



Journal of Management and Research (JMR)

Volume 8 Issue 2, December 2021

ISSN(P): 2218-2705 ISSN(E): 2519-7924

Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29145/jmr>

Issue DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29145/jmr/82>

Homepage: <https://ojs.umt.edu.pk/index.php/jmr>

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29145/jmr/82/06>

Article History: Received: July 1, 2021
Revised: December 15, 2021
Accepted: December 16, 2021
Available Online: December 31, 2021

Citation: Hassan, S., Fiaz, M., & Asif, R. (2021). Public service motivation and quality of working life in public institutions: The moderating role of P-O Fit. *Journal of Management and Research*, 8(2), 159–181.

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A publication of the
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University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

Public Service Motivation and Quality of Work Life in Public Institutions: The Moderating role of P-O Fit

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Abstract

Public service motivation (PSM) is an important concept in the field of public management. The current study aimed to examine the relationship between the quality of work-life (QWL) and PSM of public sector employees. It also investigated how the person-organization fit (P-O fit) influences this relationship. To test our conceptual model, data was collected from 253 faculty members of public universities through a self-administered survey questionnaire. The results of structural equation modeling (SEM) indicated a significant positive relationship between QWL and PSM. The findings also demonstrated that P-O fit strengthens the positive association between QWL and PSM.

Keywords: person-organization fit (P-O fit), public service motivation (PSM), quality of work-life (QWL)

Introduction

Public service motivation (PSM) is a dynamic concept in which employees must recognize and pay attention to public concerns for better delivery of quality public services. Employees faces the challenge of developing an organizational culture that motivates its employees to serve the public selflessly and contribute to the efficient functioning of organizations (Hassan et al, 2021). Public service motivation (PSM) has a considerable influence on public management since service in the public sector has been often viewed as a responsibility rather than a job. According to empirical research, PSM prompts employees to serve others for the good and well-being of the society in general, regardless of how they define the concept (Kim & Vandenabeele, 2010; Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). The literature regarding the reforms on public service

management indicates that the improvement in job performance is driven by many factors including the quality of work life (QWL) that affects the motivational level of the employees. Employee well-being in this study has been operationalized as the quality of working life (QWL) because it coexists with similar concepts such as employee well-being at the workplace. Furthermore, a high QWL can increase the well-being and welfare of employees (Al-Qutop & Harrim, 2011). Quality of work life (QWL) is referred to by many researchers as “general state of well-being”, “enhanced sense of employee well-being”, or “overall well-being” of employees in the workspace (Danna & Griffin, 1999; Nordenfelt, 1993).

PSM has been attributed as altruistic work ethic and pro-social behaviour of employees since it encourages them to oblige the public interest. It has been found that individuals intending to serve the public seek out employment in public sector careers and are less inclined towards monetary incentives (Houston, 2000; Perry & Wise, 1990). Perry and Wise (1990) stated that “the greater an individual’s public service motivation, the more likely the individual will seek membership in a public organization”. P-O fit significantly affects a variety of employee behaviours and attitudes as indicated in the extant literature (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Kristof, 1996). This approach comprehends the similarity between the fundamental characteristics of individuals (values, objectives) with the characteristics (values, culture, resources) of the organization (Bright, 2007). According to this concept, employees are attracted to organizations that are well-matched with their characteristics and values. This is why individuals with high PSM are attracted to public sector organizations since their job task and working environment seeks to satisfy and serve the public.

Improving QWL is increasingly becoming necessary since it generates positive feelings of self-worth among employees by meeting their psychological, physical, social, and economic needs (Akar, 2018). It leads to better job participation and satisfaction and promotes loyalty towards the organization’s mission and objectives. According to Lau (2000), QWL is the workplace environment that enhances employee satisfaction by providing rewards, job security, and growth opportunities. For the effective functioning of different sectors and departments, QWL must be

tailored in such a way that it addresses the specific needs of each sector (Camargo et al., 2021). Organizations provide a high QWL to get better organizational results from their employees. Subsequently, QWL improves the work involvement of employees, which directly affects their organizational commitment. Hence, public employees have better work involvement and commitment to their jobs (Permarupan et al., 2013).

The association between the institutional context and PSM can be demonstrated by employing the P-O fit theory. According to this theory, an adjustment between the individual's needs and principles and the opportunities offered by the organization is necessary to obtain positive results (Edwards et al., 2006). When public employees needs and principles are not compatible with organizational practices, it adversely affects their work and organization, which ultimately reduces PSM (Giauque et al., 2015). Public sector employers have to go to great lengths to attract qualified staff, but they end up losing against their private counterparts due to the competitive labour markets (Asseburg & Homberg, 2020). However, P-O fit plays an important role in improving organizational attractiveness. At present, the P-O fit theory is extensively utilized in PSM investigation; in fact, ample investigations have been conducted to study the association between the P-O fit and PSM (Kim et al., 2012). The congruence of values (P-O fit) has been frequently used as a mediating variable between PSM and behavioral outcomes (Christensen & Wright, 2009). Conversely, Paula et al. (2017) suggest that it is important to recognize the setting in which workers perform their jobs so QWL can be improved to enhance the overall well-being of employees in the workplace.

Previous studies have examined how the qualification, family unit, and religious belief of employees affect PSM (Perry, 1997). This research aimed to explicate and depict the influence of QWL on PSM. The results of the study will add to the relevant literature by depicting the association between QWL and PSM. Universities are considered the most influential organizations in any community. Public service motivation is the better interpretation of employees in higher education than private sector (Lewis & Frank, 2002). The profession of teaching is complex, that is why employees working in educational institutions face different levels of

emotional and physical fatigue due to their hectic work routines (De Paula & Boas, 2017). For this reason, there is a need to address the QWL and PSM of public employees working in the education sector.

This study addressed how QWL can be utilized to manage employees within public institutions since it is a prevailing issue in the field of public management. Employee satisfaction depends on the level to which employees and organizations are like-minded in terms of the perceived and desired work quality of employees at the workplace. This study purposes a conceptual framework where P-O fit theory is used to moderate the association between QWL and PSM. Therefore, we propose that:

Research Questions

1. Does personal organization fit (P-O fit) moderate the relationship between quality of work life and public service motivation?

Literature Review

Quality of Work Life (QWL)

QWL are the conditions and environment of a workplace that enhance employee satisfaction. Organizations are responsible for creating better jobs and working conditions for employees. Sirgy et al. (2001) report that research on QWL largely seeks to overview work-related factors affecting employees at employment. The information acquired through overview can assist and direct organizations to implement better working conditions and approach at the workplace (Edwards et al., 2009). QWL has several dimensions such as motivation, job satisfaction, participation, efficiency, health, well-being, security in job, growth and balance between work and life (Living & Conditions, 2002; Rethinam & Ismail, 2008). QWL and well-being are inter-reliant, multi-dimensional, and linked concepts and have many interrelating aspects.

QWL has no single and specific definition, but researchers, commonly describe it as “employee well-being”. QWL includes flexible work practices such as work from home, flexible hours, and time off as needed, these practices affect the well-being of employees (Ray & Pana-Cryan, 2021). Favourable working conditions improve the contentment level of employees by providing them with benefits, job protection, and career

development prospects (Lau et al., 2001). QWL is reliant on the quality of human resource (Reena & Jayan, 2012). QWL aims to promote worker satisfaction and participation, create teamwork, improve communication, enhance employee's morale, develop workplace learning, endorse safe and sound working conditions, improve productivity and accountability, managing organizational change, create a positive relationship between employees, and provide development programs for workers by reducing stress. Mullins (2007) suggests that the negative behaviour of employees can be reduced, and organizational effectiveness can be raised by nurturing QWL in the workplace. High QWL ensures that workers are capable of modifying their employment in accord with their preferences, wellbeing, and wants. More specifically, a worker has the autonomy to structure his job in accordance with his own desires and benefit.

According to (Lee et al., 2007; Sirgy et al., 2008), QWL is related to job characteristics such as compensation, working environment, fair chances of promotion, and personal growth. Sustaining QWL improves the effectiveness of employees, eventually increasing the profitability of organizations and the efficiency of workers. Many researchers found that QWL significantly affects organizational employee behavior such as motivation, organizational performance, organizational loyalty, organizational identity, and job satisfaction (Huang et al., 2007; Sirgy et al., 2001). Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2013) reviewed past literature and identified the important factors of QWL such as working environment, culture/climate of workplace, affiliation and collaboration, training and development, income/benefits, and facilities. QWL is a multi-dimensional concept which covers job security, compensation and rewards, training and development, career prospects, and involvement in decision-making (Saraji & Dargahi, 2006).

Public Service Motivation (PSM)

Perry and Wise (1990) were the earliest to clearly describe and formalize the concept of Public Service Motivation (PSM). PSM is well-defined as “an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations”. Lee (2005) explored the difference between public and private employees' PSM. They found that increased PSM in public employees is due to the vision and

mission of public organizations that are more inclined to support opportunities to work for the community. Therefore, people inclined towards public services are eager to work with public organizations (Perry, 2000). However, Gagné and Deci (2005) reported that PSM and extrinsic motivation are significant components that encourage employment in public sector organizations at the individual level. According to Ki (2021), the practice of monetary rewards remains common and widespread in the public sector. However, monetary rewards and promotional opportunities positively motivate public officials with low PSM. Delfgaauw and Dur (2008) claimed that people are attracted to the public sector for employment due to improved working environment, job security, and less monitoring of performance. QWL in the public sector has long been under study and empirical studies pertaining to it have yielded mixed and contradictory results. The success of any organization depends primarily on effective management and the quality of its workforce. Due to the competitive environment, it is a challenge for public organizations to hire and maintain talented and motivated personnel for public service. Therefore, the current study examined the effect of QWL on PSM of employees. The increasing use of Perry (1996) PSM scale with four dimensions has elevated some concerns about its application in other countries and cultures. To overcome this obstacle, Kim et al. (2012) made an effort to develop a more comprehensive scale of PSM that can be used in countries with diverse cultures and languages. Kim et al. (2012) developed a revised version of the PSM scale to measure the concept internationally. Therefore, the 16-items Public Service Motivation scale by Kim et al. (2012) was used in the current study.

Linking Quality of Work Life and Public Service Motivation

Afşar (2015) suggested that QWL and organizational commitment has positive association. He also found that employees with higher QWL would have an optimistic behaviour toward their organization. Arif and Ilyas (2013) investigated the different dimensions of QWL on teachers' work attitude and established that value of work, climate, work and life balance, and job satisfaction were the strongest aspects affecting the perceived QWL of teachers in private academic institutions. Rethinam and Ismail (2008) examined healthiness, welfare, employment security,

satisfaction in job, capability growth, and the sense of balance between work and life as a valuable constituent of QWL. Quality of work life can also be used to invent a better work environment and to improve the workplace by implementing relaxed working hours and physical working conditions (Duyan et al., 2013). QWL plays a vital role in implementing efficient and effective performance in organizations. QWL is also an important contributor to motivation since they are positively associated (Baleghizadeh & Gordani, 2012).

Abraham Maslow (1943) developed the theory of human needs and established that the “Maslow pyramid” has five levels: physiological, security, social, self-esteem and self-actualization. Within organizations, we can apply Maslow’s pyramid, dividing it into two levels: low-level extrinsic needs (pay, adequate workplace environment, and job security), and high-level intrinsic needs such as self-esteem and self-actualization needs. When people get high QWL, they are more inclined to serve others by promoting PSM. Thus, based on extant literature, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1: Quality of work life (QWL) has a significant effect on public service motivation (PSM).

Person Organization Fit and Public Service Motivation

According to Kristof (1996), P-O fit postulates a link between an individual and an organization based on their compatibility by identifying the congruence between individual preferences or desires with system and structure of organization as well as organizational culture and personality of the individual. The similarity between preferences, desires, and goals of individuals and organizations is the core principle of the P-O fit concept (Kristof Brown et al., 2005). Previous studies have supported the view that employees having a high level of PSM are more inclined to get jobs in the public sector compared to those with low PSM, since “the employment sector can serve as a proxy for organizational values” (Christensen & Wright, 2011). Hence, we hypothesize that P-O fit and PSM have a positive association, since selfless employees are attracted to public sector organizations due to high compatibility between them. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H2: Person Organization (P-O) fit improves Public Service Motivation (PSM).

Moderating Role of Person-Organization Fit (P-O fit)

Person-Organization (P-O) fit is a conceptual approach and is defined as the compatibility between employees and their organizations. Employees having better P-O fit are more content with their jobs and are intrinsically motivated (Silverthorne, 2004).

P-O fit is a dynamic research idea within the context of this study because according to this concept, individuals are keen to feel satisfied, engaged and retained at work if they are compatible with it due to their congruence of preferences, incentives, and environment (KristofBrown et al., 2005). Hence, from the review of previous literature, it has been established that P-O fit has constructive benefits in the attitudes and behaviours of employees. Additionally, it was also noted that compatibility between an individual and an organization is an element of P-O fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Hence, if individuals and organizations are more compatible, the workforce is more happy, dedicated and productive. Public employees who have high PSM are more congruent with their organizations. These employees are more attracted to the public sector employment which relate it to the perspective of P-O fit (Steijn & Giaque, 2021). Therefore, in the light of the literature review, we postulate that:

H3: P-O fit moderates the relationship between Quality of Work Life (QWL) and Public Service Motivation (PSM).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework

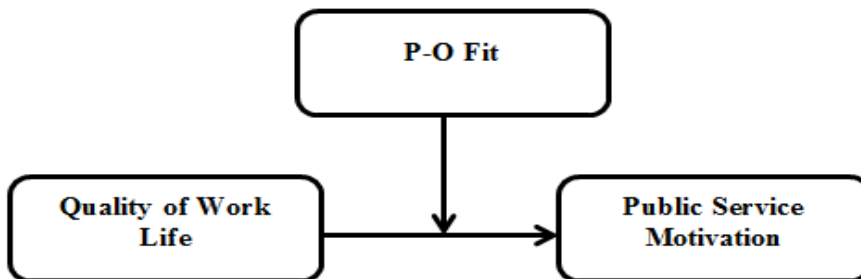


Figure 1 presents the conceptual model for the current study. It describes the relationship between the variables under study. It depicts that QWL affects PSM and the relationship is moderated by the P-O fit.

Methodology

Sample and Procedure

For this study, the data were collected through a structured questionnaire, which was filled out by faculty members from four public universities. After seeking permission from the registrar office of the university, all members of the academic staff was contacted to obtain the maximum response from the sample. Convenience sampling method was used to collect data from participants who were available. The 300 questionnaires were distributed among the faculty members and after several follow-ups, 253 questionnaires were received from the academic staff of public sector universities. Quantitative research method was employed to investigate how QWL affects PSM when moderated via P-O fit. For data analysis, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and AMOS -22 were used. The current study utilized the structural equation model (SEM) to test the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to study the association between the variables of interest.

Measures

Public Service Motivation (PSM)

Public Service Motivation (PSM) was measured using a scale developed by Kim et al. (2012). The scale has 16-items.

Quality of Work Life (QWL)

Quality of work life (QWL) was measured using scale WRQoL developed by Van Laar et al. (2007). The scale has 23 items to study the perceived quality of life of employees.

Person Organization (P-O) fit

Person organization (P-O) fit was measured using a scale developed by (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). The scale has 4 items.

All the three scales were scored on a 5-point likert scale that ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results

Demographic Analysis

This section elaborates demographic information in terms of age, gender, qualification, and working experience of the respondents. Of the 253 respondents, 43% were men and 57% were females since out of the four universities, two are women universities. In terms of age, 45% of the respondents fall in the age category of 36-45 years and the second highest category is 35% and falls in the range of 26-35 years, 15% of respondents were in the age range of less than 25 years of age, and 5% were above the age range of 55. The rating of the respondents showed that 40% of employees have an M.Phil. degree, 22% had a master's degree, 21% have a PhD, and 17% had other certifications or professional diplomas. Regarding the experience of the respondents, 38% have work experience of 10 to 15 years, 26% of the employees have 16 to 20 years of experience, 28% have less than 10 years of experience, and 8% have more than 20 years of experience.

Table 1

Pearson Correlation Analysis

		Correlations		
		QWL	P-O Fit	PSM
QWL	PR	1	.470**	.578**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	253	253	253
PO-Fit	PR	.470**	1	.575**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	253	253	253
PSM	PR	.578**	.575**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	253	253	253

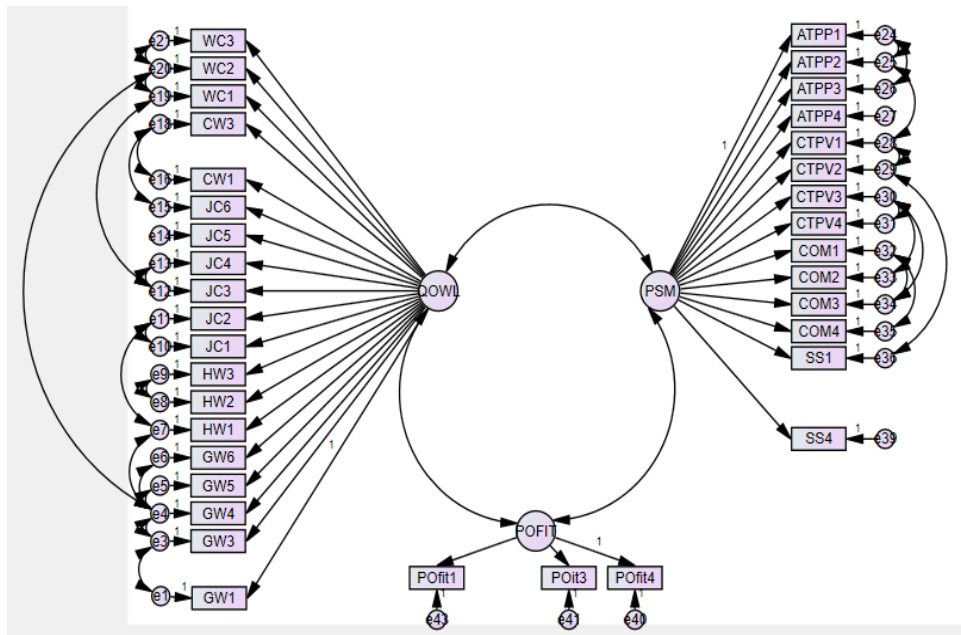
*PR: Pearson correlation

Results revealed that a significant relationship exists between QWL, PSM, and P-O fit. The coefficient value depicts that there is a moderate correlation among the variables.

The above given table depicts a significant positive correlation between the variables at 0.01 level (2-tailed) of significance.

Figure 2

Confirmatory Factor Analysis



At first, the items used in this study are examined by applying a confirmatory factor analysis. The confirmatory factor analysis tests the reliability and overall validity of the variables (Farrell & Rudd, 2009). The items that have a factor loading less than 0.5 are removed (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The composite reliability (CR) represents the overall reliability and internal consistency of the items (Farrell & Rudd, 2009). Thus, to verify the reliability and internal consistency of the variables, CF measure was used. The values of CR for PSM=0.951, QWL=0.950, and PO-Fit=0.764.

Table 2*Reliability and Validity (Convergent and Discriminant)*

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	PSM	QWL	POFIT
PSM	0.951	0.581	0.398	0.958	0.762		
QWL	0.950	0.502	0.331	0.952	0.564	0.709	
POFIT	0.764	0.519	0.398	0.765	0.631	0.575	0.721

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values range between 0.502 and 0.581. They meet the criteria of an acceptable range and are greater than the minimum acceptable value of > 0.5 . CR (composite reliability) ranges from 0.764 to 0.951 and its internal consistency was found to be the acceptable threshold value of > 0.7 . The Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) values are expected to be less than the AVE values that remain correct in this case, that is, $AVE > MSV$. Hence, the values support the discriminant and convergent validity.

Table 3*Structural Model Results (Goodness of Fit)*

Measure	CMIN/DF	GFI	AGFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Model Fit	2.598	0.943	0.997	0.923	0.941	0.064

All the values were in an acceptable range, indicating the model to be fit. The Chi-square value (2.598) was less than 3, indicating the acceptable threshold value. According to Byrne (2016), this value helps in evaluating the model by reducing the effect of sample size on model fit. The GFI value (0.942) represents the 'goodness of fit' and states the variance, created by the population co-variance (Tabachnick et al., 2007). The value of GFI is greater than (0.8). AGFI (0.997) indicates the adjustment of GFI based on the degree of freedom. The value of TLI was (0.923) which must be above 0.9. The value of CFI was (0.941), meeting the acceptable value of 0.9. RMSEA value (0.064) specifies the fitness of the model. This value

must be close to 0.06 as it represents the appropriateness of the model (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Figure 3

Analysis of Moderation Effect

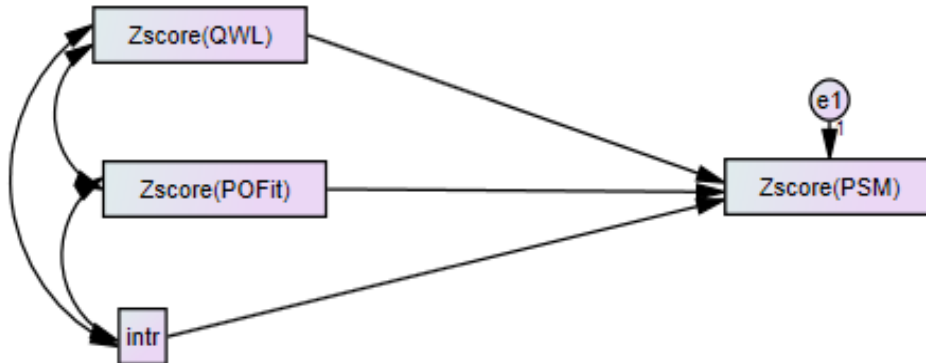


Table 4

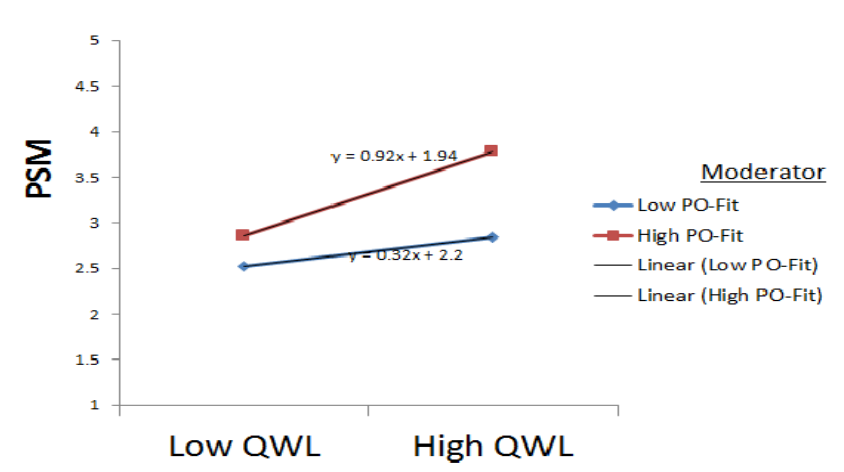
The Casual Effect of Quality of Working Life on PSM

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
PSM	<-----	QWL	.312	.053	5.840	***
PSM	<-----	P-O fit	.315	.053	5.953	***
PSM	<-----	QWL*P-O fit	.155	.032	4.782	***

The above table shows that the independent variable (QWL) has a significant effect ($\beta = 0.312$, $SE = 0.053$, $p < .001$) on dependent variable (PSM) which supports the hypothesis (H1). The moderating variable (P-O fit) has a significant effect ($\beta = 0.315$, $SE = 0.053$, $p < .001$) on the dependent variable (PSM) which supports hypothesis (H2). The interaction variable (QWL*P-O Fit) has a significant effect ($\beta = 0.155$, $SE = 0.032$, $p < .001$) on dependent variable (PSM) which supports hypothesis (H3). As all the variables are significant, it is proven that the moderation effect of P-O fit is there.

Figure 4

Slope of Moderation of P-O fit for the Quality of Work Life and Public Service Motivation Relationship.



This investigation analyzed the moderating effect of the P-O fit, which affects the strength of QWL on PSM. It has been shown that P-O Fit strengthens the association between QWL and PSM.

Discussion and Conclusion

The research objective of the current study is to examine the association between QWL and PSM of the selected public universities' faculty. It also investigated the moderating role of PO-fit between the above-mentioned two variables. The association between QWL, P-O fit, and PSM was examined using quantitative statistical techniques. The hypotheses tested through the structural equation model (SEM) proved a significant positive relationship between QWL and PSM. The results also depicted that P-O fit moderates the relationship between QWL and PSM. The findings of this study established that QWL positively affects PSM of faculty members in the workplace and their relationship is moderated by the P-O fit framework.

Additionally, it was also identified that high QWL enhances the affective commitment of the employees since organizations that provide

high QWL to their employees attain better results in terms of job involvement (Permarupan et al., 2013) and job motivation. The outcomes of this research will assist policymakers and administrators in implementing policies that promote high QWL in the workplace to promote PSM among academics. Nowadays, the success of organizations depends to a large extent on how they attract, select, motivate, and retain their employees. Higher education institutions are not exempt from this notion. Therefore, the administration of universities must create a workplace that assures the mental and physical well-being of the employees, so they are driven to accomplish their tasks (Hassan et al., 2021).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The empirical findings of the study established that QWL positively affects PSM when moderated via PO-fit, which improves and strengthens the relationship between the selected variables. Therefore, our study suggests that public organizations can motivate their employees by improving their PSM via providing high QWL. However, since public employees seek employment in the public sector to fulfill their desire to serve the public (Vandenabeele, 2008), the P-O fit approach must be utilized to ensure the congruence between the individual and the organization.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study is cross-sectional in nature, so it cannot establish a cause and effect relationship. Furthermore, data was collected from only 253 employees, which also limits its generalizability.

Common method bias is also a limitation of this research due to the self-information measurement of variables by the respondents. Future researchers may use other designs, such as the time series design, and a larger sample size to gain better insight into the relationship between QWL, P-O fit, and PSM. The current study includes data collected from faculty of public sector universities having different motivations and expectations; however, a contrast and assessment of the results comparing the faculty of public and private universities could produce interesting results with respect to their PSM.

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