

A Study on Occupational Stress and Quality of Work Life (QWL) in Private Colleges of Oman (Muscat)

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Abstract

Purpose: Study aims to depict the phenomena related to Quality of Work Life (QWL) and Occupational Stress among business management lecturers in private colleges of Oman. It also intends to find the predictive validity of the proposed model by using SEM path analysis.

Design/methodology/approach: A combination of descriptive and conclusive research design was adopted to describe and report the related phenomena. Private colleges of Oman were chosen for study. Sample frame consisted of all the management teachers teaching in seven private higher educational institutions in Oman offering management degree. The sample size consisted of 44 lecturers.

Findings: Study indicated that occupational stress score among management lecturers were relatively lesser than the average, whereas perceived QWL was found more than the average in these institutes. It was inferred that perceived QWL was better in these institution compare to occupational stress. SEM path analysis was also administered to validate the proposed framework by using SmartPLS software. A negative relationship was established between two latent construct. The statistics indicated that occupation stress is negatively affecting the QWL of teachers in management institutions in Oman. But, proposed hypothesis was not established because T value was reported as 0.927 with p value of 0.354.

Originality: Based on the review of literature relatively a very few studies targeted on management lecturers in private colleges of Oman with related variables.

Limitations: Sample size was on a lower side due to the teacher's tight work schedule and involvement in institutional miscellaneous activities and limited time allocated for data collection.

Keywords: Occupational stress, Quality of Work Life (QWL), SEM path analysis, Oman

Abbreviations: IT = Information Technology, PLS= Partial Least Square, QOL= Quality of Life, QWL= Quality of Work Life, SEM= Structural Equation Modeling

1. Introduction

Education sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in Oman and Lecturers play an important role in shaping up the future of students. They constantly engage themselves in the pursuit of quality pedagogy. Since new teaching methodologies are evolving rapidly, it has become more demanding in carrying out their roles and responsibilities in an effective way. The main causes of stress among the lecturers were reported as their multiple academic and administrative roles assigned to them. Lecturers feel stressed when they are not able to balance their personal and work life need, which leads to decrease in quality of teaching and lack of efficiency which in turn affect the relationship between the student and lecturers. Stress has been increasing due to the evolving needs, tough competition, work pressure and short deadlines. When occupational stress is felt, it will not only affect the performance of work but also affect health of employees in the form of heart attack, migraine that can lead to death. (Yahaya, et.al 2010).

Quality of work life is an outgrowth of human relation movement. Robbins (1989) defined Quality of Work Life (QWL) as a process by which an organization respond to employee needs by developing mechanisms to allow them to share fully in making the decisions that design their lives at work. QWL affect employee's work responses in terms of organizational identification, job satisfaction, job involvement, job effort, job performance, intention to quit, organizational turnover and personal alienation (Efraty & Sirgy, 1990). The lack of quality of work life is due to inappropriate placement, less recognition and participation and inadequate health and insurance programs. Occupational stress affects quality of work life which ultimately affects job satisfaction. Present study analyzed the phenomena of occupational stress and QWL among the business management lecturers in private colleges in Oman.

2. Literature Review

Review of literature was done to report the studies related to occupational stress and QWL. Following research examined the underlying phenomena of stress and QWL separately and together in various professions, organizations and sectors. It provides a foundation to identify the research gap for the present study.

Beheshtifar & Nazarian (2013) reported that occupational stress was a perception of discrepancy between environmental demands (stressors) and individual capacities to fulfill these demands. Occupational stress was more, where there was more discrepancy in perceptions. Nasiripour, et.al., (2009) explored the level and sources of occupational and personal stress among 172 rural health workers in Mashhad district. It was found that role overload and role ambiguity were the main sources of stress and it adversely affected the quality of their service. Boki & Talib (2009) determined the level and relationship of occupational stress, job satisfaction among 40 male Navy officers and non officers from

the Naval base in Lumut, Malaysia. Result revealed that majority of the male navy personnel had moderate levels of job satisfaction in the favorable nature of work facet.

Hasan (2014) compared occupational stress among 100 teachers of primary government and private school in Haridwar and found that private primary school teachers were highly stressed in comparison to the government primary school teachers. Jeyarai (2013) determined the occupational stress level of 120 government teachers and 185 aided/contractual school teachers and found that aided school teachers had more occupational stress level than government school teachers and were also less satisfied with teaching. Reddy & Anuradha (2013) examined the occupation stress of 327 higher secondary school teachers of Vellore district in Tamil Nadu and found that 88 percent of teachers were experiencing moderate and high levels of occupational stress. Tashi,K (2014) examined the level of stress among 150 Bhutanese teachers and found that stress was experienced by them. Male teachers were more stressed than their counterparts.

Kusi,et.al. (2014) explored the cause and effects of work related stress among 50 university level academic staffs. Result highlighted various causes and the effects of stress among the lecturers. Adebisi (2013) investigated the occupational related stress to know the influence of gender, faculty and experience on stress among 100 lecturers and revealed that gender and years of experience did not influence stress on lecturer but the stress varied from faculty to faculty based on their teaching experience. Kumar,et.al. (2013) investigated causes of work stress among 478 engineering faculty members to find out the difference and association among demographic and job profile variables of engineering teachers. Study showed that location, working status, working hours and type of institutions also causes stress. Pabla (2012) studied the occupational stress amongst 200 professional college teachers in Punjab and revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female teachers in occupational stress level where as there was significant difference between teachers teaching in the professional colleges located in rural and urban areas. Teachers employed on Ad-hoc and permanent basis had different level of stress. Muthuvelayutham & Mohanasundaram (2012) found the impact of occupational stress on job satisfaction and job involvement among 422 engineering college teachers in Trichy. It was found that there was a significant impact of stress on job satisfaction and job involvement among teachers. Ismail,et.al.(2009) measured the effect of occupational stress on job satisfaction among 80 academic employees in private institutions of higher learning in Kuching city, Malaysia. Result demonstrated that physiological and psychological stress did not increase job satisfaction in the stress model. Mostert,et.al. (2008) determined the occupational stressors for support staff at a higher educational institution in North West Province. Study investigated the relationship between occupational stress and organizational outcomes. Result demonstrated average level of occupational stress with increased organizational outcomes.

Srinivas et.al. (2014) studied quality of work life (QWL) among 50 employees at Dunlop Polymers Pvt, ltd in Mysore. Result confirmed that the company was providing a high quality of work life to the employees. Sabarirajan & Geethanjali (2011) investigated the extent of QWL among the employees of public and private banks in dindigul. QWL positively influenced the performance of the banks based on findings. Kasraie,et.al.,(2014) investigated the relationship between the quality of work life, job stress, job satisfaction and citizenship behavior among 158 staff of Oshnaviyeh Hospitals and showed that there was a significant positive relationship between the quality of work life, job stress, job satisfaction and citizenship behavior. Jayaraman (2014) aimed to find out the level of

quality of work life of 298 employees of paper & pulp mill of Dindigul district and found that most of employees are satisfied with their jobs and the job factors were related to level of perception of QWL and overall job satisfaction. Varghese & Jayan (2013) explained quality of work life as the part of overall quality of life that is influenced by work. Quality of work life matters to employees as better quality of working life is associated with better retention and lower absence. Chitra & Mahalakshmi (2012) find out the employees perception on their work life quality of 251 employees in manufacturing organization. Ten variables were used to measure quality of work life and to test the relationship of variables with job satisfaction. Result indicated that each of the QWL variables on its own is a salient predictor of job satisfaction.

The following studies focused on the relationship between QWL & work stress in various organizations.

Behzad et.al. (2014) assessed the relationship between quality of work life and occupational stresses in personnel of social security organization in Hamadan Province, IR Iran with 58 personnel selected through census method and showed a positive association between QWL and Stress. QWL was significantly associated with personnel education level and work experience. Bolhari, et.al. (2012) investigated the impact of occupational stress on quality of work life among information technology employees in Iran. A cross sectional design was applied and information was gathered from IT staff. It found that occupational stress had a negative impact on quality of work life. Jafari, et.al. (2012) aimed at determining the quality of life (QOL) among 241 nurses to see the relationship between occupational stress and QOL. The result showed a high level of occupational stress among nurses which adversely affected their QOL and there was no significant correlation between QOL and occupational stress.

A hypothesis was proposed based on the research in this area. It was observed in most of the research that occupational stress is inversely affecting QWL, but in few cases the research result was just opposite. Especially in Middle East countries, the researches have shown a mixed trend between occupational stress and QWL relationships. To explore the relationship between these two phenomena in the management institutions, the following hypothesis was proposed.

3. Hypothesis [H₁]: Occupation stress is positively affecting quality of work life (QWL) in private management colleges in Oman.

Very few studies focused on the relationship between QWL & work stress in educational institutions. These studies are as follows:

Kumar & Deo (2011) measured different aspects of work life among 100 college teachers of Bihar and Jharkhand to find out the differences in perception of male and female, senior and junior teachers and revealed that junior college teachers experienced significant more stress as compared to senior teachers and female teachers experienced more role overload and inter role distance stress as compared to their male counterparts. Chadha, et.al. (2012) studied on the effect of organizational stress on quality of life among 50 primary and secondary school teachers and the result revealed that there was a significant difference between self role distance among primary and secondary school teachers and significant correlation between physical domain and role overload. (QWL and Stress in education institution)

In the field of management, there was a significant gap in the associational study of occupational stress and QWL among the lecturers. This study attempted to address the

observed research gaps by reporting and examining the impact of occupational stress on QWL among lecturers.

4. Objectives of the Study

- To evaluate the level of stress on Lecturers in private collage of Oman.
- To determine the level of Quality Work of Life (QWL) in private collage of Oman.
- To identify the relation between stress and quality work of life in private collage of Oman.
- To verify the conceptual framework by using Smart PLS

5. Research Methodology

A combination of descriptive and conclusive research design was adopted to study the phenomena related to QWL and occupational stress. Standard Questionnaire on QWL and occupational stress was identified for the study. QWL questionnaire had 45 five point scale items consisting to 10 factors, whereas Occupational stress questionnaire had 46 five point scale items consisting of 12 factors. The questionnaire on Occupational stress was taken from Srivastava, A.K., Singh, A. P., (2000) and Questionnaire on QWL was taken from Dhar, S., Dhar, U., Roy, R. (2000) respectively.

Purposive sampling method was used. Sample frame consisted of all the management teachers teaching in seven private higher educational institutions in Oman offering management curriculum. Questionnaires were distributed to all the teachers to collect the response related to these phenomenons. 44 responses were collected from the lectures who taught management subjects in private colleges in Muscat. Sample size in this study was 44. The level of QWL and Occupational stress among the management lecturers were reported by using the descriptive statistics, whereas the conceptual framework between QWL and Occupational stress was verified by Smart PLS version 3.2.1 in order to test the hypothesis and measurement model.

Primary data was collected from two questionnaires in the study, whereas secondary data was collected from following sources to build the research framework and review of literature:

1. Internet sources.
2. Books and Journal research articles.
3. Electronic Research Database , EBSCO

6. Data Analysis Method

The data collected from the sample was analyzed by using descriptive statistics using statistical tools. Occupational stress and QWL questionnaire was analyzed by using descriptive statistics. Occupational stress consisted of 46 items on five point scale. 28 items were true –keyed and 18 items were false-keyed items out of 46 items in the questionnaire. A false keyed item scoring was reversed at the time of scoring. Test of reliability of scale was done using Cronbach alpha method and composite reliability of scale was done through SmarPLS. SmartPLS was used to test the hypothesis by exploring the model's predictive validity. An initial path model was formulated .Boot-strapping was conducted in the initial path model for model analysis in terms of its predictive ability.

7. Findings of the Study

Data was compiled for occupational stress in the following table for further analysis.

Table 1: Factors average to Occupational stress

S.NO	Subscales/Factors (Occupational Stresses)	AVAREGE
1	Role overload	3.3
2	Role ambiguity	2.6
3	Role conflict	3.0
4	Unreasonable group and political pressures	3.0
5	Responsibility person	3.2
6	Under participation	2.9
7	Powerlessness	2.8
8	Poor peer relation	2.7
9	Intrinsic impoverishment	2.7
10	Law status	2.8
11	Strenuous working condition	2.7
12	Unprofitability	3.1
	TOTAL	2.9

According to the factor average calculated in Table-1, strong similarities among three factors were observed such as role overload, responsibility person & unprofitability. It was inferred that teachers in private colleges were overloaded and under high pressure to perform their duties. Since, modern private institutions assign academic and administrative work to their faculty members, and these responsibilities are diverse in nature, they found them relatively overloaded. The compensation was also not profitable to them based on the findings of the study. Unprofitability was ranked moderately higher compare to other occupational stress factors. It is proposed that, the private education institution in Muscat should focus to resolve the above concerned area to foster better quality of work life (QWL) within the organization by lucrative compensation.

The score reported on role ambiguity, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relation, intrinsic impoverishment and law status in the colleges indicated comparatively little stress among the faculty members. Moderately high score on the factor “responsibility person” indicated that faculty members felt responsible as a teacher in the organization. A moderate score on role conflict & unreasonable group and political pressures indicated the inverse impact of dual responsibility in term of academic and administrative duties assigned to them. The overall score reported on occupational stress is below the average was considered as a positive stress in an educational institution for improved organizational effectiveness. Data was compiled for QWL in Table -2 for further analysis.

Table 2: Factors average to QWL

Factors	Elements	Average
1	Stability of tenure	3.4
2	Growth opportunities	3.4
3	Employee satisfaction	3.4
4	Competent employees	3.7
5	Value orientation	3.5
6	Innovation practices	3.9
7	Work-life balance	3.4

8	Human relations	3.3
9	Learning orientation	3.5
10	Challenging activities	3.5
	Total	3.5

Table 3: Dimensions average to QWL

Sl.no	Dimension	Average
1	Dimension 1(Proactively)	3.53
2	Dimension 2 (work- life balance	3.43
3	Dimension 3 (human relation)	3.35
4	Dimension 4 (learning organization)	3.60
	Total	3.50

Factors such as competent employees and innovation practices got high score from the faculty members teaching management subjects in Table 2. It was inferred that respondents felt satisfied about the way organization responded to the needs of employees in a positive way. The feeling of being competent and using innovative practices in their pedagogy can make them committed and instill loyalty to the organization. Findings indicated a good QWL environment in private higher management education institutions in Oman.

The others factors scores such as Stability of tenure, Growth opportunities, Employee satisfaction, Value orientation, Work-life balance, Human relations, Learning orientation and Challenging activities were found more than moderately satisfied. It was inferred that respondents were moderately satisfied with QWL. It was verified from Table 3 on QWL dimensions average such as learning origination and being proactive with the score more than moderately satisfied with the existing QWL in the management education institutions in Oman.

The findings corroborate the research evidence that when the employees experience lesser occupational stress, QWL within the organization is bound to be more. The lesser occupational stress observed among lecturers is the evidence of comparatively better QWL in these private management educational institutions in Oman.

8. Conceptual model analysis by using Smart PLS

Conceptual framework between QWL and Occupational stress was verified by Smart PLS in order to test the hypothesis under conclusive research design. The reliability test was conduct to verify the items and scale reliability used in the study to go for further analysis using smart PLS.

8.1. Reliability analysis: Cronbach's Alpha reliability method was applied to check reliability of all items in the questionnaire. Reliability test was applied using SPSS 20 and the reliability measures were given in the Table 4. The initial reliability coefficient value was found as 0.850 for Quality of Work Life (QWL) questionnaire. The eight (8) insignificant items were again deleted based on item- total statistics to improve the measurement model. The remaining 37 QWL items were again tested for items reliability. The reliability coefficient value was found as 0.880. Similarly for Occupational Stress the initial reliability coefficient value was 0.835. The fifteen (15) insignificant items were again screened out to improve the measurement model. The remaining 31 Occupational Stress items were again tested for items reliability. The reliability coefficient value was found as 0.874. As the reliability score is higher compare to the initial reliability test further

analysis can be done to verify the structural model. It can be inferred that the standard scale used in the study to identify QWL and stress among management teachers need revision in Omani context.

Table 4: Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability of the measure

Scale	Cronbach’s Alpha	No. of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha after deleting items	No. of Items
Quality of Work Life (QWL)	0.850	45	0.88	37
Occupational Stress	0.835	46	0.87	31

8.2. Conceptual Background

The two constructs of the study are conceptually related to each other by the structural model as shown:



Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Measurement Model evaluates the relation between manifest variable (Observed items) and Exogenous/Endogenous latent variable by analyzing the factor loading on each constructs (Hulland, 1999). Structural model verify the relationship between exogenous latent variable and endogenous latent variable by analyzing path coefficients between them. Higher path coefficients and resultant R^2 values reported is the indicator of better model predictive ability. The study used Smart PLS to estimates the measurement model and structural model simultaneously (Ringle, et. al., 2005). The proposed model is shown in Figure1. The proposed model has two latent construct as QWL and occupational stress.

8.3. Measurement Model:

Tenenhaus, M., Esposito Vinzi V., Chatelin Y. M. and Lauro C. (2005) introduce three criteria to determine the overall quality of the model. Specifically, a path model can be assessed at three levels:

1. The quality of the measurement model
2. The quality of the structural model
3. Each structural regression equation used in the structural model.

8.3.1. The quality of the measurement model:

The quality of the measurement model was tested by assessing the individual item and scale reliability followed by convergent and discriminant validity of constructs’ measures. Initially the relationships were displayed between the constructs of occupational stress and QWL (Bhakar, et. al., 2012). PLS algorithm was applied and the resultant relationships, coefficients and values of loading were calculated. QWL was an endogenous latent variable

in the study and Occupational stress is exogenous latent variable. The factor loading below 0.5 were removed from the initial path model. A final path model was determined after removing the items which had the loading below 0.5. The final path model is given below in Figure 2. Path coefficient was reported negative. It was -0.741.

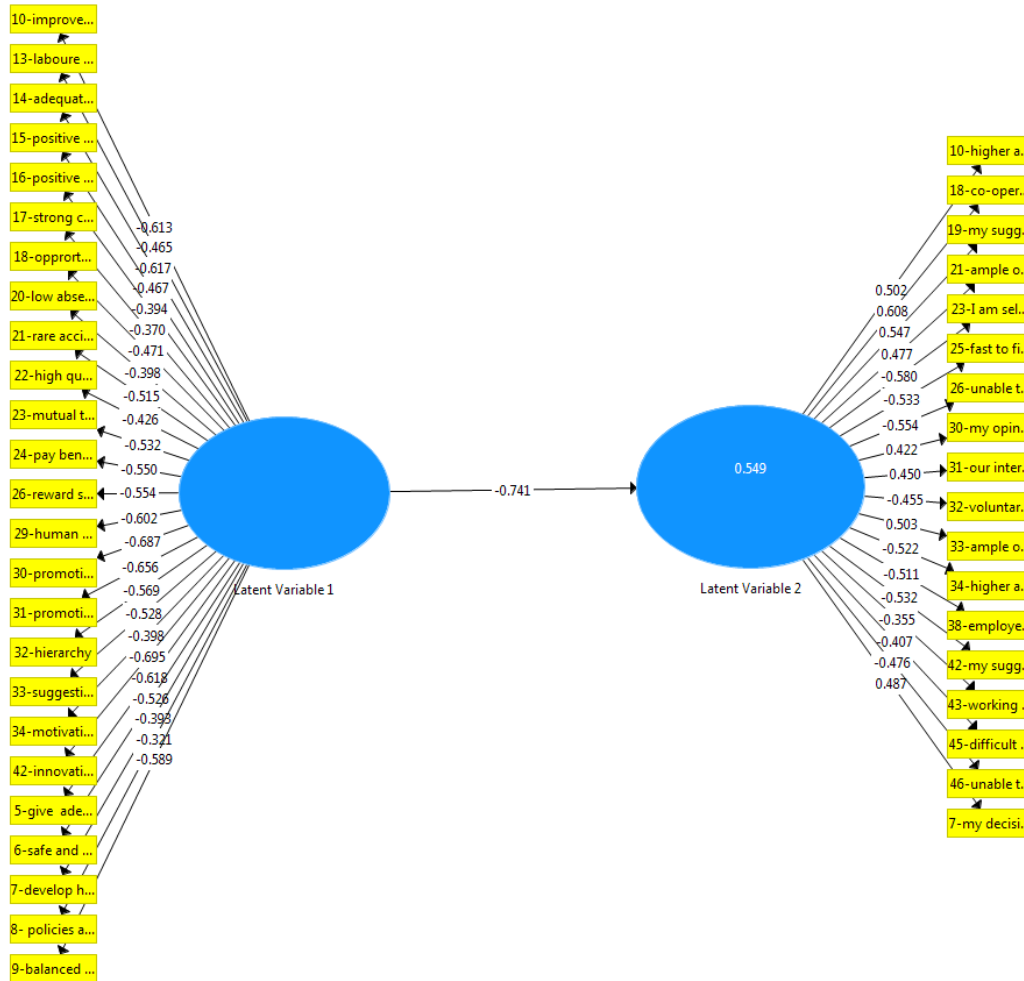


Figure 2: Final Path Model

Reliability:

Individual factors reliability was assessed by examining the loadings of associated factors on their respective latent constructs in PLS modeling (Hulland, 1999). Reliability of each variable was assessed through Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) measure of composite reliability in addition to Cronbach’s (1951) alpha. This measure is preferred over Cronbach’s alpha because it offers a better estimation of variance shared by the respective indicator (Hair et al., 2006). In this study composite factor reliability coefficient of the constructs ranged from 0.785 to 0.882 as shown in Table 5, which met the standard of 0.70 as suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Table 5: Composite Reliability

Sl. No		Composite Reliability
1	Occupational Stress	0.88
2	QWL	0.78

The factor loading, cronbach alpha, composite reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values calculated by PLS algorithms were tabulated in Table 6.

Table 6: Cronbach alpha, Composite reliability and AVE)

Latent variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Occupational Stress	0.87	0.88	0.279
Quality of Work Life (QWL)	0.88	0.78	0.249

Convergent validity:

Convergent validity refers to the degree of agreement in two or more measures of same construct (Camines & Zeller, 1979). Fornell & Larcker (1981) indicated that convergent validity is not established because variance extracted values are less than 0.5. Results indicated that the variance extracted from the items ranged from 0.249 to 0.279 reported in Table 6. It was inferred that the scale used for Occupational Stress and Quality of Work Life did not possess convergent validity. Also, the standard scales used in Omani context need to be moderated in future research for better measurement model and thus the structural path for the same can be validated.

Discriminant Validity:

Discriminant validity is adequate when constructs have an AVE loading greater than 0.5 meaning that at least 50% of measurement variance was captured by the construct (Chin, 1998). In addition, discriminant validity was also not confirmed because the diagonal elements are not higher than the off-diagonal values in the corresponding rows and columns. The diagonal elements are the square root of the AVE score for each construct (i.e. Stress and QWL).

Table 7: Discriminant Validity Results (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

	Occupational Stress	Quality of Work Life (QWL)
Occupational Stress	0.528	
Quality of Work Life (QWL)	-0.741	0.499

The diagonal element values were shown in the Table 7 was more than the off-diagonal values. The result indicated that the constructs of Occupational Stress and QWL did possess Discriminant Validity. It was inferred that the standard scales of Occupational Stress and QWL constructs are different from each other thus the structural path for the same can be validated.

8.4 Structural Model Analysis:

Hypothesis was tested by computing path coefficient (β) where as R^2 measured a construct's percentage variation that is explained by the model (Wixom & Watson, 2001). Conceptual model hypothesized that Stress is negatively impacting the QWL of teacher teaching in private management institutions. (R^2) was reported as -0.741. It suggested that negative variance of 74.1 percent in QWL was explained by occupational stress on QWL in the measurement model. It can be also be inferred that if there is 100 point increase in the stress, the 74.1 point decrease on QWL will be observed. The statistical significance of path coefficient (β) between these two latent constructs is measured by T statistics reported in bootstrapping.

Since the objective of PLS is to maximize variance explained rather than fit, therefore prediction-oriented measures such as (R^2) are used to evaluate PLS models (Chin, 1998). A bootstrap procedure using 1000/5000 sub samples was performed to evaluate the statistical significance of path coefficient according to Chin's (1998). The following (Table 8) showed hypothesized path coefficient along with their bootstrap values, "T" values.

Table 8: Path coefficient along with their bootstrap values, "T" values

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/STERR)	P Values
Occupational Stress -> Quality of Work Life (QWL)	-0.741	0.927	0.354

The relationship between Occupational Stress and QWL was not significant because path coefficient between these two latent constructs are not significant as $T = .927$ (Table value is supposed to be significant if it is more than 1.96 at α (significance level) of 0.05 degree of freedom > 120). Since T value is less than 1.96 indicating that the proposed path between occupational stress and QWL of teachers teaching in private management colleges in Oman is not significant. Also p value of 0.354 suggests that the proposed relationship between these two latent constructs is not significant.

Proposed hypothesis was not accepted based on the above analysis. It was inferred that occupational stress is not significantly affecting the QWL among the management teachers in Oman.

9. Conclusion

The study found moderate work stress among the management teacher in private collages in Oman. Moderate stress can be indicated as positive stress to foster individual performance and organizational climate. This was also corroborated from the result reported from QWL questionnaire. The final score of QWL was reported as 3.5 in 5 point scale. It was inferred that employee were moderately satisfied from QWL in these management institutions. Perception of being competent employee and innovative employee score was reported more than the final average score of QWL. It was inferred that teachers in educational institutions perceived them as more competent and empowerment because of the autonomy in pedagogy.

PLS analysis revealed that QWL of these educational institutions are inversely related with stress with a coefficient of -0.741. This clearly indicated that 100 point change in the stress would bring 74.1 point negative changes in QWL among faculty members in private management institutions in Oman. It means a 100 point increase in stress among employees would lead to deterioration of 74.1 point in QWL. But, Proposed hypothesis was not accepted based on the analysis as stress was not significantly affecting the QWL among the management teachers in Oman. Proposed structural model was not established because T value was reported as 0.927 with p value of 0.354. The hypothesized relationship between Occupational Stress and QWL was not significant because path coefficient between these two latent constructs were not significant. It was inferred occupational stress is not significantly affecting the QWL among management teachers in Oman.

The study reaffirms the past research findings where these two phenomena were negatively associated with each other. Further, it proves the theory that if Quality of Work Life (QWL) is better in an organization, the occupational stress shall be relatively lesser among the employees in such organizations. It can also be inferred that if perceived QWL is better in the organization, overall organizational health is better or improving there. It suggests that, the employees working in such organizations are withdrawing satisfaction from the workplace. Thus the perceived occupational stress shall be lesser in such organizations and mostly an inverse relationship shall prevail between these two constructs. Also, perceived QWL was reported more compare to occupational stress in Oman based on descriptive statistics. Thus, collectively these finding corroborates the inverse relationship between these two phenomena discussed in the study.

10. Directions for Future Research:

1. The future study can include all higher private colleges for further generalization of the phenomena related to QWL and occupational stress among teachers in Oman.
2. The further study in these areas can be extended to other sectors to study the phenomena related to these two construct.

11. Limitations

1. Sample size was on a lower side due to the teacher's tight work schedule and involvement in institutional miscellaneous activities.
2. Time duration to collect the data was less than 3 months.

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