

## MEASURING FACTORS INFLUENCING WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONG MILLENNIALS IN MALAYSIAN ORGANIZATION

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### Abstract

This study addresses a pressing issue in the contemporary global economy by examining the critical relationship between work engagement and the quality of work-life among millennial employees, with a specific focus on the Y generation. In an era of economic volatility, the sustainability of employee engagement has emerged as a paramount concern for various industries. Research has shown that millennial employees with low or no work engagement are highly inclined to leave their organizations within a year. To explore this nexus, the study adapted Walton's quality of the work-life model and integrated it with the JD-R Theory. Therefore, study's objective is to determine the impact of quality of work-life on work engagement, with a particular emphasis on the role of psychological capital as a mediator. Employing a mixed-mode research approach, the study will be conducted within the organizational landscape of Malaysia, utilizing online platforms. This research contributes significantly to the ongoing discourse on work engagement by delving deeper into the interconnected realms of Quality of Work-Life, Work Engagement, and Psychological Capital among younger employees, thereby offering insights crucial for sustaining economic vitality. As a move forward, this study paves the way for future investigations into this conceptual domain.

### Research paper

**Keywords:** Work Engagement; Quality of Work-Life; Psychological Capital; Young Employees

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## **Introduction**

The challenge of managing employee engagement and sustaining high-quality work performance is considerably more complex than the process of hiring individuals. Human resource development has recognized work engagement strategies as critical values in numerous industries and organizational contexts (Schuetz et al., 2021; Lee & Eissenstat, 2018). This multifaceted concept has been extensively explored across various fields, including psychology, industrial studies, organizational development, and management (Kim & Hyun, 2017; Wood et al., 2020). However, a noteworthy gap in this research pertains to the lack of clarity among young employees regarding work engagement, which can significantly impact their productivity and loyalty to the organization. Despite being a multidimensional concept encompassing motivation, cognitive and emotional elements, physical well-being, and high performance (Kuok & Taormina, 2017), the precise understanding of work engagement remains elusive.

The relevance of work engagement becomes evident when considering its strong correlation with an industry or organization's achievements (Chen, 2018; Batrancea et al., 2019, 2022). Implementing changes and ensuring the sustainability of an organization's effects are closely linked to work engagement across multiple industrial sectors (Satata, 2021). Past research has consistently shown that a lack of employee work engagement contributes to high turnover rates and negatively affects organizational productivity and performance (Mani & Mishra, 2021). Defined as passion, commitment, enthusiasm, energy, and focused effort directed towards an organization, work engagement is essential for achieving common goals between employees and the organization (Abuhashesh et al., 2019; Rai & Maheshwari, 2021).

Quality of work-life, a multidimensional concept (Sekhara et al., 2018), has garnered increased attention as a framework to enhance worker satisfaction and working conditions across various industries (Daud, 2010; Salamzadeh et al., 2014; Tajpour et al., 2021; Bashir et al., 2023). This concept's significance extends to the service sector, where it has become a focal point (Qamari et al., 2020). Quality of work-life is a crucial variable for understanding the relationship between employee well-being and industries (Setyaningrum & Pawar, 2020). Employees are highly motivated when they experience a comfortable and morally satisfying work environment, especially given that they spend a significant portion of their daily lives in the workplace (Afroz, 2019).

However, it is essential to note that quality of work-life is not only relevant to specific groups within industries; it is also crucial for promoting equality among employees, particularly in the services sector. This emphasis on durability in the quality of work-life is a significant research gap that needs exploration, as it forms the basis for understanding the overall life experiences of employees across different industries (Orgambídez & Benítez, 2021). These gaps in research highlight the importance of identifying and addressing the quality of work-life issues for various industry employees, especially within the context of an evolving workplace characterized by uncertainty and rapid change (Laulié et al., 2021; Hosseini et al., 2022).

The modern workforce, characterized by diversity in age, gender, values, and ethnicity, demands more fulfilling and meaningful work conditions (Nwanzu & Babalola, 2019). High-quality work-life and work engagement have been identified as crucial factors in mitigating turnover intentions among employees (Schultz, 2021). Extensive studies have consistently shown that

work engagement, defined as the simultaneous investment of an individual's physical, cognitive, and emotional energy in full work performance (Rich et al., 2010), significantly reduces turnover intentions across various organizations and industries (Gupta & Shaheen, 2017).

To shed further light on the intricate relationships between leadership, work engagement, and turnover intentions in organizations, it is necessary to investigate specific leader behaviors' effects (Song et al., 2021). Psychological capital, often referred to as personal resources, plays a significant role in fostering work engagement within the workplace (Alessandri et al., 2018). This is particularly relevant when ample resources are available in the workplace, increasing the likelihood of employee engagement (Donaldson et al., 2021). Psychological capital reflects employees' optimistic attitudes toward both individual life and work within organizations (Fontes & Russo, 2021; Nwanzu & Babalola, 2019). It encompasses attributes like self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, which collectively contribute to employees' ability to face challenges confidently and positively (Kotzé & Nel, 2019; Luthans & Youssef, 2017).

Psychological capital serves as a vital individual psychological resource, fostering a positive workplace atmosphere that encourages high levels of engagement. It enables employees to control their emotions and cognitive processes when faced with challenging work demands, leading to increased absorption and productivity (Alessandri et al., 2018). As the world of business, particularly the service industry, undergoes dynamic changes due to the presence of multiple generations in the workforce, addressing the unique characteristics and needs of young employees, particularly the Z-generation,

becomes paramount (Hookway & Woodman, 2021). These younger employees exhibit traits such as adaptability to challenging tasks but require empowerment to enhance their work engagement (Hui et al., 2021). Failure to address these issues may result in declining work engagement, leading to decreased productivity and increased turnover (Satpathy et al., 2019).

In light of these considerations, this study aims to delve deeper into the dynamics of employee engagement, particularly among younger generations, and to emphasize the critical role of quality of work-life in enhancing work engagement. By addressing this research gap, this study aims to contribute valuable insights to organizational policies, especially in nurturing the unique characteristics of millennial employees and improving organizational effectiveness. In the following sections, the study will outline the research methodology, present the study findings, and discuss the implications and recommendations for both academia and industry stakeholders.

## **Literature Review**

### **Work Engagement**

The past study stated the concepts that are widely used to measure research needs such as work engagement with various approaches and combinations of concepts to form the characteristics of perfection (Setyaningrum & Pawar, 2020). The combination of concepts and empirical study introduced work engagement showed a good impact, but there were also unsatisfactory findings related to the conceptual study (Orgambídez et al., 2020). Some scholars have also explored the relationship between work engagement and quality of work-life by reviewing the conceptual study, stating that the influence between the concepts will yield varying results in terms of engagement

depending on the motivation of each individual involved (Hakanen et al., 2021).

Other studies also agreed that the findings of the quality of work-life analysis will significantly support work engagement, especially individual indicators through job satisfaction (Orgambídez et al., 2020). This is agreed by a recent study where work engagement of either individuals or organizations can be influenced by elements that are within the quality of work-life, as various ways can shape employee behavior (Laulié et al., 2021). This study is particularly concerned with the needs of the employee which is crucial for organizations to discover to achieve objectives (Moreira et al., 2021).

Past research investigates the importance of dismantling concepts and making a good impact with appropriate theoretical backing proving similar patterns had been established in engagement work through quality of work-life (Kanten & Sadullah, 2012; Sahni, 2019). Moreover, this study is important to be explored because the important character in an organization is an individual who will change the position of the organization according to the quality of life of employees, whether technical management or humanely driven towards quality of work.

### **Quality of Work-Life**

Historically, several studies have evaluated and described the quality of work-life as a multi-dimensional model which can influence the work environment according to employee situations regarding the nature of industry organization, worker's behavior, and individuals' performance (Fernandes et al., 2017; Walton, 1975). In a different study, quality of work-life was iden-

tified and generally defined as concerning the effectiveness of the organization, and employee's well-being through the thought of the person, work, and organization (Afroz, 2019; Saygılı et al., 2020).

In general, the quality of work-life has been through humanized work, and basic needs required more, which encourages them to improve their quality of working life (Mohammadi & Karupiah, 2019). In relation to the needs of the employee, quality of work-life has been studied as a motivating tool and job enrichment path by concluding variables significant to career achievement, career balance, and career satisfaction (Davoodi et al., 2020; Radovic Markovic & Salamzadeh, 2018; Salamzadeh et al., 2022; Salamzadeh & Markovic, 2018). This corresponds to the experimental studies of indicators of quality of work-life related to the concept of employee-organizational commitment, which is motivating employees and promoting the best employee performance in the organization to increase their commitment (Wood et al., 2020).

Along with the request for further research related to quality of work-life, which requires the study to identify the significance of the aspect of employment where this study takes the approach of studying the closest aspect that is the work engagement scope (Sinval et al., 2020). Several studies have agreed about the quality of work-life influences on employees "in terms of organizational identification, job satisfaction, employee engagement, work effort, job performance, and intention to exit, turnover and organizational segregation" (Aruldoss et al., 2021).

Therefore, this study recognized that currently accepting the concept of employee engagement is essential to organizational success, and it becomes important for organizations today to develop and enhance strategies to nurture well-engaged employees (Setyaningrum & Pawar, 2020).

## **Psychological Capital**

Numerous studies have described psychological capital also called personal resources can fostering engagement at work and the more the resources are available in the workplace, the greater the probability that the employee will be engaged (Grover et al., 2018; Schaufeli, 2017; Paramba et al. 2023). Past studies have discussed psychological capital as mostly related to the reflection of employees' optimistic attitudes towards individual life and work in the organizations (Gupta & Shaheen, 2017; Vermooten et al., 2020).

According to history, the key properties of psychological capital have to do with resilience from the aspects of the individual self in general (Hobfoll et al., 2018). The use of this psychological capital concept is often used in investment-related fields, sociology, and economics with an emphasis on individual psychological resources and motivational tendencies (Alessandri et al., 2018; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Consequently, interesting past studies have used psychological capital as a mediator which has a four-element structure supporting work engagement behavior which contains self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience. Self-efficacy refers to self-confidence to face challenges to be met, hope refers to the support obtained reciprocally directed on the path to goal, optimism means the positive emotions related to output, and resilience means overcoming failure in conflict while seeking positive change (Donaldson et al., 2021; Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017).



Moreover, psychological capital can be considered as an individual resource where an employee's positive aura can drive emotional and cognitive levels of involvement in challenging work and work demands that need rigorous and absorption (Li et al., 2020; Vermooten et al., 2020). Psychological capital would be established and improved through comparatively rapid workplace interventions and it has the potential to even produce a competitive advantage, but also increase revenues (Donaldson et al., 2021). This can allow the organization to leverage the psychological state of the employee engagement effectively for the benefit of both the organization and the individual especially the millennial the anchor of the current workforce (Alessandri et al., 2018).

### **Millennial Employees**

Work engagement was discussed as a question of channelling organizational members' identities to their work duties, which is when increasing efficiency and representing employees physically state, intellectually, and emotionally while performing their roles (Kahn, 1990; Li et al., 2020). To be deeply attached means to make meaningful connections with members of the employee and to have empathy for the experiences of others (Tkalac, 2021).

Being intellectually engaged, on the other hand, is being intensely aware of one's goal and function in the workplace (Sanchez et al., 2016). Engagement can also be defined as a positive, affective or cognitive state composed of vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Witte, 2017).

In recent years, work engagement has been the focal point of human resource (HR) managers (Lee & Eissenstat, 2018). Different management

policies are framed to earn employee engagement including supportive environment, communication processes, leadership and developmental opportunities (Schultz, 2021). However, previous research has reported that different generations of employees tend to have unique engagement drivers (Dorie & Loranger, 2022; Lai et al., 2012; Saeedikiya et al., 2023; Afjal et al., 2023; Salamzadeh et al., 2023). Likewise, young employees have a lack of work engagement, only if they perceive that the organization is committed to satisfying their higher-order socio-cognitive needs (Madan & Madan, 2019). The extant literature suggests a positive association between the perception of learning and employee positive attitudes (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Therefore, employees with access to learning opportunities are highly motivated and committed.

Past research has shown that organizational initiatives to offer learning and development opportunities, particularly skill and capacity development, are strong predictors of employee satisfaction and engagement (Mokhtar et al., 2021). In particular, initiatives promoting the sharing of information and knowledge create opportunities for individual learning through competency development (Younas & Waseem, 2020). This results in building their personal and professional competencies such as problem-solving, networking, decision-making, self-confidence, opportunity identification and analytical aptitude (Schaufeli, 2017).

In covenant with their psychological profile, young employees exhibit a dominant growth need and a learning goal orientation; hence, they are attracted to the developmental initiatives offered by the organization (Younas & Waseem, 2020). Therefore, continuous learning opportunities offered by

an organization by promoting dialogue and inquiry, socialization and collaboration serve their quest for personal learning, which in turn fosters a feeling of engagement (Moreira et al., 2021). As engagement is a psychological state, employees are more likely to feel emotionally and cognitively engaged, when their dominant growth needs are served (Effendi et al., 2021).

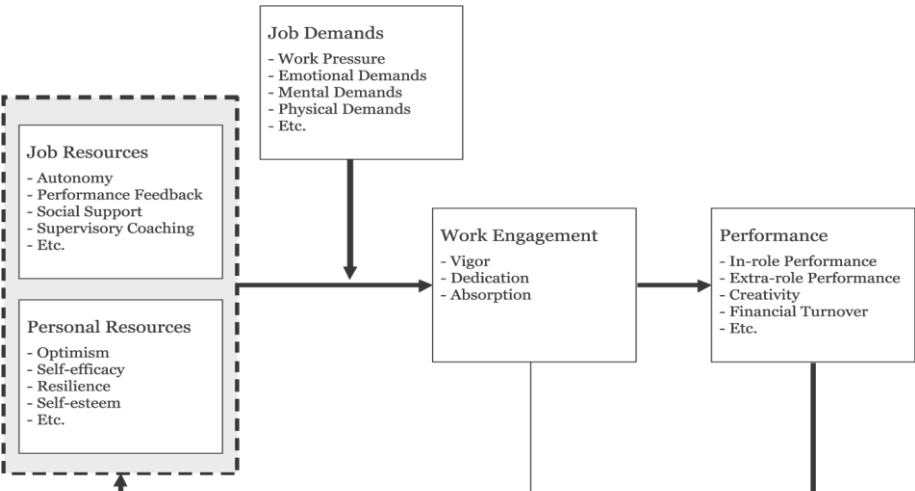
Therefore, employees perceive that their organization is concerned towards their continuous development and they harbour a sense of belongingness, involvement and growth (Mokhtar et al., 2021). This results in a satisfaction of their higher-order cognitive and self-actualization needs. In line with the social exchange perspective, once young employees recognize that organization is committed to their overall well-being, they feel an obligation to repay in terms of a positive reciprocal response of higher engagement (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Thus, the perception of learning evokes positive response manifested as higher engagement. This is consistent with the past research which indicates a strong positive relationship between work engagement with psychological need satisfaction (Chan et al., 2017).

## **Theory Foundations**

The Job Demand-Resources theory (JD-R) extends the job demands-resources model inspired by job design and work stress theory which can understand, explain and make predictions about employee well-being and job performance (Bakker & Vries, 2021; Radic et al., 2020). Over the past few years, the model has increased the number of studies continuously used to predict a variety of individual-related understandings in organizations, which include work engagement and employee psychology (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

The JD-R model has been used and proven successful in predicting the consequences of this experience which has now produced numerous studies, and some Meta-analyses on the JD-R model that the model matures and results in great theories (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Guided by JD-R theory, this study needs to understand, describe, and make predictions about employee well-being (e.g. health, motivation, and work engagement) and work performance which in this section provided a further discussion of the most important building blocks supported by JD-R theory (Grover et al., 2018; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

Therefore, this theory can support all quality of work and can be adapted to the specific job being work engagement.



**Figure 1.** JD-R Model (Source: Bakker & Demerouti, 2017)

**Table 1.** Work Engagement Articles Review

No	Authors & Year	Purpose	Conceptual / Theoretical Model	Paradigm / Methodology	Context / Sample	Finding	Limitation / Gaps
1	Gupta et, at., 2018	The study conducted was to examine the six-dimensional quality of work life and work engagement with the role of psychological capital mediator.	QWL as dependent variable, work engagement as independent variable, and PsyCap as mediator.	The study was conducted in 15 hospitals that were randomly selected from a list of hospitals accredited by the National Accreditation Board for Indian Hospital and Healthcare service providers. Data were obtained and collected from employees working in the hospital's accident and emergency departments. The methods of analysis used were statistical measures is the Harman one-factor model in SPSS and the common latent factor in the AMOS CFA model.	The context of the study was among employees of the emergency and trauma department of the Indian Primary Health Care Center Hospital (n = 200).	The findings of the study found that five dimensions of QWL had a relationship with the work engagement. Moreover, PsyCap fully mediates the relationship between job engagement and workplace control of one of the QWL dimensions. However, PsyCap mediates in part between work engagement and the other five dimensions of QWL.	This study states among the limitations are the study design and its reliance on facility sampling, which may limit the possibility of generalization. Moreover, the study can be replicated across other service industries such as hotels and so on due to the similar intensive work environment as it is limited in the context of emergency departments hospital in India.
2	Hafilda & Ilmi, 2022	This study aims to test the influence of psychological capital on employee engagement with quality of work-life as a mediator variable in	Employee engagement as dependent variable, PsyCap as independent variable, and QWL seven dimension as mediator.	This study conducts a quantitative method in which causal research is explained by the influence of value variation on one or more other variables. In other words, whether a change in value in one	The subjects of this study were employees of BPJS West Java Manpower Company and Bandung Branch Office which amounted to 140 employees	The study found that there is a positive and significant influence of psychological capital on the quality of work-life and employee engagement. In addition, there is also a positive	This study focuses more on PsyCap as a predictor for employee engagement and as a QWL as a mediator. Yet there are still gaps and limitations

No	Authors & Year	Purpose	Conceptual / Theoretical Model	Paradigm / Methodology	Context / Sample	Finding	Limitation / Gaps
		BPJS West Java Man-power Company.		variable can result in a change in value in another variable. In addition, the analysis technique used is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with Partial Least Square (PLS) method.		and significant influence of quality of work-life on employee engagement. Quality of work-life serves as a full mediator of the influence of psychological capital on employee engagement.	that need to be tested because the context of the study is limited to entrepreneurs in one organization in Indonesia. Moreover it is not stated about the diversity of the working generation.
3	Wardani & Anwar, 2019	This study was conducted to elucidate the relationship between capital psychology and work engagement with mediators of quality of work-life.	Work engagement as dependent variable, psychological capital as independent variable, quality of work-life as mediator.	Quantitative with questionnaires survey. The measuring tools used in this study were the QWL Model by Walton, Implicit PsyCap Questionnaires (IPCQ) by Harm and Luthan, and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) by Schaufeli and Bakker. Analysis are used CFA as hypotheses testing and the mediation regression model using SPSS for PROSESSv3.0 by Andrew F. Hayes	Respondents from multinational companies employees in Indonesia with 356 of sample size.	Studies have found that psychological capital and work engagement have a positive relationship. In addition, psychological capital and quality of work-life, work engagement and quality of work-life also have a positive relationship. Psychological capital has direct and indirect effects on work engagement and quality of work-life as a mediator. Quality of work-life is partial me-	This study has a limited context of respondents to the workers of the largest car assembly plant in Indonesia. Not described the context of multi-generational workers especially young employees. In addition, this study focuses on PsyCap as a predictor of the study and QWL as a mediator.

No	Authors & Year	Purpose	Conceptual / Theoretical Model	Paradigm / Methodology	Context / Sample	Finding	Limitation / Gaps
						diated relationship between psychological capital and work engagement.	

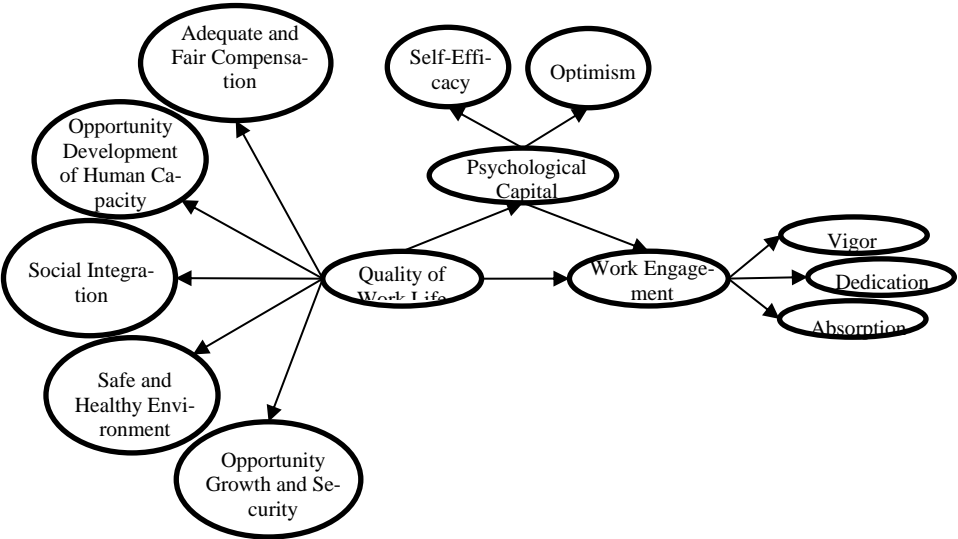
### **Framework of the Study**

Captivating the foundation of the literature review that has been done previously, this study will select the independent, mediated and dependent variables of the research framework with underpinning the JD-R theory by Bakker & Demerouti (2017) to investigate relationship and understanding of work engagement among young employees through the population gap. Accordingly, this conceptual framework will widely used to demonstrate that young employees and work engagement have a determination to explain the mutually supportive relationship.

Based on Gouldner (1960), past study of theoretical was explained a sense of responsibility by the employee obtains support and shows positive behaviors and support to the organization which is also supports a reciprocal relationship between employee and good management. After examining the problems in the latest issue supported by the literature review highlights in identifying the purpose and relationship between variables coupled with the relevant theoretical support already described, a full study conceptual framework is proposed to understand the impact of work engagement in organizations through five dimensions in independent variables i.e. adequate compensation and fair, safe and healthy environment, growth and security, human

capacity development, and social integration and the three dimensions in the dependent variables are vigor, dedication, and absorption.

Moreover, the study conceptual framework introduces the structures of mediator between quality of work-life and work engagement using dimensions of self-efficacy and optimism as depicted in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Research Framework with Formed Dimensions (Source: Authors)

**Methodology of Study**

The population of this study are the young employee mostly Z-generation employees from various organization industries. This study will consider individuals consisting of Z-generation working in different organizational locations in the Malaysian industry. The population in this study is estimated at 25,784 active employees registered which is taken through the e-Census website powered by the Department of Statistics Malaysia. The sample for this study will be selected based on power analysis using GPower.



For the framework proposed, the minimum sample needed is 146 respondents based on F-Test (Linear Multiple Regression: Fix model, R2 deviation from zero) with 80% predictive power, effect size,  $f^2 = 0.15$ ). Hence, a few cycles of data collection will be made namely (1) pilot testing, (2) development of the measurement and structural model. Respondent characteristics will be used as the filter questions to ensure respondents who participated in this study represent the inclusion criteria identified. Apart from that, the study framework consists of one endogenous, work engagement and 1 predictor, namely quality of work-life. Psychological capital is estimated to mediate the relationship between the quality of work-life and work engagement.

Stage 1: Measurement design for work engagement, quality of work-life and psychological capital. For this study all the items will be adapted from previous scholars. The focus group will be conducted using the Focus Group protocol using qualitative method. It consists of three phases namely, preparing the focus group, conducting the focus group, and interpreting the results. the verification will be made using Cognitive Aspects of Survey Methodology (CASM). Once the statements are finalized, they will be confirmed with the expert reviews. At the end of these stages, all items for constructs are finalized.

Stage 2: Data analysis: Validate Research Framework. Once the items for identified variables are finalized, we will develop the model for the research framework. The model will be developed based on the past literature. Data will be collected based on a sampling frame using systematic random sampling. Once the data is ready, we will conduct the preliminary analysis to test the assumptions using SPSS. Next, the assessment of validity and relia-

bility will be conducted. This assessment involved the inter-items loading using average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR) and convergent validity using heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). The result will be reviewed and the amendment will be made based on the result gained from the pilot study. At the end of this stage, the model will achieve its reliability and validity, and thus can be proceed for further analysis.

Stage 3: Data analysis: investigate the relationships between work engagement, quality of work-life and psychological capital. At this stage, data once again will be collected for the actual study based on the inclusion criteria for this study. The sampling frame will be obtained from the university using systematic random sampling. The set of data will go through a preliminary analysis to test the assumptions for PLS-SEM. Once the preliminary analysis is achieved, we will assess the structural model in order to validate the model by testing the relationship of the variables in the model. At the end of this study, the validated model is ready to be used in future studies.

Before the measurement is distributed to the actual respondents for the actual study, the measurement will be presented to the ethical committee to ensure that the measurement confirms the ethical guidelines outlined by the university.

## **Discussion And Conclusion**

The study's findings will be used to assess and contextualize the levels of work engagement among millennial employees in the Malaysian organizational industry, with implications for the country's economic development. Furthermore, these findings can serve as a valuable foundation for the crea-

tion of practical guidelines and procedures tailored to organizations, particularly those with a predominantly young workforce. This study's primary objective is to apply key theories and practices that can help numerous organizations enhance their performance and ensure the sustainability of their contributions to the national economy. Consequently, this study operates under the assumption that the quality of work-life and work engagement play pivotal roles in retaining individuals within an organization over an extended period.

### ***Implications, Limitations And Future Research***

This study highlights the critical importance of addressing work engagement and quality of work-life among millennial employees, especially in the context of the Y-generation. The findings may have practical implications for organizations seeking to retain their younger workforce in times of economic uncertainty. The integration of Walton's quality of work-life model and the JD-R Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the relationship between work engagement and quality of work-life, which can be applied to other demographic groups and industries. The focus on psychological capital as a mediator suggests that interventions aimed at improving employees' psychological well-being could potentially enhance work engagement and overall job satisfaction.

The study's findings may be specific to the organizational landscape of Malaysia and may not be directly applicable to other regions or countries with different cultural and economic contexts. The mixed-mode research approach, which includes online surveys, may introduce selection bias and limit the generalizability of the results, as it may not capture the perspectives of

employees who are less digitally inclined. While the study offers valuable insights into the relationships between quality of work-life, work engagement, and psychological capital, it may not account for all possible confounding variables or external factors that could influence these relationships.

Future research could expand the scope of this study by conducting cross-cultural comparisons to determine whether the relationships observed in Malaysia hold true in other countries. Longitudinal studies could be conducted to track changes in work engagement and quality of work-life over time, providing a deeper understanding of how these factors evolve and interact. Exploring additional mediators and moderators in the relationship between quality of work-life and work engagement could further enhance our understanding of this complex dynamic. Qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, could complement the quantitative findings by providing richer insights into the experiences and perceptions of millennial employees. Investigating the effectiveness of specific interventions or organizational policies aimed at improving the quality of work-life and, subsequently, work engagement among millennial employees would offer practical guidance for employers seeking to retain and engage this demographic group in the face of economic challenges.

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