

Quality of Work Life as a Predictor of Work Engagement among the Teaching Faculty at King Abdulaziz University

Dr. Saleh Ali Y. Alqarni

Assistant Professor of Educational Administration
Institute of Graduate Educational Studies
King Abdulaziz University (KAU), KSA

Abstract

This study aimed to explore the relationship between quality of work life (QWL) as perceived by teaching faculty at King Abdulaziz University (KAU) and their work engagement (WE). Moreover, the study aimed to analyze how QWL dimensions might predict the faculty's WE. Walton's (1975) Criteria for QWL and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), were used to achieve the study's objectives. The study's participants comprised 299 teaching faculty members working in the different colleges at KAU. The findings indicated that the faculty was moderately satisfied with QWL at KAU but they reported relatively high levels of WE. The findings showed that QWL and its dimensions are all positively correlated with the WE of the faculty at KAU. Findings also provided evidence that two factors of QWL (development of human capabilities and social relevance) were the only significant predictors of the faculty's WE.

Key Words: Quality of work life, work engagement, job engagement, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)

1. Introduction

Since the turn of the new millennium, it has been widely researched that human negative psychological states represent only one half of the already identified psychological aspects in the work environment, and that positive cognitions, emotions, and behaviors are also dominant and require study. This recent shift has triggered increasing focus and research on what has recently been termed "positive psychology" (Luthans, 2002; Nelson and Cooper, 2007; Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008). Positive psychology, according to Luthans (2002, p. 698), is "the study of positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today's workplace". This new trend of addressing human behaviors represents a parallel approach to support the classical psychology that focuses on human failure, disease, weakness, disorder, trouble, inability, and other human negative states. By the beginning of the last decade, researchers and practitioners of organizational psychology had also focused their attention in studying various human positive states; however, one of these aspects has gained increased attention and unprecedented popularity: work engagement (WE). It is the influence of positive psychology that causes the current shift to the study of WE. This can be observed in the literature of organizational psychology, particularly the engagement literature (Luthans, 2002; Gavin and Mason, 2004; Martin, 2004). According to Schaufeli and Salanova (2007), WE is the antipode, or the polar opposite, of burnout. For some researchers, WE was defined as a "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002, p. 74). For Lopez, Snyder and Rasmussen (2006), a positive approach emphasizes the facilitation of employee health and well-being.

Both academic and empirical research on WE has revealed that it is highly associated with a wide range of positive organizational outcomes: high profits, gross revenue generation, professional growth (Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2009), reduction of turnover intentions (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2006; Shuck, Reio and Rocco, 2011), job satisfaction (Alarcon and Edwards, 2008), organizational commitment (Hakanen, Bakker, and Schaufeli, 2006; Saks, 2006), task performance (Salanova *et al.*, 2003), high safety ratings (May, Gilson and Harter, 2004), job control (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2006) and high-quality relationships with employers (Saks, 2006).

In addition, other studies conducted in the field conclude that productivity, job performance, discretionary effort, organizational citizenship, and customer service could be positively enhanced with the presence of high levels of WE (Richman, 2006; Rich, LePine, and Crawford, 2010; Fleming and Asplund, 2007; Christian, Garza, and Slaughter, 2011). Furthermore, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) revealed that WE is negatively associated with burnout. Moreover, researchers including Shuck *et al.* (2011) have suggested that enhancing WE could build a strong competitive advantage for organizations worldwide. On a related level, Schwartz (2011) considered employee engagement as an indisputable source of competitive advantage at all organizational levels. These outcomes explain why interest in studying employee engagement is gaining unprecedented attention in organizational psychology, business, management, and in the field of human resource development (Czarnowsky, 2008; Ketter, 2008; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Chalofsky, 2010; Shuck and Wollard, 2010). Consequently, organizations are today implementing unremitting interventions to enhance WE levels among their workforce. Ketter (2008) indicated that organizations are seeking ways to adopt this new trend; they develop plans and execute exploratory surveys on their workers to decide what procedures to deploy in this regard.

Fortunately, in conjunction with the great efforts made nowadays by organizations to attain the state of work engagement, Saks (2006) has confirmed there are antecedents that might be important for WE and that focusing extensively on these antecedents could increase and, perhaps, aid the development of such positive behavior among workers. He also indicated (2006, p. 613) that “human resource practices such as flexible work arrangements, training programs, and incentive compensation might also be important for engagement”. In a related context, Wollard and Shuck (2011) indicated that, date, we know very little about the antecedents of employee engagement and other factors influencing the development of WE. This present research assumes that there may be enhancing administrative techniques or other ways through which organizations could have well engaged workforce. Such enhancing methods should be comprehensive, planned, and covering a wide range of aspects in the workplace. For this purpose, we consider that improving QWL could be an efficient solution in this regard, because it comprises many crucial variables that could help, if improved, to foster work engagement among employees. In support of this proposition, QWL is considered as workplace strategic arrangements that enhance job satisfaction and improve working conditions for employees. Simultaneously, it assists employers in their quest to reach high levels of organizational effectiveness (Lau and Bruce, 1998).

Moreover, it is obvious from past research that QWL initiatives can greatly help to improve employees’ self-esteem and job satisfaction (Suttle, 1977), lead workers to provide better services, and increase customer satisfaction (Johnson, 1996; Griffith, 2001). Moreover, QWL programs can improve work performance and the quality of life among employees (Sadique, 2003; Rose *et al.*, 2006; Islam and Siengthai, 2009). In a related context, Singh and Srivastav (2012) found that QWL was associated with both organizational and individual efficiency. Conversely, a weak level of QWL causes job dissatisfaction, increased absenteeism, demotivation, low morale, rising accident rates, and poor productivity, which therefore cause poor organizational performance (Stephen and Dhanapal, 2012). Fajemisin (2002) found that QWL is crucial for organizational success and competitive advantage. Subsequently, Dada (2006) confirmed that QWL influences employees “in terms of organizational identification, job satisfaction, job involvement, job effort, job performance, intention to leave, turnover and organizational alienation”. It is, therefore, acknowledged nowadays that embracing the concept of work engagement is crucial to the success of organizations, and it becomes imperative for today organizations to develop enhancing strategies to nurture well-engaged employees. In this study, QWL is considered to be efficient in this regard. By way of illustration, we consider that organizations could retain well-engaged employees who fully dedicate their efforts to achieving their organization’s goals as far as appropriate attention is given to such issues as salaries and compensation, working conditions, development of employee capabilities, growth and security, socialization techniques, constitutionalism, work and personal life balance, and the social relevance of work life. In support of this idea, Maslach *et al.* (2001) identified six elements of working life that lead either to burnout or engagement: “workload”, “rewards and recognition”, “community and social support”, “perceived justice”, “choice and control”, and “meaningfulness and value of work”. These issues are the core constituent variables of QWL; hence, the present study assumes that the improvement of employees’ QWL could significantly predict employee WE.

1.1. Statement of the problem

In this changed era, higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia, like those of many other countries globally, encounter many challenges at present: the increased demand for higher education; the need to keep pace with rapid technological developments; the need for non-traditional sources of financing, building and sustaining a competitive advantage; and maintaining a rank and status among excellent universities.

Faced with these challenges, universities need to have a workforce characterized by high performance, critical skills, proficiency, high commitment, and sincerity, to enable them to achieve the university's goals, in addition to responding effectively to such unprecedented challenges. King Abdulaziz University, one of the oldest universities in Saudi Arabia, confronts the same challenges. It employs 4,561 faculty members, on whom it relies to bear responsibility for creating change in the university, enhancing its role in contributing to the country's development process, leading the university to conduct its responsibilities to the community, and improving its competitive positioning among the world's universities. To meet these challenges, WE might be significant as a way to manage teaching faculty at universities, as there is evidence that engaged employees are, as stated earlier, believed to work hard, deliver good customer service, generate high profits, and demonstrate high performance.

Thus, for higher education institutions, and KAU in particular, we consider the embracing of certain strategies or approaches leading to the development of faculty WE. We then consider QWL, that has been recognized by prior research as leading to employees providing better services, increased customer satisfaction (Johnson, 1996; Griffith, 2001), improved work performance (Wyatt and Wah, 2001; Rose *et al.*, 2006; Islam and Siengthai, 2009), and uplifting both organizational and individual effectiveness (Singh and Srivastav, 2012).

Therefore, the following questions arise:

- Might QWL be a significant predictor of faculty WE? or
- Might QWL be a potential strategy for improving or developing faculty WE?

To address these issues, the present study aims to assess WE levels among the faculty members and how they perceive (QWL) at KAU. Based on the findings, the relationship and interrelations will be explored between the two concepts and their dimensions for the purpose of addressing the above questions. Additionally, QWL in Saudi Arabia remains a newly incepted term despite the elapse of over forty years since its emergence. Very little research has been conducted to assess the QWL in the public and private sectors in Saudi Arabia; moreover, the nation's higher education sector remains, to date, unexplored in this regard. Moreover, although WE is a novel concept that has only recently arisen in the literature of organizational psychology, human resource development, and business management, and is associated with already-proven organizational outcomes, little is presently known about its status and antecedent variables in the Saudi context. In academia, furthermore, most research on the WE phenomenon has addressed the nature, definition, and validation of the psychological concept itself (Wefald and Downey, 2009), rather than understanding its antecedents and predictors. Since there is a scarcity of studies addressing the concepts of QWL and WE in the Saudi context, and considering that they are essential for organizational effectiveness and productivity in all organizations, and in higher education institutions in particular, the need emerges to conduct a study to explore the current status of these two concepts and how they are related.

1.2. Statement of purpose

The study aimed to examine the level of QWL as experienced by the faculty at KAU and to measure how the faculty perceives the level of their WE. It also aimed to uncover the relationship, if any, between QWL, as perceived by the faculty at KAU, and their WE. Moreover, the study aimed to analyze how QWL dimensions might predict faculty WE.

1.3. Significance of the study

The study is significant for a number of reasons. First, it addresses the concept of WE that has gained increased focus from researchers since 2000. As discussed earlier, WE have long been proved an essential factor in improving job performance, task performance, and productivity. Thus, its study in the Saudi context is justified as there are no prior WE studies in this region. This will be the first such study and will offer guidance for further studies in the higher education sector and other sectors in Saudi Arabia.

Second, the outcomes of this research could provide valuable information about the status of QWL at KAU. Therefore, university leaders, deans, administrators, and policy-makers in the higher education sector could use this information in determining problem areas that may negatively affect the faculty's performance, commitment, and productivity in the university work environment at KAU and in Saudi universities in general. Hence, necessary decisions and actions may be taken to rectify sources of imbalance.

Third, once faculty work engagement has been evaluated, the findings will provide valuable insight and information for university top management and deanships of different colleges about faculty work engagement. They could benefit from the survey feedback and could implement programs that may actually develop faculty engagement in the university, thereby potentially increasing the overall effectiveness of the faculty that could be achieved.

Fourth, while UWES (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003) and Walton's criteria (1975) of QWL have been validated in different countries, there has been no exploration to date of their validity and reliability in the Saudi context. Thus, it appears very important to examine both scales in terms of the dimensionality and reliability for a Saudi sample. Therefore, the study will provide future researchers with two reliable measures (the Arabic versions of UWES and Walton's criteria of QWL) that could facilitate conducting further studies in different sectors.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Work engagement

The term "engagement" was first coined by Kahn (1990) in his paper: "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work". In that article, Kahn (1990, p. 700) articulated that "work engagement referred to the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's preferred self in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence, and active full role performances".

Despite the many studies conducted on WE or on its equivalent concept (employee engagement) since the inception of the term in the early 1990s, it seems that there has been no clear agreement regarding the meaning of this term. Schaufeli *et al.* (2002, p. 74) defined work engagement as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption". According to Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002, p. 417), "employee engagement is an individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work". According to Saks (2006, p. 602), "work engagement is the degree to which an individual is attentive and absorbed in the performance of his roles". Moreover, Saks (2006, p. 602) elaborated that employee engagement is a "distinct and unique construct consisting of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components associated with individual role performance". Shuck and Wollard (2010, p. 103) defined employee engagement as "an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes".

As the above review demonstrates, these definitions provide slightly similar perspectives: they all articulate that WE is a positive state, attitude, or behavior that describes a unique attachment of the employees towards their work. These studies addressing the term have generated another equivalent concept: "employee engagement" which is used alternately with WE. Some other definitions concentrate on the element components of the construct. Kahn (1990) posited three subsets: "psychological meaningfulness", "psychological availability", and "psychological safety". Schaufeli *et al.* (2001) consider it to comprise three dimensions: "vigor", "dedication", and "absorption". Alternatively, Saks (2006) and Shuck and Wollard (2010) identified the following three components: "cognitive", "emotional", and "behavioral". Consequently, WE is better viewed as multi-dimensional construct that describes various aspects of employee attitudinal and behavioral actions. Addressing the concept, different models of WE have been developed since its emergence in 1990. In his integrated conceptual review of work engagement, Shuck (2011, p. 307) indicated four main approaches or models in this respect: "Kahn's (1990) need-satisfying approach, Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter's (2001) burnout-antithesis approach, Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes's (2002) satisfaction-engagement approach, and Saks's (2006) multidimensional approach".

Kahn (1990) developed a model of three psychological conditions related with engagement or disengagement at work: psychological meaningfulness, "psychological availability and "psychological safety". His model confirmed that employees were more engaged in workplace settings that offered them more psychological meaningfulness, availability, and safety. According to Khan (1990, p. 705): psychological meaningfulness refers to "sense of return on investments of self in role performances." Psychological availability refers to "sense of being able to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career." Psychological availability refers to "sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary for investing self in role performances."

One of the most significant shifts in addressing the concept was based on the burnout literature. According to Maslach and Leiter (1997), engagement can be examined through the opposite pattern of scores on the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS). Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) later confirmed that employee engagement was the positive antipode of burnout. They noted that engagement is characterized by "energy", "involvement", and "efficacy", the direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions: "exhaustion", "cynicism", and "ineffectiveness". Maslach *et al.* (2001, p. 417) asserted that "employee engagement was the positive antithesis to burnout and can be defined as a persistent positive affective state characterized by high levels of activation and pleasure."

Based on the MBI-GS scale, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was developed by Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova (2003). The UWES features 17 items that measure "vigor", "absorption," and "dedication" as its three main components of engagement. Subsequently, using a large international database, Schaufeli and Bakker (2006) developed a shortened version of the original 17-UWES with the same dimensions. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2006, p. 702): "Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Finally, absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work."

In a meta-analysis study, Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) explored the relationship between employee satisfaction-engagement and the business unit outcomes of "customer satisfaction", "productivity", "profit", "turnover", and "accidents". Their model was the first to investigate employee engagement at the business unit level; it suggested that employee engagement is significantly associated positively with profit outcomes. In his model on antecedents and consequences of engagement, Saks (2006) asserted that employee engagement can be developed through a social exchange model. He was the first to distinguish between "job engagement" and "organizational engagement" as different patterns of employee engagement. He hypothesized that there might be antecedents to engagement and that giving considerable attention to these antecedents could increase and, perhaps, aid the development of such positive behavior among workers. The study found that "job engagement" is positively associated with "job satisfaction", "organizational commitment", and "organizational citizenship behavior", and negatively associated with "intention to leave".

Subsequently, Macey and Schneider (2008) introduced their conceptualization that suggested that engagement develops from three main components: "trait engagement", "state engagement", and "behavioral engagement". According to them, "trait engagement refers to positive views of life and work; state engagement refers to feelings of energy and absorption; and behavioral engagement refers to extra-role behavior" (2008, p.6). They concluded that employee engagement is better seen as a multi-construct that includes various aspects of employee attitudinal and behavioral actions.

Consistent with the present study, few significant studies have been conducted in higher education sector. Selmer, Jonasson and Luring (2013) found faculty engagement variables are positively associated with group trust but negatively associated with group conflict. Van den Berg, Bakker, and Ten Cate (2013) found feedback on teaching performance to be a strong predictor of teaching engagement among academicians. Earlier, Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2006) had investigated the psychometric characteristics of the UWES for academic teaching faculty in higher education institutions in South Africa. In a study conducted on academicians, Takawira, Coetzee and Schreuder (2014) found significant relationships between "job embeddedness", "work engagement", and "turnover intention". Yusoff *et al.* (2013) revealed that the UWES possesses good psychometric properties and can be considered a reliable and valid tool for assessing WE among academic staff in Pakistan. More recently, Altunel, Kocak, and Cankir (2015) found that job resources: "autonomy", "social support", "coaching", "opportunity for personal development", and "task significance" are highly needed to develop WE among Turkish academicians. Alzyoud, Othman and Isa (2015) revealed that "autonomy," "social support", and "performance feedback" were significant factors in influencing academicians' WE. Almost a decade earlier, Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) had revealed three job demand resources as significant contributors to WE of academicians: "growth opportunities", "organizational support", and "advancement opportunities".

From the above review, it is clear that WE is an emergent, dynamic issue among practitioners and researchers in the fields of positive psychology, business management and human resource development. It has also been proven that WE is a positive behavior that has positive returns at both personal and organizational levels. However, this concept has not yet received adequate study and research, especially in the higher education sector. Therefore, this study seems to be one of the first to address the WE phenomenon in the higher education sector, which is in dire need of a sincere, committed, high-performance workforce that could effectively facilitate coping with the current challenges facing this sector.

2.2. Quality of work life

The QWL concept was first launched by Davis (1973) at the "43rd American Assembly on the Changing World of Work" at Columbia University. Researchers participating at that event reported that "improving the place, the organization, and the nature of work can lead to better work performance and a better quality of life in the society" (Gadon, 1984; Wyatt and Wah, 2001; Sadique, 2003; Islam and Siengthai, 2009).

The concept of QWL is gaining importance as a technique to rescue environmental and human values that have been neglected in favor of the technological advancement of productivity and economic growth (Walton, 1975). Schermerhorn, Hunt and Osborn (1994, p. 51) clarified that "the term has gained deserved prominence in OB (Organizational Behavior) as an indicator of the overall quality of human experience in the work place". Despite the enormous research conducted on QWL since the term's inception in the early 1970s, it seems that there is no common ground regarding the real meaning of the concept. However, there has been consensus among academicians and researchers interested in the field that it is a multidimensional construct. Many researchers and practitioners agree that it is difficult to give a clear definition of the term (Davis and Cherns, 1975; Lawler, 1975; Sirgy *et al.*, 2001).

In attempts to reach a thorough understanding of the term, several definitions have been offered by researchers:

- "the quality of the relationship between employees and the total working environment, with human dimensions added to the usual technical and economic considerations"(Davis, 1983,p. 80);
- "a process by which an organization responds to employees' needs in developing mechanisms to allow them to share fully in making the decisions that design their lives at work" (Walton,1975);
- "An individual's perception of, and attitudes towards, his or her work and the total working environment. It is an individual's evaluative reactions to, and satisfaction with, his/her work and the total working environment"(Nadler and Lawler, 1983);
- "a way of thinking about people, work, and organization involving a concern for employee well-being and organizational effectiveness" (Cummings and Worley,1997);
- "satisfaction with wages, hours and working conditions, describing the basic elements of a good quality of work life as; safe work environment, equitable wages, equal employment opportunities and opportunities for advancement" (Mirvis and Lawler, 1984);
- "a process by which an organization responds to employee needs by developing mechanisms to allow them to share fully in making the decisions that design their lives at work" (Robbins,1989,p. 207);
- "a hierarchy of concepts that include non-work domains such as life satisfaction, job satisfaction and more work-specific facets of job satisfaction including such things as pay, coworkers and supervisor" (Danna and Griffin,1999);
- "the intimate characteristic of the technologies introduced into companies and their impact and to the economic elements like salary, incentives, bonuses, or even to the factors connected to one's physical and mental health, safety and, in general, to the workers' wellbeing" (Rainey, 2003);
- "the positive emotional reactions and attitudes an individual has towards his job"(Rainey, 2003); and
- "the favorable conditions and environments of a workplace that support and promote employee satisfaction by providing employees with rewards,job security, and growth opportunities"(Lau and Bruce, 1998,p. 213).

It is clear from the above definitions that QWL has been perceived by researchers in different ways, which have introduced other related concepts, such as employee or job satisfaction, employee's well-being, and life satisfaction. Some other definitions emphasize the quality of the relationship between employees and the work environment conditions. Other trials have concentrated on such components of the construct as salaries, incentives, relationship with coworkers and supervisors, safety, participation in the decision-making process, response to personal needs, healthy physical working conditions, etc. Moreover, outcomes and benefits of adopting the concept are also asserted, such as organizational effectiveness. In summary, QWL is better viewed as a strategy or a mechanism that improves or enhances the quality of the relationship between employees and conditions in the work environment, which in turn leads to better organizational effectiveness.

Because of the different perceptions of the term, different models of QWL have been developed since its emergence in the early 1970s. Walton (1975) suggested an eight-criterion conceptual model for QWL:

- "adequate and fair compensation";
- "safe and healthy working conditions";
- "development of human capacities";
- "continuous growth and security";
- "social integration in the work organization";
- "work and total life space";
- "constitutionalism"; and
- "social relevance of work life".

Walton's QWL model (1975) is one of the most cited, widely accepted, and commonly used QWL models for researchers internationally. Xhakollari (2013) stated that Walton's model is one of the most cited by authors since it relates the factors concerning the individual and their work and provides the basis for subsequent theories.

Hackman and Oldham (1976) suggested "psychological growth needs" as significant factors of QWL: "skill variety," "task identity," "task significance," "autonomy," and "feedback". They indicated that if employees are to experience high QWL, fulfillment of these needs should be given considerable attention. In a survey of quality of working life, Warr, Cook and Wall (1979) found different contributing factors: "work involvement", "intrinsic job motivation", "higher order need strength", "perceived intrinsic job characteristics", "job satisfaction", "life satisfaction", "happiness", and "self-rated anxiety". In his conceptualization of the quality of working life, Taylor (1979) indicated that QWL is better seen as a holistic approach that covers several components: "basic extrinsic job factors of wages", "hours and working conditions", and "the intrinsic job notions of the nature of the work itself".

He also added other elements of equal importance: "authority exercised by employees", "employee participation in decision making", "fair and equal approach at work", "social support", "utilizing one's present skills", "self-growth", "scope of future at work", "social relevance of the work", and "effect on extra work activities". Hackman and Oldham (1980) suggested a model focusing on factors relevant to QWL. Their QWL model includes the following core elements: "working conditions", "employee job satisfaction", "employees' behavioral aspects", "employees' financial and non-financial benefits", "growth and development", and "supervision". Nadler and Lawler (1983) highlighted four indicators of QWL: "Participation", "Trust", "Reinforcement", and "Responsiveness". Participation is the process by which workers are involved in the decision making. Trust requires careful designing of jobs, systems, regulations, and structures to provide workers with the autonomy they need at work. Reinforcement requires the creation of a reward system that is fair and subject to work performance. Finally, responsiveness means creating a pleasant workplace that highly satisfies individual needs. Mirvis and Lawler (1984) suggested a model focusing on factors relevant to QWL: "satisfaction with wages", "hours", and "working conditions". They concluded that "safe work environment", "equitable wages", "equal employment opportunities", and "opportunities for advancement" are significant contributors to QWL. Klatt, Murdick and Schuster (1985) opined eleven elements of QWL: "pay", "occupational stress", "organizational health programs", "alternative work schedule", "participatory management and control of work", "recognition", "superior-subordinate relations", "grievance procedure", "adequacy of resources", "promotion and development", and "employment on permanent basis".

Schermerhorn and John (1989) identified relevant factors that must be given considerable attention in the organization: "fair and adequate pay", "healthy and safe working conditions", "opportunities to learn", "professional growth", "professional integrity", "support of individual rights", and "proud of the job". Baba and Jamal (1991) proposed a group of QWL factors, including "job satisfaction", "job involvement", "work role ambiguity", "work role conflict", "work role overload", "job stress", "organizational commitment" and "turnover intentions". According to Havlovic (1991), the significant factors of QWL comprise "job security," "job satisfaction", "better reward system", "employee benefits", "employee involvement", and "organizational performance".

For Lau and Bruce (1998), QWL is a multifaceted construct that includes such components as "job security", "reward systems", "training and career advancements opportunities", and "participation in decision making". Schermerhorn *et al.* (1994) viewed QWL as a technique that should offer: "fair pay", "safe working conditions", "opportunities to learn and use new skills", "room to grow and progress in career", "protection of individual rights", and "pride in the work and in the organization". Sirgy *et al.* (2001) classified QWL into two main categories: "lower- and higher order needs." The lower needs comprises "health/safety needs" and "economic/family needs", whereas the higher needs comprises "social needs", "esteem needs", "self-actualization needs", "knowledge needs", and "aesthetic needs".

Fajemisin (2002) identified the significant antecedents of QWL. The first is "recognition," to be satisfied through "membership in clubs" or "association", "reward system", "congratulations for achievement", "job enrichment", etc. The second is "occupational stress," which arises from "irritability," "hyper excitation" or "depression", "unstable behavior", and "fatigue". The third is "pay and stability of employment"; the fourth is "organizational health programs." Skinner and Ivancevich (2008) argued that QWL is related with "adequate and fair compensation", "safe & healthy working conditions", "opportunities to develop human capacities", "opportunities for continuous growth and job security", "more flexible work scheduling and job assignment", "careful attention to job design and workflow", "better union-management cooperation", "less structural supervision", and "development of effective work teams". Gupta and Sharma (2011) identified the following

determinants of satisfaction with QWL: “adequate income & fair compensation”, “safe & healthy working conditions”, “opportunities to use & develop human capacity”, “opportunity for career growth”, “social integration”, “constitutionalism”, “eminence of work life”, and “social relevance of work”. Van Laar, Edwards, and Easton (2007) highlighted six psychosocial contributors to QWL: “job and career satisfaction”, “general well-being”, “stress at work”, “control at work”, “home-work interface”, and “working conditions”.

Investigating the above-discussed models, we note the following important issues:

- 1) The importance of QWL is an issue on which authors and academicians highly agree for both the human workforce and organizational effectiveness and productivity. However, QWL has been viewed differently in terms of its component elements, determinants, and/or dimensions.
- 2) There is consensus among researchers that QWL is better seen or viewed as a complicated, multifaceted, multi-dimensional construct. It comprises a wide range of elements that cover organizational, social, cultural, economic, and psychological aspects in the work environment.
- 3) Whatever the component dimensions and elements of QWL are, they form interdependently the whole construct of QWL in an organization. Observing the impact of the interdependent dimensions as they interact provides a better understanding of QWL than is achieved by considering each individual factor and dimension in isolation.

3. Conceptual framework and hypotheses

As shown in Figure 1, the conceptual framework for the current study was based on Walton’s QWL model, according to which QWL is “a process by which an organization responds to employees’ needs in developing mechanisms to allow them to share fully in making the decisions that design their lives at work”(Walton, 1975). Walton’s model consists of eight subsets, comprising: “adequate and fair compensation”, “safe and healthy environment”, “growth and security”, “development of human capabilities”, “the total life space”, “social integration”, “constitutionalism” and “social relevance”. On WE, this research framework is based on the UWES in which “vigor”, “dedication”, and “absorption” are the main components of this behavioral state. According to Schaufeli *et al.* (2002, p. 74), work engagement refers to that “positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption”.

The main hypotheses of this paper are as follows:

1. There is a significant positive relationship between QWL as perceived by teaching faculty at KAU and their WE.
2. There is a significant positive relationship between each of the QWL dimensions as perceived by the KAU faculty and their WE.
3. QWL dimensions are thought to be positive significant predictors of the KAU faculty’s WE.

4. Methodology

This study is descriptive in nature, seeking to describe the status of QWL at KAU as experienced by the faculty and how the faculty perceives their WE. It will also analyze and interpret the relationship that may exist between the two concepts. In essence, the study will investigate whether QWL could be a significant contributor of WE among the faculty.

A study is said to be “descriptive” when it describes and interprets the situation, as it exists. Best and Kahn (1998, p. 113) demonstrated that “descriptive research is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident, or trends that are developing”. They elaborated (1998, p. 144), “Descriptive research deals with the relationships between variables, the testing of hypotheses, and the development of generalizations, principles, or theories that have universal validity. It is concerned with functional relationships”. In this descriptive study, the researcher believes that the appropriate method for analysis is correlation. The present research is a correlation study since it is carried out to explore and interpret human behaviors in quantitative terms and to, thereby, analyze how they relate.

4.1. Sampling

The research population comprises the teaching faculty working at King Abdulaziz University (KAU) in the 2015/2016 academic year. Around 2,850 faculty members working in the main campus were approached in the process of data collection. The two instruments were sent via electronic email to the teaching faculty. In total, we received 299 responses, which represent 10.31 % of the original population. The respondents were all full-time faculty members at KAU. Males and females constituted 55.5% (n=166) and 44.5% (n=133) respectively; Saudi and non-Saudi constituted 77.6% (n=232) and 22.4% (n=67) respectively. Regarding age, 34.1% of the

respondents were aged lower than 35 years, 42.5% between 35 and 50 years, and 23.4% aged above 50 years. In terms of academic rank, about 8.4% of the respondents were full professors, 14% are associate professors, 32.1% are assistant professors, 27.4% are lecturers, and 18% are instructors or assistant instructors. According to the sample, as at the time of the data collection, 79.2% of the respondents had been working at KAU for less than 10 years, 21.1% had between 10 and less than 20 years of service, and 22.7% had worked at KAU for over 20 years.

4.2. Instruments

Quality of Work Life (QWL): Walton's QWL scale (1975) was used to investigate the faculty's perceptions about their QWL. It is a 35-item survey measuring eight dimensions: "adequate and fair compensation", "safe and healthy working conditions", "development of human capacities", "opportunity for growth and security", "social integration", "constitutionalism", "work and total life space" and "social relevance". The 35 items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In the current study, reliabilities for the eight QWL subsets ranged from 0.79 to 0.85. The alpha coefficient for the entire scale was found to be 0.94, which is a very high level of reliability for this scale. The construct validity of QWL was also supported in this study. The eight dimensions were highly correlated with the overall scale, with correlations ranging from 0.68 to 0.87 and all significant at the 0.01 level (see Table 2). The intercorrelations among the eight QWL dimensions were also high, significant at the 0.01 level, and in the positive direction.

Work Engagement (WE): The UWES was used to assess faculty engagement. This scale is the most widely used instrument for measuring WE. It was developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). It features a 17-item scale that measures "vigor" (6 items), "absorption" (6 items), and "dedication" (5 items). All items are scored on a 7-point frequency rating scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*always*). The scale has been validated in several countries (e.g., Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002; Storm and Rothmann, 2003; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Yi-Wen and Yi-Qun, 2005).

In the current study, reliabilities for the three UWES subscales were 0.77 for "vigor", 0.84 for "dedication", and 0.76 for "absorption". The alpha coefficient for the entire scale was found to be 0.91, which is a very high level of reliability for this scale. The construct validity of UWES was also supported in the current study. The three dimensions were highly correlated with the overall scale, with correlations of 0.93, 0.92, and 0.91 for "vigor", "dedication", and "absorption" respectively (see Table 2). They were all significant at the 0.01 level. The intercorrelations among the three dimensions were also high, significant at the 0.01 level, and in the positive direction. The two instruments were contextualized to the Saudi educational context. In addition to the original English versions, the two scales were translated into Arabic using a translation and back translation technique.

5. Findings

To examine the levels of QWL and WE, mean scores of these variables and their dimensions were found. The mean scores and standard deviations are given in Table 1, which shows that the mean score of QWL measured using Walton's eight dimensional scale was 3.10, indicating an average level of QWL. Among the eight dimensions, "development of human capabilities" had the highest mean (3.36), followed by "social relevance", which had a mean score of 3.35, while "safe and healthy environment" reported the lowest mean (2.70). Table 1, also, shows that the mean score of WE measured using UWES-17 was 4.05, indicating that the level of engagement was relatively high or above average. Among the three dimensions, "dedication" had the highest mean (4.18), closely followed by "vigor" and "absorption", which had the same mean score (3.98). A correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between the QWL dimensions and WE. Table 2 contains the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of the study variables. The results show that there is a significant positive relationship between QWL and WE ($r = 0.42, p < 0.01$). All the dimensions of QWL are significantly and positively related with WE. For the QWL dimensions, social relevance ($r = 0.44, p < 0.01$) correlates moderately with engagement, followed by development of human capabilities ($r = 0.43, p < 0.01$), constitutionalism ($r = 0.37, p < 0.01$), growth and security ($r = 0.30, p < 0.01$), social integration ($r = 0.29, p < 0.01$), safe and healthy environment ($r = 0.28, p < 0.01$), total life space ($r = 0.27, p < 0.01$), and adequate and fair compensation ($r = 0.21, p < 0.01$). To investigate the extent to which the QWL dimensions explained the variance in WE, a multiple regression analysis (Enter method) was conducted.

The correlation matrix (Table 2) shows that multicollinearity did not apply here because the variance inflation factor (VIF) was much less than 10 ($r > 0.9$) and all tolerance values were greater than 0.6 (Meyers, Gamst and Guarino, 2006). Table 3 shows that the overall effect of the correlation ($R = 0.51$) between the faculty's WE and the QWL dimensions as perceived by the faculty is a significant, moderate, and positive effect ($R^2 = 0.26, p \leq 0.05$). Table 3 shows that 24% percent of the variation in the faculty's WE is explained by two dimensions

of QWL together: social relevance and development of human capabilities. The regression analysis in Table 3 shows that development of human capabilities (Beta=0.313, T= 4.075, $p \leq 0.05$) is a positive significant predictor of WE: it explains 31.3% of the variance in the faculty's WE. Social relevance (Beta=0.332, T= 4.673, $p \leq 0.05$) is also a significant predictor of WE, contributing 33.2% percent of the variance in the faculty's WE. Other QWL variables do not have significant contribution in explaining the variance in WE among the faculty.

6. Discussion

The results show that the KAU faculty perceived levels of QWL that were moderate to low. This implies that they are moderately satisfied with the quality of their working lives. This finding is inconsistent with that of Arif (2013), who revealed no dissatisfaction of QWL among teachers of private universities in Pakistan. Conversely, it is similar to that of Nair (2013), who found average QWL among college teachers. Thus, QWL should be given considerable attention by university top management as they implement their decisions and strategies for development and improvement of the university's work environment. This implication is consistent with the related literature that regards QWL as "commitment of any organization to work improvement: the creation of more involving, satisfying, and effective jobs and work environments for people at all levels of the organization" (Carlson, 1980).

University top management could benefit from the strategies recommended by Sirgy *et al.* (2008, p.181), who proposed a variety of QWL programs: "decentralized organizational structures, teamwork, parallel structures, ethical corporate mission and culture, organization work schedule, etc.", and non-work-life provisions: "working at home, flexi-time, compressed work week, part-time work arrangements, job-sharing, etc.". With this study's finding in mind and considering that QWL is "an individual's evaluative reactions to, and satisfaction with, his/her work and the total working environment" (Nadler and Lawler, 1983), university top management is recommended to conduct periodical investigations of the faculty's QWL perceptions to enable them to take necessary decisions and actions to rectify any sources of imbalance. For this reason, Duyan *et al.* (2013, p. 114) advised, "Measuring QWL and employee well-being might also actualize the practical implications like redesigning of jobs, improvements in the workplace, working hours/patterns and environmental conditions."

The mean scores of each QWL dimension ranged between moderate and low levels (3.36 – 2.69). The dimension of "development of human capabilities" had the highest score; "Safe and healthy environment" had the lowest. This considerable level of "development of human capabilities" implies that the faculty feels, to some extent, that there is meaningfulness and importance in the work and job tasks they do. This also implies that the faculty feels, to some extent, satisfied about the degree of autonomy given to them as they perform their work. Such a low level of "safe and healthy environment" implies that the faculty feels unsatisfied regarding working hours, workloads, working conditions, and/or physical environment. These findings are inconsistent with those of Nair (2013), who found that, among academicians, "growth and safety" had the highest mean whereas "constitutionalism" had the lowest score. These findings are also dissimilar to those of Tabassum (2012), who revealed "Social relevance" as the highest dimension and "growth, and security" as the lowest. In this study, it is noteworthy that all dimensions of QWL attained relatively moderate scores except for "safe and healthy environment," which was perceived at a weak degree by the faculty. Therefore, Based upon understanding of the faculty's pressing needs and their QWL experiences regarding their work environment, it is necessary for university top management to take this issue seriously and to address its problematic aspects and weak points to satisfy the faculty's needs in this regard.

The faculty reported an above average WE level. This finding is similar to that of Selmer *et al.* (2013), who found high levels of faculty engagement in Danish universities. This finding also concurs with that of Van den Berg, Bakker and Ten Cate (2013), who found that teaching faculty showed relatively favorable work engagement. The mean score of "dedication" was found to be the highest, followed by "vigor" and "absorption" that attained the same mean score. This indicates that the respondents feel highly involved and immersed in their work and encounter very few problems as they carry out their job tasks. Consistent with these findings, Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2006) revealed relatively high levels of dedication amongst academics. In another study conducted on academicians, Takawira, Coetzee, and Schreuder (2014) revealed that "dedication" obtained the highest mean score whereas absorption attained the lowest.

Testing hypotheses 1 and 2, the findings provide evidence that QWL and its dimensions are all positively correlated with WE among the KAU faculty members. Analysis shows that correlations of QWL dimensions with WE range between moderate to low practical side effects but all are significant ($p < 0.01$), and in the positive direction. "Social relevance" shows the highest positive correlation with WE of faculty

members; "Adequate and fair compensation" shows the least positive correlation with WE. This positive relationship implies that adopting strategies to improve the QWL dimensions could enhance significantly, in certain areas, WE among KAU teaching faculty. These interpretations are relatively consistent with the findings of other studies, although no studies have previously been conducted to examine the relationship between QWL and WE. It is evident from prior research that high level QWL was always associated with positive outcomes for both the organization and its employees. Tabassum (2012) revealed that all the QWL dimensions were positively associated with the job satisfaction of the university teaching faculty. Moreover, Ghasemizad and Mohammadkhani (2013) reported that QWL is associated significantly with administrators' and teachers' productivity. In addition, the results of parallel findings from other researchers emphasize the importance of QWL and its association with positive organizational and individual outcomes. For example, Dada (2006) asserted that QWL affects employees in terms of "organizational identification", "job satisfaction", "job involvement", "job effort", "job performance", "intention to quit", "organizational turnover", and "personal alienation".

Testing hypothesis 3, the findings confirm that not all QWL dimensions are significant contributors to WE among faculty members. The results provided empirical support that two dimensions, (namely "development of human capabilities" and "social relevance") are the only significant predictors of the faculty's WE. "Development of human capabilities" and "social relevance" has significant contributions in explaining the variance in WE as perceived by the KAU faculty. According to the regression analysis, the findings suggest that 24 % percent of variability in WE could be accounted for these two QWL dimensions. It is apparent that the influence is positive and implies that an increase in each of these two variables can evoke an increase in WE.

Therefore, we can conclude that developing human capabilities and social relevance could serve as promoting factors that could help to raise WE levels among the faculty. In essence, to help the faculty to be engaged, basic interventions should be executed in this regard to ensure they feel satisfied in respect of these two QWL components. Hence, to ensure a well-engaged teaching faculty, academic administrators are advised to devote great focus to improving faculty capabilities. In essence, they are recommended to address faculty's training needs and, hence, provide the appropriate training to develop their capabilities. Consistent with these interpretations, some researchers have indicated that when workers have the chance to develop and demonstrate their potential with opportunities for personal and professional development, this may lead them to better fit their jobs and to become less likely to leave (Bergiel *et al.*, 2009). Another effective way to ensure a well-engaged teaching faculty is to pay attention to "social relevance". It has been observed that socialization techniques – such as "network groups", "tactics of mentoring and guidance", "support", "affirmation", and "developing a sense of belonging" – could effectively help employees to develop their embeddedness towards their work and, thereby, reduce their intention to leave (Freidman and Holtom, 2002; Allen, 2006). In summary, QWL improvements can, therefore, be considered as activities or arrangements that seek to create greater faculty engagement through the enhancement of human capacities and social relevance. Levering (1988) asserted that "the profit of successful organizations is not to be achieved at the expense of its employees". In conclusion, one technique for developing a distinguished and healthy work environment is to create high QWL for employees within their socio-technical systems.

7. Conclusion

The findings indicated that the KAU teaching members were moderately satisfied with their QWL but perceived an above average WE level. To investigate the contribution of QWL dimensions towards WE among the faculty, correlation analysis was conducted to investigate how QWL and WE are related, and a multiple regression was computed to examine the effects of QWL factors on WE. The findings showed that QWL and its dimensions were all positively correlated with the WE of KAU faculty members. They also provided evidence that two factors ("development of human capabilities" and "social relevance") were the only significant predictors of the faculty's WE. These results have valuable implications for top management and academic administrators. We have demonstrated that QWL programs could lead to positive individual and organizational outcomes, and it is understood that the faculty, in this changing era, are acting as assets on whom the university counts to bear responsibility for creating change in the university, enhancing its role in contributing to the country's development process, and leading the university to conduct its responsibilities to the community. Thus, top university management should emphasize policy implications in relation to QWL issues. They ought to adopt original and innovative strategies to create high QWL levels among the teaching faculty. One way to do this is to think consistently with other business enterprises about enhancing their employees' working lives. The findings support the need to embrace the concept of WE in the Saudi higher education sector. It is suggested that programs or initiatives should be developed to ensure a well-engaged

faculty. One basic groundwork is to execute planned interventions targeting the advantage of organizational variables that help promote WE among the faculty. One way to do this is providing training programs and workshops for academic leaders regarding the WE concept and its positive outcomes; these should be complemented in the longer term by techniques that ensure the development of such behavior among faculty members over time.

8. Limitations and future directions

Despite the limitations associated with self-report scales, they remain the most common tools in organizational research and in research in social and behavioral sciences in general (Harrison, McLaughlin, and Coalter, 1996). However, some researchers have observed that some self-report methods have been found to produce exaggerated results (Crampton and Wagner, 1994; Lindell and Whitney, 2001). One limitation of this study is that it relied on self-reported, cross-sectional methods in assessing WE among the KAU faculty. For this reason, we recommend that future research should employ longitudinal and experimental methods to explore and assess changes in the WE levels among the faculty. Qualitative methods such as structured interviews, behavioral observation and ratings by others could be useful alternative tools in this respect. Research using larger samples is still needed to investigate whether the relationships we found in this study could be generalized to other higher education institutions. For future studies, other measures would also be used to assess WE among faculty members. Such measures may include that of Khan (1990). We also recommend further studies aiming to develop psychometric scales that reliably assess both QWL and WE in the Saudi context. Broader correlational studies in the academic environment would also uncover the existing relationships between the faculty's WE and other organizational variables, such as "distributive leadership", "servant leadership", "ethical leadership", "team management", and "organizational health". For QWL, we suggest study of its relationship with "burnout", "organizational citizenship", "organizational performance", "self-efficacy", "turnover", and "intention to quit".

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Table1: Means and SDs for QWL and WE as perceived by the faculty

Variables	N	Mean	SD
Safe and healthy environment	299	2.70	.71
Adequate and fair compensation	299	2.94	.91
Growth and security	299	3.01	.74
Constitutionalism	299	3.09	.87
Social integration	299	3.14	.75
Total life space	299	3.19	.97
Social relevance	299	3.35	.78
Development of human capabilities	299	3.36	.76
QWL	299	3.10	.63
Dedication	299	4.18	.71
Vigor	299	3.98	.57
Absorption	299	3.98	.62
WE	299	4.05	.58

N	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Adequate and fair compensation	2.93	.91												
2	Safe and healthy environment	2.7	.71	.513(*)											
3	Development of human capabilities	3.36	.76	.447(*)	.655(*)										
4	Growth and security	3.01	.74	.557(*)	.597(*)	.581(*)									
5	Social integration	3.14	.75	.326(*)	.571(*)	.589(*)	.528(*)								
6	Constitutionalism	3.09	.87	.520(*)	.691(*)	.692(*)	.651(*)	.681(*)							
7	Total life space	3.19	.97	.405(*)	.629(*)	.505(*)	.494(*)	.415(*)	.564(*)						
8	Social relevance	3.35	.78	.425(*)	.567(*)	.566(*)	.576(*)	.570(*)	.647(*)	.426(*)					
9	QWL	3.09	.63	.685(*)	.835(*)	.802(*)	.795(*)	.741(*)	.875(*)	.729(*)	.761(*)				
10	Vigor	3.67	.37	.172(*)	.276(*)	.430(*)	.291(*)	.288(*)	.382(*)	.282(*)	.418(*)	.406(*)			
11	Dedication	3.72	.45	.211(*)	.259(*)	.433(*)	.295(*)	.301(*)	.340(*)	.279(*)	.448(*)	.410(*)	.779(*)		
12	Absorption	3.64	.39	.191(*)	.238(*)	.327(*)	.245(*)	.232(*)	.315(*)	.202(*)	.363(*)	.338(*)	.791(*)	.728(*)	
13	WE	3.68	.36	.210(*)	.280(*)	.433(*)	.302(*)	.299(*)	.375(*)	.278(*)	.448(*)	.420(*)	.925(*)	.920(*)	.909(*)

(**) All correlations are significant at 0.01 level.

Table2: Pearson’s product-moment correlations between QWL dimensions and WE

Table3. Multiple regression of the QWL dimensions predicting work engagement (WE)

Independent variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-value	Sig.
	B	SE	Beta							
Model 1 (constant)	2.673	.162		16.533	.000	.512(a)	.262	.242	12.864	.000(a)
Adequate and fair compensation	-.021	.041	-.033	-.517	.606					
Safe and healthy environment	-.127	.067	-.155	-1.878	.061					
Development of human capabilities	.239	.059	.313	4.075	.000					
Growth and security	-.015	.059	-.019	-.253	.800					
Social integration	-.032	.057	-.041	-.565	.572					
Constitutionalism	.043	.061	.064	.695	.488					
Total life space	.048	.040	.080	1.192	.234					
Social relevance	.249	.053	.332	4.673	.000					

Dependent variable: workengagement (WE).
 (a) Predictors: (Constant), Social relevance, Adequate and fair compensation, Totallifespace, Social integration, Development of human capabilities, Growth and security, Safe and healthy environment, and Constitutionalism

Figure. 1 Conceptual Framework



