



A Study on Perceived Appreciation, Psychological Capital and Work Life Balance Among Work From Home Employees

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Abstract

Senior executives have grown increasingly open to the concept of introducing Work from Home for all or a portion of their workforces since the Covid-19 issue. Work from Home offers benefits such as enhanced work-life balance, decreased travel time, increased flexibility, increased perceived autonomy, reduced occupational stress, improved productivity, lower turnover rate, and increased job satisfaction. On the contrary, it faces difficulties such as multitasking, social isolation, diminished job motivation, extra costs, distraction, and restricted communication. The study's goal was to investigate Work from Home Employees' Perceived Appreciation, Psychological Capital, and Work Life Balance. A sample of 31 Work from Home employees aged 25 to 40 years old was gathered. Standardised scales were used to measure Perceived Appreciation, Psychological Capital & Work Life Balance. The results found out that Work Life Balance is significantly positively correlated with Perceived Appreciation & further, dimensions of Psychological Capital Hope & Optimism are significantly positively correlated with Perceived Appreciation. It is suggested that companies should introduce programs for employees to help them balance work and family responsibilities and build on employees' psychological capital. Furthermore, creating an appreciation plan that fits the company's values & mission is beneficial for employee's engagement, motivation & retention.

Keyword: Perceived Appreciation, Psychological Capital, Work Life Balance, Work from Home, Employees

Introduction

The sudden outbreak and restrictions due to Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 shifted the individuals to use remote working (Ozimek, 2020). The adoption of the Work from Home increased in the 2000s as a result of the development of personal computers, the internet, email, laptops, cloud computing and so on.

Compared to Work From Office (WFO), Work From Home (WFH) has the potential to reduce commute time, provide more flexible working hours, increase job satisfaction and improve work life balance. In response to Covid-19 pandemic, businesses implemented telecommuting policies in the hopes that employees can better manage their work-home balance & protect their well-being (Kelliher & de Menezes, 2019; Matos et al., 2016). Telecommuting, also referred to as telework of working from home is a policy that allows employees to perform their job at home, during some part of the week and stay connected to the office by means of communication technologies (Allen et al., 2015).

In a survey by John Hopkins (April, 2022) done on remote Australian workers it was found that one third (30.2%) of workers have a better work life balance than they did before the pandemic, while less than one in ten (8.7%) said it worsened. Over a quarter (27.4%) asserted that due to better work life balance they had more time to invest in their health & wellness. Striking a balance between work and family is important as it has a significant impact on employees' well-being (OECD, 2017).

Highly demanding job settings that have poor control over work scheduling have adverse consequences for both the health & well-being of employees as well as their families (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999). While some researchers suggest work from home helps employees balance career development and work, few researchers believe it impacts the work home balance as Work from Home blurs out the boundaries between work and home roles (Schieman & Young, 2010). Solis (2016) asserts that long working hours & occupying home space can increase the likelihood of work family conflict. Authentic appreciation has a powerful & positive impact on employees' morale & job satisfaction (White, 2015). It is worth building an organisational culture based on appreciation since it is an effective as well as an economical way to increase well-being (Stocker et al., 2010).

The Covid-19 pandemic forced us to adapt to our changing environment. Research has shown that individuals who have high psychological capital increased the individual willingness to change (Sasmita, 2019). Therefore, employees with good psychological capital have readiness for changes (Lizar, Mangundjaya & Rachman, 2015).

Perceived Appreciation at Work

Appreciation in the workplace is without a doubt one of the most potent strategies to enhance employee retention, and develop relationships inside the firm, and abroad. Every employee wants to be appreciated since it is a natural need as well as a need to experience a sense of accomplishment. Adler & Fagley (2005) defined appreciation as "acknowledging the value and meaning of something, an event, a person, a behaviour, an object, and feeling a positive emotional connection to it". Employees who feel their work is valued and recognised at work, or more generally, who feel they are respected and recognised as individuals, may feel appreciated in the workplace. According to Grover (2014), appreciation at work refers to "unconditionally acknowledging the person as an individual or acknowledging his or her performance, behaviour or qualities." Employees may experience a sense of appreciation, for instance, when they are commended for their efforts or when an organisation takes into account their ideas and opinions about matters pertaining to their employment.

A study by Stocker et al., (2010) explored how Swiss military professionals were impacted by appreciation at work. Significant correlations were found between appreciation at work and the outcome variables feelings of resentment and job satisfaction. Appreciation at work was negatively related to feelings of resentment and positively related to job satisfaction. A study by Anita et al., (2022) sought to understand how two types of appreciation, supervisor appreciation and general workplace appreciation, affect presenteeism (attending work while feeling unhealthy or being ill). According to the findings, both types of appreciation boost an employee's resources. Employee stress is reduced because of the increased resources, which reduces presenteeism. General appreciation is also more advantageous than supervisor appreciation. Gauglitz (2019) conducted research on 183 German employees of various organisations and found that perceived appreciation had a positive effect on both work engagement and organisational citizenship behaviour. Through their research, they concluded that employee motivation and performance may very well be improved via appreciation and feedback.

Psychological Capital

Psychological Capital can be defined as "an individual's positive psychological state of development that is characterised by a) having confidence (Self efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks, b) making positive attribution (Optimism) about succeeding now and in future, c) preserving toward goals and when necessary, redirecting paths to goal (Hope) in order to succeed, d) when beset by problem and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (Resilience) to attain success (Luthans, Youssef, Avolio, 2007)

Self-Efficacy: According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviours necessary to produce specific performance attainments. Self-efficacy reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation, behaviour, and social environment (Carey & Forsyth, 2009). Research suggests that self-efficacy is not related to the competences of an individual's capabilities, on the contrary, it is related to the belief in personal abilities. Self-efficacious individuals are likely to manage their work and problems as they set new challenges which in turn expand their experience base (Lewis, 2011). Individuals high in self efficacy can successfully perform tasks & set challenging goals for themselves, invest more resources, and more importantly can handle failure better than individuals who are low on self-efficacy (Heaven, 2006)

Hope: It is a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful a) agency i.e goal directed energy and b) pathways, i.e planning to meet goals.

Clear goal setting, active participation, advanced preparation, practising flexibility, cognitive exercises and re-alignment of goals can increase individual hope (He et al., 2019).

Resilience: is defined as, "the developable capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, failure or even positive events, progress and increased responsibility" (Luthans, 2002).

According to Stewart, Reid & Mangham (1997), resilience is the capability of individuals to cope successfully in the face of significant change, adversity, or risk; this capability changes over time and is enhanced by protective factors of the environment. Further, psychological resilience is the coping skills of people in case of uncertainty, negative situations, and obstacles (Cetin et al. 2011). According to Tugade & Fredrickson (2004) resilient individuals are better in terms of dealing with stress- triggered from the constantly changing working environment, are more open to new experiences and maintain emotional stability when faced with adversity.

Optimism: Tiger (1971) defines optimism as "a mood or attitude associated with an interpretation about the social or material one which the elevator regards as socially desirable to his or her advantage, or for his or her pleasure". Keles (2011) states that optimism can be defined as a generalised expectation to have a better future. Research suggests that individuals high on optimism rarely lose hope when they follow their own innovative ideas & find a better alternative to make their ideas successful even when they come across stressful circumstances (Ziyae et al., 2015)

Research suggests that PsyCap is positively associated with work engagement (Thompson et al., 2015); job satisfaction (Hyo & Hye, 2015) and performance (Sun et al., 2011) whereas a negative association of PsyCap is found with undesired employees' outcome (Bitmis & Ergeneli, 2015) and stress (Avey et al., 2009).

Research asserts that Self Efficacy make employees more confident to do challenging work, Hope; makes employees more brave facing obstacles capable of achieving goals; Optimism ensures employees succeed with changes and Resilience can help employees bring around from slumps and adapt to changes (Munawaroh & Meiyanto, 2017).

Work Life Balance

According to Marcks&MacDermid (1996), work life balance is defined as “role balance is the tendency to become fully engaged in the performance of every role in one’s total role system, to approach every typical role and role partner with an attitude to attentiveness and care. Put differently it is the practice of that even handed alertness known sometimes as mindfulness.

Clark (2000) defined work life balance as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict.” In the same year, Kirschmeyer (2002) defined it as, “living balanced life is achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains and so requires personal resources such as energy, time & commitment to be well distributed across domains.”

A proper Work-Life Balance is important for both employers and employees in terms of increased productivity. According to Poulouse (2014), work related outcomes includes job/ work satisfaction, career satisfaction, organisational commitment, employee turnover, retention of employees etc whereas, non-work-related outcomes includes marital satisfaction, family satisfaction, health outcomes and so on. Further, outcomes of the work life balance outcomes for employees as suggested by Vlems (2005) includes, increased employees well-being and happiness, improved relations with management & improved employees’ self-esteem, health, concentration and confidence.

Zedek& Mosier (1990) and O’Driscoll (1970) suggested five Work-Life Balance models, which included a) Segmentation Model (work & non work are two distinct domains and have no influence on one another), b) Spill over Model (work & non work can influence one another either in positive or negative way), c) Compensation Model (demands & satisfaction lacking in one domain can be compensated in other domain), d) Instrumental Model (one segment facilitates success in other segment), e) Conflict Model (excessive duties of a sphere force individuals to make choices which arises conflicts). Morris & Madsen (2007) proposed two theories of Work Life Balance in contrast which is, Resource Drain Theory of Work-Life Balance suggests that time, energy & money are limited resources and therefore when an individual invests excessive time at work, the amount left for personal life is reduced, whereas, Enrichment Theory of Work- Life Balance suggests that experiences gained from one domain (Work or personal life) enrich the quality of life in another domain

Work Life Balance has a positive impact on employees’ well-being & positive energy at work (Russo, Shteigman&Carmeli, 2016) and linked to job engagement & turnover intention (Jaharuddin, Zainol, 2019).

Remote working and various forms of flexible employment allows Work Life Balance to be maintained and facilitates the development of a balance between private & professional life (Chung, Lippe, 2020)

According to Beauregard & Henry (2009) the merits of remote work on work life balance suggests better management of responsibilities and easier avoidance of role conflict through increased plasticity of the home environment whereas Felstead & Henseke (2017) suggests the negative consequence is reduced satisfaction with Work Life Balance. Prolonged working hours (Tipping et al., 2012); overlapping domestic & professional duties (Hyman & Balrly, 2011), increased conflict between work & non-work roles (Fonner & Stache, 2012) can contribute to disturbed Work-Life Balance in remote working.

Purpose

The purpose is to study Perceived Appreciation, Psychological Capital & Work Life Balance among Work From Home Employees.

Hypothesis

There will be a significant positive relation of Perceived Appreciation with Psychological Capital and its four dimensions, Hope, Self-Efficacy, Optimism & Resilience.

There will be a significant positive relation of Perceived Appreciation with Work Life Balance.

Method

Sample

A total sample of 31 Work from Home Employees, in the age 25 to 40 years was collected from Chandigarh, India.

Measures

Perceived Appreciation at Work: Perceived Appreciation scale as developed by Gauglitz (2019), consists of 12 items & rating ranges from 1 (doesn’t apply at all) to 5 (entirely applies)

Work Life Balance: As developed by Hayman (2005), consists of 15 statements about work-life balance, on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

Psychological Capital: as developed by Luthans, Youssef et al. (2007), consists of 12 items measuring Self Efficacy, Hope, Resilience & Optimism. The scale is on a 6 point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree)

Procedures

The participants were informed about the purpose of research & the questionnaires were filled through Google forms. Each participant was thanked for cooperation & their kind help. Standardised psychological tests were administered to the participants.

Analysis of Data**Results****Table 1: N, Mean and Standard Deviation**

	Perceived Appreciation	Self-efficacy	Hope	Resilience	Optimism	Work Life Balance
N	31	31	31	31	31	31
Mean	48.0	14.4	18.2	12.9	9.90	45.2
Standard deviation	9.02	2.99	3.76	2.87	1.83	11.5

Table 2: Correlation

	Perceived Appreciation	Self-efficacy	Hope	Resilience	Optimism	Work Life Balance
Perceived Appreciation	—					
Self-efficacy	0.310	—				
Hope	0.380 *	0.673 ***	—			
Resilience	0.178	0.684 ***	0.629 **	—		
Optimism	0.426 *	0.638 ***	0.593 **	0.422 *	—	
Work Life Balance	0.388 *	-0.106	-0.110	-0.054	0.012	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion of Results

The results found out that the dimension of Psychological Capital i.e, Hope is significantly positively correlated with Perceived Appreciation ($r=0.380$, $p < .05$). Further, another dimension of psychological capital i.e, Optimism is significantly positively correlated with Perceived Appreciation ($r=0.426$, $p < .05$). The results also found out Work Life Balance is significantly positively correlated to Perceived Appreciation ($r=0.338$, $p < .05$)

Research done by Sastaviana (2021) on 132 employees in Indonesia found that 47.3% of the psychological capital contributed to the readiness for changes in the workforce during Covid-19 pandemic. The results also showed the two dimensions of Psychological Capital, i.e. Hope & Optimism are both linked positively to readiness for change.

In a recent study by Gupta (2022) done on 35 Work from Home employees & 35 Work from Workplace employees, found out that employees engaged in online work setting tend to receive & perceive more appreciation at work as compared to employees engaged in the offline work setting. Further, the research suggests that work from home employees have better work life balance than work from workplace employees.

Further, appreciation at work increases job satisfaction and helps employees to validate their judgements about their own performance (Pfister et al., 2020).

Conclusion

The aim of the current research was to study Perceived Appreciation, Psychological Capital & Work Life Balance. A sample of 31 Work From Home employees in the age 25 to 40 years was collected. Standardised scales were used to measure Perceived Appreciation, Psychological Capital & Work Life Balance. The results found out that Work Life Balance is significantly positively correlated with Perceived Appreciation & further, dimensions of Psychological Capital Hope & Optimism are significantly positively correlated with Perceived Appreciation.

As today's workplaces are getting busier and faster, with more demands coming from more sources than ever. This poses the significant challenge of assisting staff in achieving consistent business results while preserving high levels of mental well-being. Employees can take on challenges without worrying about failing if they have the right combination of intellectual and emotional tools. The best managers are those who proactively seek to incorporate HERO framework (Hope, Self-Efficacy, Resilience & Optimism) to motivate their teams to make significant contributions.

Employers can help employees have a better work-life balance by providing them with attention management training, encouraging a vacation friendly culture, enforcing strict rules regarding after work hours emails & switching to asynchronous communication. Finally, building an appreciation culture for recognizing employees' significant contributions is important to help build trust, boost productivity & improve brand reputation.

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