



ADAPTING WORK LIFE: REMOTE WORK DYNAMICS IN DELHI-NCR'S MSME SECTOR AMID COVID-19

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Abstract

Background: This study explores the intricate relationship between the quality of work life (QWL) and remote work within the rural Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector of the Delhi-NCR region during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Method: A quantitative survey approach, incorporating Likert scale-based questions, was utilized to gather data from employees within these organizations.

Findings: The findings reveal a nuanced landscape where employee perceptions vary widely. While some employees strongly agree that their supervisors effectively communicate the organization's vision, others disagree. The impact of remote work on work-life balance is mixed, with some finding it highly effective and others less so. These findings underscore the need for tailored strategies to improve communication, support work-life balance, and adapt practices in remote work settings.

Keywords: *Quality of Work Life (QWL), Remote Work, MSMEs, COVID-19, Employee Well-being, Organizational Communication.*

Introduction

In recent times, the global landscape of work has witnessed unprecedented shifts, catalysed by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This unprecedented event has not only led to a re-evaluation of traditional work practices but also prompted organizations, particularly those in the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector, to swiftly adapt to a new reality. The MSME sector forms the backbone of economies worldwide, contributing significantly to employment generation and economic growth. In the rural areas of Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR), this sector plays a pivotal role, encompassing a diverse range of enterprises across various industries. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic introduced unprecedented disruptions, forcing organizations to grapple with abrupt changes in work dynamics, employee well-being, and overall productivity (Abdullah, N. N., & Anwar, G. 2021)

One of the central determinants of an organization's effectiveness is the Quality of Work Life (QWL) experienced by its employees. QWL encompasses a multidimensional construct that integrates various elements such as job satisfaction, work-life balance, job security, and the physical and psychological well-being of employees (Walton, 1974). Amidst the pandemic, as organizations grapple with the challenges of maintaining operational continuity, understanding the dynamics of QWL becomes indispensable.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced a swift and widespread adoption of remote work, often referred to as Work from Home (WFH), as a means of ensuring business continuity. Remote work introduced new dynamics into the workplace, including altered communication patterns, blurred boundaries between work and personal life, and the need for greater self-discipline. In this context, the QWL of employees became a central concern, as it directly affected their ability to adapt to remote work, maintain work-life balance, and remain engaged and motivated in their roles (Alves, J. C., et al 2020). Understanding how QWL and remote work intersect in rural

region is not only academically significant but also has practical implications for policy development, organizational management, and rural development strategies.

Objectives

- To investigate how Quality of Work Life (QWL) has influenced Organizational Performance during the Covid19 pandemic in the MSME sector for the Delhi-NCR region.
- To examine how the Work from Home (WFH) concept has impacted the QWL of employees during Covid19 pandemic in the MSME sector for the Delhi-NCR region.

Literature Review

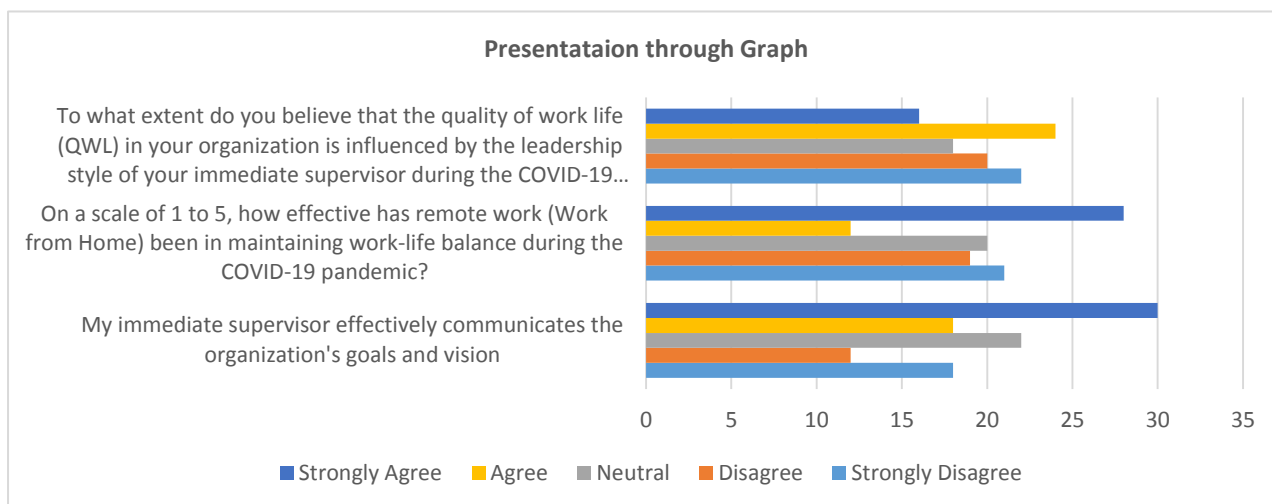
(Nkansah, D., et al. 2022) focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the Delhi-NCR region. It highlights a gap between employees and leaders due to the pandemic's disruptions. Transformational leadership styles are shown to be effective in enhancing Quality of Work Life (QWL) and employee engagement in SMEs. Employee engagement is not only beneficial for individual employees but also for the entire team within MSMEs. Engaged employees tend to perform at their highest level, ultimately contributing to the overall organizational performance. Leadership style is recognized as a critical factor in establishing QWL, which, in turn, positively influences employee productivity and overall SME performance.

(Adnan Bataineh, K. 2019) delves into the concept of Quality of Work Life (QWL) in the context of changing demographics, increased work demands, and longer working hours. It emphasizes the importance of work-life balance and how it positively impacts both employees and SMEs. Achieving harmony between work and life is shown to lead to better employee performance, ultimately benefiting organizational performance. QWL is highlighted as a key factor in enhancing employee productivity, which, in turn, has positive effects on overall organizational performance. Effective implementation of QWL strategies not only allows employees to socialize with the community but also helps control employee turnover and SME costs while boosting productivity.

(Agrawal A., 2019) focuses on the quality of work life in the public sector, particularly in Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs). The study aims to understand the impact of QWL on overall organizational performance in the public sector, which employs a significant number of individuals. It uses a six-dimensional framework to measure QWL and highlights the need for improved policies to enhance the quality of life for public sector employees. The study's results can inform better policy-making in the public sector to improve QWL and subsequently enhance organizational performance.

Research Methodology

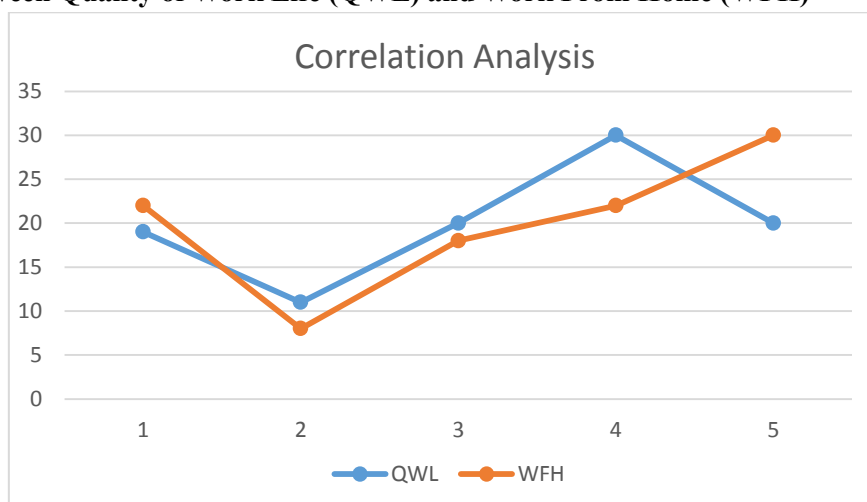
The proposed research methodology, which employs a quantitative approach and survey method with Likert scale questions, provides valuable insights into the relationships between QWL and remote work in the MSME sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. Collected data was analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize responses, and inferential statistics such as correlation analysis was applied to explore relationships between variables.



Data Analysis

The survey responses offer valuable insights into the perceptions and attitudes of employees within the MSME sector of Delhi-NCR during the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of their immediate supervisor's ability to effectively communicate the organization's goals and vision, there is a divergence in opinions. 30 respondents strongly agree that their supervisors excel in this communication, indicating a positive alignment with the organization's vision. 18 disagree, and 12 strongly disagree, highlighting a significant number of employees who feel that there is room for improvement in communication. When assessing the effectiveness of remote work in maintaining work-life balance, the data shows a mixed perspective. A majority of respondents 28 rated remote work as highly effective, indicating that it has positively impacted their work-life balance during the pandemic. On the other hand, 21 rated it as a ineffective, suggesting that for a substantial portion of the workforce, remote work did not successfully maintain this balance. Regarding the influence of immediate supervisors' leadership styles on the quality of work life within the organization, opinions are varied. While 24 respondents agree and 16 strongly agree that their supervisor's leadership style plays a significant role in shaping the work environment, 22 strongly disagree, and 20 disagree, suggesting a divided perception within the organization about the extent of this influence.

Correlation between Quality of Work Life (QWL) and Work From Home (WFH)



	<i>QWL</i>	<i>WFH</i>
<i>QWL</i>	1	
<i>WFH</i>	0.583734	1

A positive correlation coefficient of 0.584 suggests a moderate positive relationship between Quality of Work Life (QWL) and the effectiveness of Work from Home (WFH). This indicates that as the perception of QWL improves, there tends to be a corresponding improvement in the effectiveness of remote work (WFH) in maintaining work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees who reported higher QWL also tended to report more positively about the effectiveness of remote work in achieving work-life balance.

Discussion

This study delved into the intricate interplay between Quality of Work Life (QWL) and the effectiveness of remote work (Work from Home) in the rural MSME sector of Delhi-NCR during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. The survey highlights a range of opinions regarding the effectiveness of remote work in maintaining work-life balance. While a majority of respondents rated remote work as highly effective in this regard, a notable number gave lower ratings, indicating that remote work's impact on work-life balance is not uniform. This underscores the need for tailored strategies to support employees' well-being, acknowledging that remote work may affect individuals differently.

Conclusion

The study revealed that effective communication of organizational goals and vision by immediate supervisors played a pivotal role. Respondents who felt their supervisors were proficient in conveying organizational objectives demonstrated a more positive outlook towards their work environment. It is evident that the intersection of quality of work life and remote work is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires careful consideration. Organizations should prioritize effective communication of their goals and vision to employees, especially in a remote work context. This can enhance alignment and employee engagement. Recognizing the diverse impact of remote work on work-life balance, organizations should implement tailored support mechanisms to address individual needs and challenges.

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