific dimension, contributing authors, meaning and sample item has been given in Table 1. *Confirmatory factor analysis* using a sample size of 35 has been carried out to confirm the reliability of the data and the validity of the questionnaire. Exploratory factor analysis is not required as the items used in the questionnaire has proved reliability and validity and they have been slightly modified to suit to the local requirements of the place of survey. The questionnaire was translated to Arabic for the ease of use by the participants. The data collection was based on *purposive sampling*, as there was a need to study the QWL during the crisis situation. The criterion of purposive sampling was to choose specifically those employees who were affected by the COVID-19 issue, to be more precise, the employees of those organizations where they were required to work in groups in the absence of the

crisis. The specific organizations chosen were educational institutes, banking finance and insurance, engineering, human resource management, call centres, and ministries of health and education.

Table 1: Dimension, contributing authors, meaning and sample item from questionnaire

Dimension	Contributing authors	Meaning	Sample item
1. Health & wellbeing	Al-Badi (2015); Al-Qutop & Harrim, (2011); Amponsah-Tawiah, (2014); Hans, et al., (2015); Hassan et al., (2014) Joseph & Deshmukh (2016); Leitão, Pereira & Gonçalves (2019); Schacher, (2007).	It is the achievement and maintenance of physical fitness and mental stability and being in possession of what a person considers import in life.	I am enjoying good health.
2. Job security	Beh et al., (2006); Kaur (2016); Martel & Dupuis, (2006); Rethinam (2008); Rose eta l., (2012); Shahbazi et al., (2011); Zare et al., (2012).	A guarantee to retain job, provided the contribution to the organization is to the expected level.	I hold a steady job in this organization.
3. Job satisfaction	Bhavani & Jegadeeshwaran, (2014); Rao et al., (2018); Taylor, (1977); Perangin-Angin et al., (2020); Sirgy et al., (2001).	A sense of fulfillment and enjoyment derived through the job.	I am able to accomplish my work objectives consistently.
4. Career prospects	Kaur, (2016); Kwahar & Iyortsuun (2018); Mensah &	The possibility of future success in a profession in terms	The career advancement opportunities in my

	Lebbaeus (2013); Saraji & Dargahi (2006); Sojka (2014).	of growth and enhancement of knowledge, skill, attitude, and competency.	job is very bright.
5. Work life balance	Allen et al., (2000); Belwal & Belwal (2014); Bhola (2016); Brough et al., (2005); Sojka (2014).	It is the balance between work and life in terms of time and efforts directed towards maintaining a good professional performance and also having adequate time for family, hobbies, social service, and any other personal interests.	I have a fair time distribution between work and life.
6. Social support	Ali et al., (2019); Altunel et al., (2015); Amini & Chinaveh, (2016); Orgambídez-Ramos & Borrego-Alés, (2017).	It is the integration of the employee with the social group in the organizations to provide counselling and even mentorship as the situation demands so that the employee's professional and personal interests are supported.	Valuable information is often shared through our social network.
7. Quality of work-life	Almarshad et al., (2019); Hackman and Oldham, (1976); Leitão et al., (2019);	It is the value addition process, which provides employees	My work environment is very creative.

	Lewis et al., (2001); Mumford & Cooper, (1979); Normala (2010); Rahiman & Kodikal, (2017); Sahni, (2019) Saklani, (2003); Serey, (2006); Sumathi & Velmurugan (2017); Tabassum et al., (2011); Yadav & Khanna, (2014).	enjoyment in their work-life through active participation and contribution to the organizational growth.	
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The analysis was carried out to test six hypotheses using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) which makes use of Partial Least Square Technique (PLST). Two models were developed, the first one was the *measurement model* which is essentially for the testing of the reliability and validity of the study, and the second model was the *structural model* which provides the means to test the hypotheses. Based on the results of the hypotheses implications were drawn to the benefit of the managers so that in case of future crisis situations they are aware of the antecedents of QWL which need to be focussed so as to make the employee enjoy their work better and contribute to the organizational performance better.

Results and Analysis

Demographic details of Respondents

The respondents chosen for this research are the employees in the government and private organizations in Kuwait. The total sample size based on purposive sampling in this research was 211. There is almost the same number of male and female respondents (about 50% each). Majority of the respondents were in the age group of 25-35 years (53.6%) followed by the age group of 35-45 years (22.7%) (Table 2). Majority of the respondents were in the group of not married (40.6%) followed by divorced (32.5%). Income wise, majority were in the group of 1000 to 2000 KWD per month (54%) followed by those with an income of 1000 KWD per month (35.1%). The respondents were mainly Diploma holders (53.6%) followed by Bachelor's Degree holders (22.7%). Experience wise a sizable number of respondents had an experience of 5 to 10 years (44.1%) followed by 2 to 5 years of

experience (29.9%). Thus, the respondents were mature enough, adequately qualified, well-experienced, and competent enough to provide the data and information for this research.

Table 2: Demographic distribution of the Respondents (N = 211)

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	104	49.3
Female	107	50.7
<i>Age</i>		
Less than 25 years	18	8.5
25-35 years	113	53.6
35-45 years	48	22.7
45-55 years	24	11.4
Above 55 years	8	3.8
<i>Marital status</i>		
Married	57	26.9
Not married	86	40.6
Divorced	69	32.5
<i>Annual income of the family</i>		
Less than 1000 KWD	74	35.1
1000 – 2000 KWD	114	54.0
More than 2000 KWD	23	10.9
<i>Educational qualification</i>		
Certificate	18	8.5
Diploma	113	53.6
Bachelor's degree	48	22.7
Master's degree	24	11.4
PhD	8	3.8
<i>Work experience</i>		
Less than 2 years	18	8.5

2 – 5 years	63	29.9
5 – 10 years	93	44.1
Above 10 years	37	17.5

The Measurement Model

The Cronbach's Alpha in this research varies from 0.7 to 0.8 indicating a moderate level of acceptance in terms of the internal consistency of the data (Cut off 0.7; Taber, 2018) (Table 3). The *composite reliability* is also moderate as the values range from 0.6 to 0.8 (Cut off 0.6; Ahmad, Zulkurnain, & Khairushalimi, 2016)). *Composite reliability* in terms of Rho-A is widely used in SEM and values of above 0.6 are be considered acceptable (Rigdon, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2010). In addition, the measurement model should also pass the *convergent validity* which is measured in terms of standardized *factor loading* (FL) after factor reduction. *Convergent validity* of these factor loadings ranged from 0.6 to 0.9 (Table 4) indicating moderate to good correlation between the factor and the observed variable. Finally, *discriminant reliability* of the model has to be tested, which is a measure of mutual exclusiveness of the factors from each other. If they are not mutually exclusive they may measure the same variable repeatedly. To meet this criterion, the square roots of *average variance extracted* of all the dimensions have to be greater than their respective correlation between the remaining constructs. This criterion is also satisfied by the model (Table 5). The path model (Figure 2) indicates that the R^2 value of the model is 0.429, which means the model has been successful in explaining 42.9% of the influence of independent variables on the dependent variables (cut-off is 10%; Rigdon, et al., 2010). Thus, the model has the required level of reliability and validity and can be subjected to further treatment which is discussed in the next section.

Table 3: Reliability and Validity Measures

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
1. Career prospects	0.84	0.61	0.63	0.34
2. Health & wellbeing	0.67	0.69	0.82	0.60
3. Job security	0.76	0.67	0.69	0.43
4. Job satisfction	0.66	0.69	0.81	0.59
5. Quality of work life	0.76	0.62	0.74	0.49

6. Social support	0.78	0.72	0.70	0.45
7. Work life balance	0.71	0.72	0.70	0.45

Table 4: Factor Loading

	CRP	HWB	JSC	JST	QWL	SSP	WLB
CRP1	0.69						
CRP2	0.64						
CRP3	0.86						
HWB1		0.74					
HWB2		0.76					
HWB3		0.83					
JSC1			0.74				
JSC2			0.66				
JSC3			0.73				
JST1				0.81			
JST2				0.82			
JST3				0.67			
QWL1					0.67		
QWL2					0.85		
QWL3					0.64		
SSP1						0.76	
SSP2						0.46	
SSP3						0.75	
WLB1							0.76
WLB2							0.69
WLB3							0.72

Legend: CRP = Career prospects; HWB = Health & wellbeing; JSC = Job security; JST = Job satisfaction; SSP = Social support; WLB = Work life balance; QWL = Quality of work life.

Table 5: Inter Item correlation

	CRP	HWB	JSC	JST	QWL	SSP	WLB
CRP	0.58						
HWB	0.05	0.78					

JSC	0.32	0.39	0.66			
JST	0.14	0.56	0.38	0.77		
QWL	0.14	0.49	0.56	0.43	0.70	
SSP	0.35	0.37	0.50	0.35	0.50	0.67
WLB	0.34	0.40	0.53	0.38	0.56	0.67

Legend: CRP = Career prospects; HWB = Health & wellbeing; JSC = Job security; JST = Job satisfaction; SSP = Social support; WLB = Work life balance; QWL

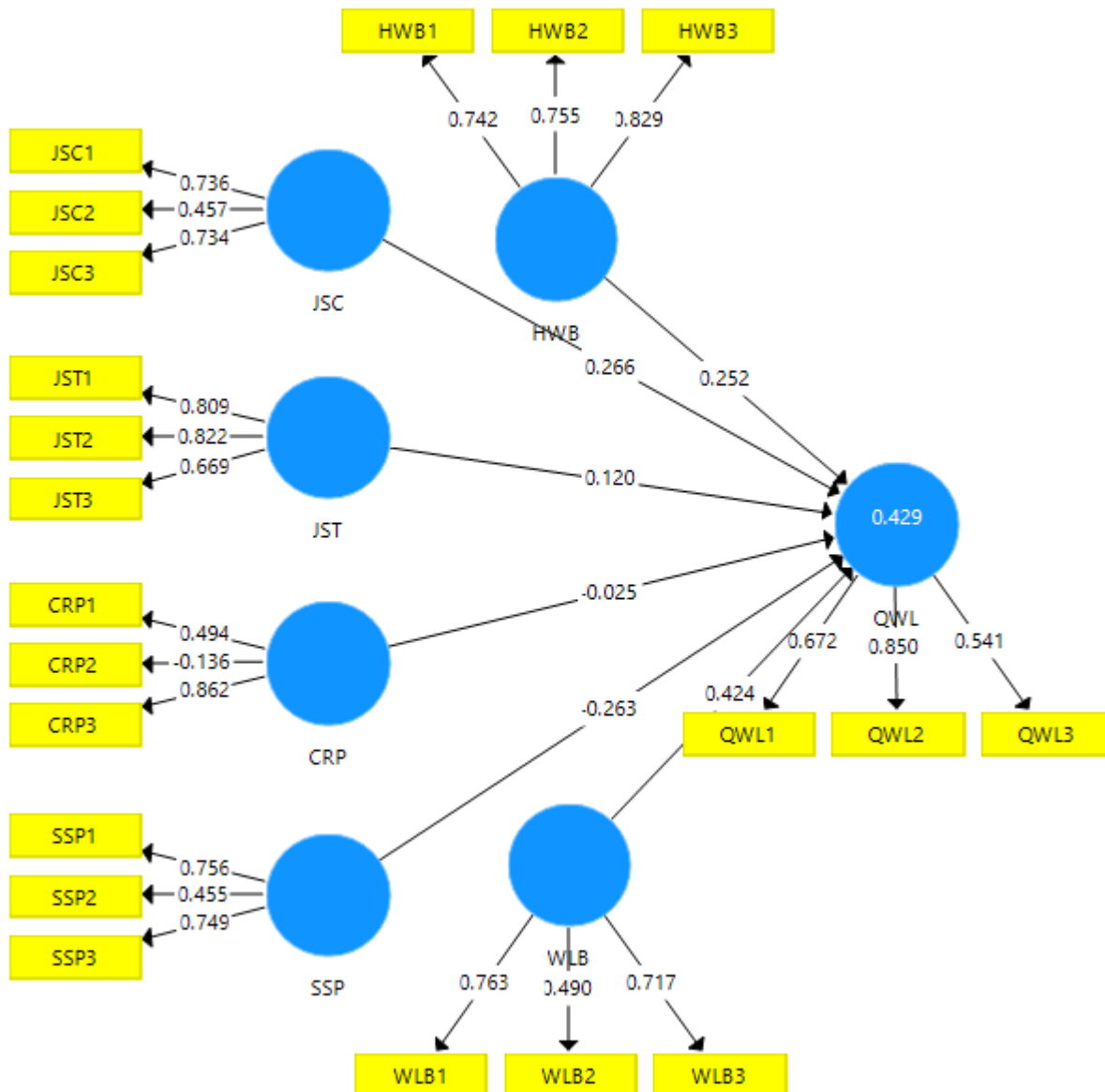


Figure 2: Path Model

The Structural Model

The structural model provides the statistical significance of the relationships between the exogenous and the endogenous factors of study. The structural model (Figure 3) and the t-values (Table 6) provide the evidence for the existence of relationships between the variables of study. In the Table 6, The Original Sample estimate is the parameter from estimating the model on the original dataset, from a normal PLS algorithm estimation. The Sample Mean estimate is the average of the estimates from all the subsamples of the dataset drawn during the bootstrapping procedure. The variance between these two should not be more than 0.1 (Rigdon, et al., 2010) to ensure reliability in modelling. In the present case the variance is less than the threshold value and the modelling is reliable. The Standard deviation within 1 indicates that the values are close to mean and again it ensures a reliable model fit. Finally the t values above 2 indicate that the null hypotheses stand rejected and it is also observed by the Alpha value (p) less than 0.05. Thus, the following hypotheses have been supported (rejected the null hypothesis):

H₁: *Health and wellbeing* has a significant relationship with the *quality of work-life*.

H₅: *Work-life balance* has a significant relationship with the *quality of work-life*.

H₆: *Social support* has a significant relationship with the *quality of work-life*.

Also, the following hypotheses are not supported (failed to reject null hypothesis):

H₂: *Job security* has a significant relationship with the *quality of work-life*.

H₃: *Job satisfaction* has a significant relationship with the *quality of work-life*.

H₄: *Career prospects* has a significant relationship with the *quality of work-life*.

Table 6: t-statistic of Hypothetical Model

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Hypothesis test result
CRP -> QWL	0.03	0.01	0.06	0.41	0.68	Not supported
HWB -> QWL	0.25	0.25	0.07	3.49	0.00	Supported
JSC -> QWL	0.27	0.24	0.17	1.55	0.12	Not supported
JST -> QWL	0.12	0.11	0.08	1.52	0.13	Not supported
SSP -> QWL	0.26	0.25	0.10	2.69	0.01	Supported
WLB -> QWL	0.42	0.43	0.16	2.65	0.01	Supported

Legend: CRP = Career prospects; HWB = Health & wellbeing; JSC = Job security; SSP = Social support; WLB = Work life balance; QWL = Quality of work life.

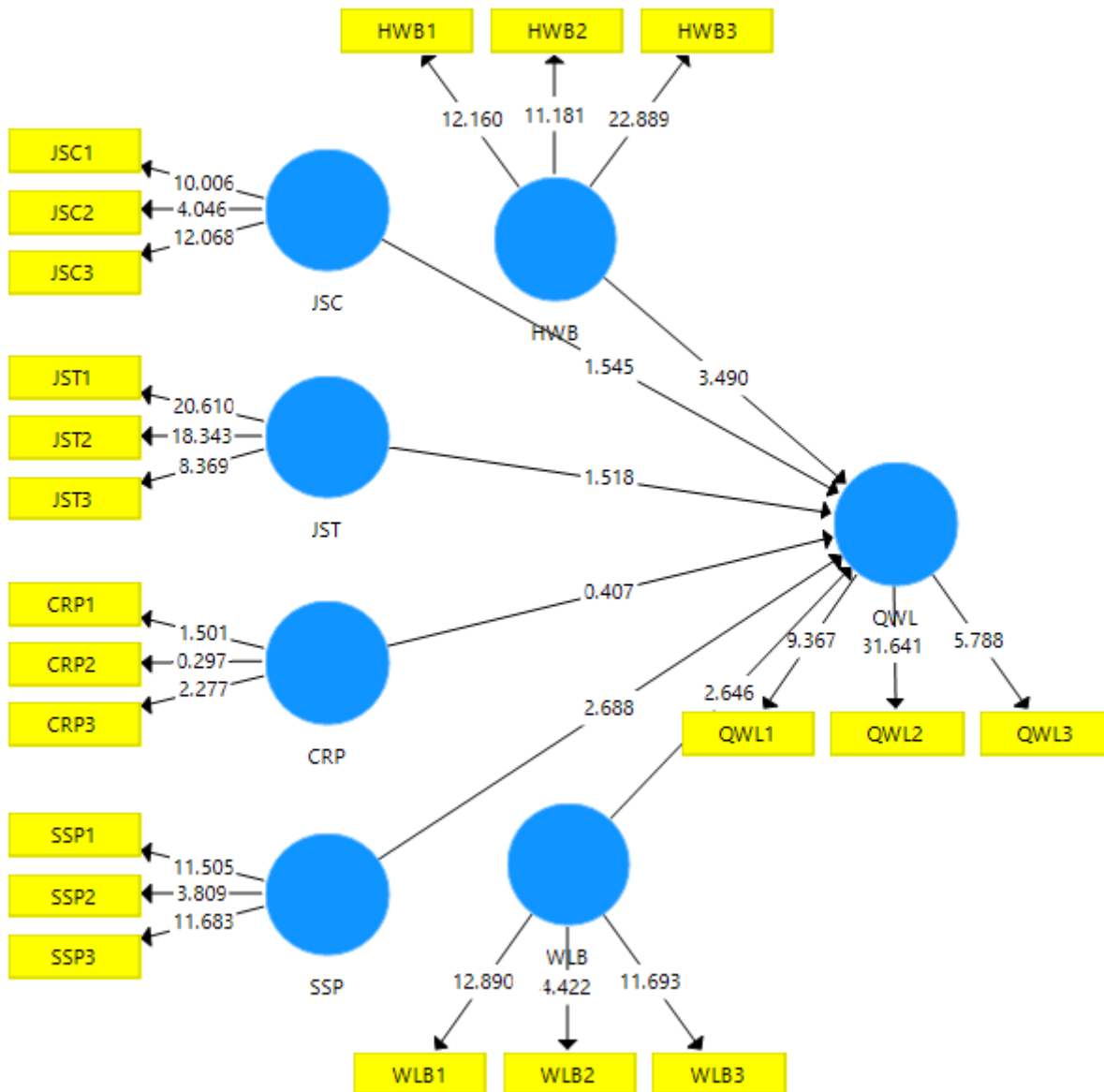


Figure 3:

Structural Model

Discussions and Implications

Hypothesis testing has revealed that *health and wellbeing* (HWB) has a significant relationship with the quality of work-life. This finding is in accordance to earlier findings by a group of researchers in various contexts of product and service organizations (e.g., Al-Qutop & Harrim, 2011; Hans et al., 2015; Kashyap et al., 2016; Leitão et al., 2019; Maamor et al., 2014). However, Klein, Pereira & Lemos (2019) have emphasized upon the need to gather more evidence on the relationship between these two variables despite the fact that the relationship seems to be obvious. There is no evidence to the testing of this relationship during the crisis situation like the pandemic COVID-19 and this study reveals that there is a significant relationship between these two variables.

Social support (SSP) has a significant relationship with the *quality of work-life* (QWL) as per this research. The result corroborates well with earlier studies (e.g., Ali et al., 2019; Altunel et al., 2015; Amini & Chinaveh, 2016; Orgambídez-Ramos & Borrego-Alés, 2017). The general perception is that with better SSP employees can have better QWL. This research has revealed that SSP plays an important role during the crisis situations in maintaining a good QWL.

It is also revealed through this study that *work-life balance* (WLB) has a significant positive relationship with the *quality of work-life* (QWL). This finding corroborates well with the earlier findings (e.g., Belwal & Belwal, 2014; Brough et al., 2005; Herst et al., 2000; Hill, 2005; Layous et al., 2011; Sojka, 2014). There are researchers who have expressed that relationship between WLB and QWL is still unexplored completely due to the multi-variate nature of both the dimensions (Leitão et al., 2019; Schneider, Hanges, Ruzevicius, 2007; Smith, Salvaggio, 2003). This is particularly true in terms of the study of the relationship of WLB with QWL during the crisis like COVID-19. The revelation is that WLB and QWL are having a significant relationship and this provides means to the theoretical and practical implications.

While the above referred three hypotheses have been supported, the rest of the hypotheses have not been supported. *Career prospects* (CRP) is found to have no significant relationship with the QWL. This revelation contrasts the earlier findings by a group of researchers including Kwahar & Iyortsuun (2018), Kaur (2016), Mensah & Lebbaeus (2013) and Saraji & Dargahi (2006), Sojka (2014). It has to be noted that this revelation is applicable to the crisis situation where employees do not consider CRP to be a part of their QWL. It is quite obvious that the priority of the employees changes during the crisis situations and they may not associate CRP to QWL. Further, *job security* (JSC) also has no significant relationship with the QWL. This finding of the study is in disagreement with the earlier findings by a group of researchers (e.g., Kaur, 2016; Lau et al., 2001; Martel & Dupuis, 2006; Rose et al., 2006; Zare et al., 2012; Rethinam, 2008; Shahbazi et al., 2011). Due to newer measures such as work from home and the availability of more free time during the period of lockdown or partial lockdown due to COVID-19, the employees may even explore other opportunities through the internet and may not be concerned about the JSC. *Job satisfaction* (JST) also has no significant relationship with the QWL during the crisis. This finding is in disagreement with the earlier research findings (Sh & Sh, 2014; Perangin-Angin, Lumbanraja & Absah, 2020; Sirgy et al., 2001; Taylor, 1977). The reason for this disagreement could be due to the shifting of the parameters which constitute JST. For instance, facing a challenging situation, which is one of the measures of JST, may be

considered to be an important antecedent to QWL during normal circumstance, but not during the outbreak of a pandemic like COVID-19 or any other such calamity.

Theoretical Implications

The research is indicative of the fact that during the outbreak of a pandemic the QWL may be considered differently by the employees. So, the conventional models of QWL may not be valid during the pandemic and modified models may be necessary to address QWL. This research has contributed a modified theoretical model of QWL with only three antecedents, namely health and wellbeing (HWB), work-life balance (WLB) and social support (SSP). The very definition of HWB may change during the crisis situation such as COVID-19 in the sense that extra measures of health may be necessary to be considered. For instance, while strict measures of hygiene, say frequent washing of hands, may not be of very high significance during the normal situations, during the pandemic it may take top priority and the employees may be very particular about the measures adopted by the management to ensure personal hygiene. Work-life balance as it is, is a very challenging dimension of the antecedent of QWL, and it may become more complicated during the outbreak of a pandemic. During the normal circumstances the employees will be available in the workplace during a certain period of time and the employees may focus fully on their work; however, during the pandemic there could be partial lockdown or full lockdown. If it is full lockdown and employee is expected to work from home, the employees' family may interfere with the work more severely than while working in the organization. The employee may have to set a totally new set of rules for work-life balance which may be very taxing to the employee. In terms of the SSP, the outbreak of pandemic may demand much higher level of social support in comparison to that under normal circumstances. A higher level of moral support may be expected by the employee from the employer as well as the family and society due to the uncertainties induced by the pandemic. These theoretical implications can be derived out of the study, which could be the basis for the development of a QWL model applicable to the pandemic outbreak situation.

Practical Implications

The hypothesis testing has provided the basis for drawing practical implications which are essentially in the form of suggestion for HR managers to turn their employees experience a better QWL during the pandemic situations. Among the variables of study three variables have shown significant association with the QWL at the time of crisis and the practical implications have been drawn to the benefit of HR managers so that they are prepared well in advance to manage the organizational performance at the time of adversities.

Health and Wellbeing (HWB) has emerged out to be an antecedent which has a significant positive relationship with the QWL of the employees. So, the practical implications of the study are to the HR managers directly in terms of the improvement in the HWB measures of the employees so that it would contribute to the improvement in the QWL. The HR managers should note that HWB has both the *physical* and *mental* wellbeing dimensions. While the physical wellbeing can be improved through healthy physical environment in terms of cleanliness, hygiene, ventilation, space for maintaining social distance, proper housekeeping etc., the mental wellbeing can be supported through a positive organizational culture and climate, measures to strengthen organizational citizenship behavior, training programmes to boost employee morale and motivation, improving the interpersonal relationships, supporting teamwork, participative management, better employee welfare, and leadership training. These measures have been very successfully adopted in most of the leading organizations of the world and are worth a try. There is research evidence that poor HWB leads to absenteeism, reduced productivity, poor product or service quality, increased compensation claims, higher medical expenses and higher insurance claims. So, HR managers should consider taking care of HWB of the employees to be one of their responsibilities. Van Laar, Edwards & Easton (2007) recommend *emotional supervisory support* which can boost the employee's motivational energy and at the same time reduce stress. This can be in the form of showing concern for the wellbeing of the family members of the employees and the supervisors acting as father figures when the occasion demands. Research has shown that such emotional support has made the employee confident and enjoyed work much better and contributed positively to the organizational objectives (e.g., Edward & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Research has also proved that stressful work environment hinders productivity as well as employee wellbeing (Iacovides, Fountoulakis & Kaprins, 2003); whereas, a working environment free from stress promotes productivity of the employees and their wellbeing (Rethinam & Ismail, 2008). So, the HR managers should focus on the stress free work environment which promotes employee creativity and supports the development of organizational citizenship behaviour which is quintessential to the strengthening of the HWB of the employees.

Social support (SSP) also has bearing on the QWL of the employees as revealed through the hypothesis testing of this research. Yuh & Choi (2017) provide evidence to the fact that SSP is significantly associated with occupational performance and quality of life as it is the integration of the employee with the social group in the organization. This can be strengthened only through the training and development programmes in which the importance of SSP has to be emphasized at all the levels of operation in the organization. Also, SSP has two components one being the *organizational* and the

other *societal*. As organizational SSP is fundamentally the strengthening of the quality and availability of helping relationships between work associates (Malik et al., 2010), it can be imbibed into the organization culture systematically. The societal support can be strengthened through socializing and building of the community relationships. This is of particular importance in the times of the outbreaks of pandemics such as COVID-19, where individual concern as well as societal concern may play a role in coping with the situation. The implication of the study is that the organizations must have a strategic action agenda which fosters the development of organizational culture and climate that is congenial for developing the collaborative instincts in the workforce with shared values and supportive nature. The action plan for the generation of positive feelings amongst the employees so as to develop an emotional and professional bond between them. Mechanisms need to be developed for collaborative culture among the work associates and generate a feeling of protection against hazardous situations, and also, to reduce the feeling of uncertainty and instability in the work environment. When collaborative tasks are appreciated and rewarded the SSP gets naturally supported and people volunteer to exhibit SSP at all the levels of operation.

Work-life balance (WLB) also has a significant relationship with QWL as indicated by the hypothesis testing. WLB is a serious issue not to be considered lightly by the HR managers as it has adverse effect on both physical and mental health of the employees which in turn affects the organizational performance. Implication is that the organization should provide a proper WLB to its employees if they have to enjoy a better QWL. The modern working environment is known to the juggling of the employees between work and family duties and responsibilities and it would aggravate further during the outbreak of the pandemic. Some of the methods which have can be very effective in improving the WLB include - implementation of paid leave for childcare, elder care and specific personal problems; policies on limited usage of laptops and smartphones for work purpose during the weekends, flexi-hours and work from home facility, compressed work-weeks, optimized workload distribution between employees, job-sharing, reengineering of work, and flexible scheduling. Training programmes can be arranged to employees on prioritizing their work, leaving work at work, learning to say 'no' when it is really necessary, managing time effectively, and avoiding stressful situations. In addition to these the employees have to be taught the fundamentals of setting the right priorities in life, focussing on one thing at a time; keeping regular track of time; developing a sense of responsibility towards the personal, professional and private time; have clear understanding about the lifestyle management; setting boundaries between personal and professional work; know whom to approach at the time of need, take proper mentorship; and evaluate the work-life balance on regular intervals.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this research was to identify the specific antecedents of QWL during the time of the outbreak of a pandemic. The pandemic like COVID-19 should prepare the organizations to handle the future crises successfully using the experiences during the current crisis. Thus, data was collected from the respondents during the time of COVID-19 when there was a partial lockdown in some places and full lockdown in the other in Kuwait. Among the six antecedents that were studied three emerged out to be dominant during the crisis situation which had significant influence on the QWL.

The quantitative analysis has helped in the identification of the three variables, namely, health and wellbeing, social support, and work-life balance as the dominant antecedents of the QWL. This has provided the basis for drawing both theoretical and practical implications in the field of QWL. The theoretical implications not only add to the body of knowledge, but also, open up a database for the use of future researchers in this field. The practical implications are drawn to the benefit of the managers so that they can prepare themselves for unforeseen future situations of similar kind. The major limitation of the study is that it has focused only on six most widely used antecedents of the QWL while there are many other antecedents which have been considered to be extraneous variables in this study. Even though these six variables of study have emerged out to be the dominant ones, the effect of the remaining variables on the QWL cannot be ignored completely. So, future researchers can consider some of these variables such as job characteristics, pay and benefits, motivation, organizational commitment, etc. The sample size is another limitation despite the fact that its adequacy is justified by the thumb rule of SEM because the most ideal sample size is always through the saturation point method. So, generalization of the outcome of the study has to be limited to, first of all the geographic location of the study, and then within the limits of the sample size adequacy.

This research is useful to both academics and practitioners as it has elements of theory and practicality. Even with the best of the simulation techniques available today, the exact prediction of a crisis situation, say in the form of natural calamity or manmade disaster, always remains a challenge. So, in that sense this research is timely, as it provides a means to strengthen the human resources performance during the crisis situation and may be beneficial to the HR managers to a considerable extent.

المستخلص

تحليل جودة العمل والحياة للمواطنين الكويتيين أثناء تفشي Covid-19

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خالد عبدالله النخيلان

لقد أثرت جائحة كورونا COVID-19 على وظائف المنظمات في جميع أنحاء العالم، حيث استلزم إما إغلاقاً كلياً أو جزئياً في البلاد، مما أدى الي أساليب أحدث للعمل، مثل العمل من المنزل. وفي هذا السياق قد لا تعكس النماذج التقليدية لجودة الحياة العملية Life Quality of Work الحقائق العملية تماماً. لذلك تم إجراء هذا البحث للتحقيق في النماذج الحالية، وذلك لتحديد أهم المتغيرات في جودة الحياة العملية.

تمنى البحث النموذج الإيجابي للبحث والمنهج الكمي لاختبار ست فرضيات مبنية على أساس النماذج الموجودة في جودة الحياة العملية. بلغ حجم العينة المختارة ٢١١ موظفاً يعملون في مؤسسات مختلفة في الكويت. بناءً على عينات هادفة. وتم اعتماد نمذجة المعادلة الهيكلية Structural Equation Modelling لإجراء التحليلات المطلوبة. أشارت النتائج الي أنه من بين المتغيرات الست التي تم النظر فيها، فقد تبين أن المتغيرات التالية: الصحة والرفاهية، الدعم الاجتماعي، والتوازن بين العمل والحياة كانت هي المتغيرات المهمة لجودة الحياة العملية خلال الأزمة. وبناءً على هذه النتيجة، تم رسم الآثار النظرية والعملية، والتي يمكن أن تكون مفيدة للأكاديميين ومديري الموارد البشرية في الوزارات الخدمية.

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