

EFFECTIVENESS OF WORK AUTONOMY ON EMPLOYEES' JOB SATISFACTION IN IT SECTOR, MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

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Abstract

The effect of Work Autonomy (WA) on Job Satisfaction (JS) of employees in the IT sector, Bangalore, with Work-Life Balance (WLB) serving as an intervening variable, is explained in this research. Despite IT employees' problems with maintaining a Work-Life Balance due to their demanding work schedule and heavy workloads, Work Autonomy's freedom, independence, and discretion can lead to a balanced work life and progressive Job Satisfaction. A structured questionnaire was predominantly used to gather data from 337 IT employees in Bangalore, which was then analyzed using SEM analysis. The results demonstrate the intermediary role of WLB on WA and JS and the direct influence of WA on JS. By implementing effective work autonomy practices, IT organizations can ensure employees' WLB and JS, contributing to organizational goals and achievements.

Keywords: demographic variable, Job Satisfaction (JS), Structural Equation Modelling, Work Autonomy (WA), Work-Life Balance (WLB)

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the Indian IT industry has created 5.43 million professionals in the financial year 2022-2023. The IT-BPM industry contributes about 7.4% of India's total GDP. About 1.5 million employees are working in Bangalore in IT and IT-related services. The world's leading IT exporter, Bangalore, is recognized as the Silicon Valley of India. The life of IT professionals is different from that of other sectors. Most of the employees join their IT job immediately after they have finished their education. The start of family life leads to problems in most employees' personal lives. The IT employees are sometimes expected to be available 24/7 for updating and troubleshooting. The problem behind this situation is the enlarged workload and time limits. They cannot find enough time for their personal life. WLB is a person's capacity to maintain a healthy balance between personal and professional life. Due to increased workload and work pressure, most IT employees cannot balance their personal and professional lives, which may cause emotional imbalance and conflicts in their work and personal lives (Greenhaus, J. H., & Allen, T. D. ;2011). WLB is the balance between an employee's work and personal life, contributing to happiness for the person who experiences it (Shaffer et al.,2016). Employees with WLB experience increased performance, organizational growth, and success. WLB has a significant role in the performance and retention of employees (Naithani,2010). WLB helps reduce burnout among employees with increased productivity (Schaufeli et al.,2009). Proper WLB improves employees' mental health by reducing stress, depression, and sleep interference (Haar et al.,2014). Maintaining WLB among employees is a significant concern experienced by individuals and organizations (Naithani, P,2010; Zhang et al., 2017). Most IT professionals work overtime because of project deadlines (Kelliher et al.,2010) . The lives of employees in the IT sector have become dramatic and flow with career gadgets (Mazmanian et al.,2013). Their profession is changing the entire lifestyle (Chesley,2014). Tight schedules and going beyond achievements make their life so fast and unhealthy (Siu, O. L. (2013). Due to this increased work pressure and targets, employees face trouble with WLB and may have turnover intentions (Zhang et al.,2017). The well-being of employees is an integral part of the success of a sector (Wang et al.,2023). The IT sector should take necessary actions to maintain balance among employees, handle work stress, and maintain a healthy lifestyle (Wang et al.,2023). The employees' Work-Life Balance will impact their performance (Anwar et al., 2013). Employees with a healthy WLB will perform effectively and can achieve career and organizational goals (Naithani, 2010). In IT sectors, employees get frustrated due to the continuous workload, which, over the years, causes turnover intentions and blackouts (Anwar et al.,2013).

Organizational structure should be prominent to work effectively. Work Autonomy is the freedom the organization provides its employees to make decisions and own their work. Work Autonomy allows employees to schedule work, deadlines, and flexible work arrangements. This arrangement enables the employees to be more convenient and productive at work, perform better, and have a healthy lifestyle. After the COVID-19 pandemic, the IT sector provides more flexible work arrangements to their employees. Employees can work at home or in the office at their convenience and according to job requirements. To a great extent, families with both partners working in the IT sector can arrange their work conveniently to meet their professional and personal requirements. Autonomy is the level of freedom, independence, and individuality given to the employees in fulfilling their tasks

(Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Work Autonomy provides a better way for employees to do their jobs conveniently (Patterson et al., 2005). According to research, Work Autonomy positively affects Work-Life Balance (Bulger & Fisher et al., 2012).

One of the major concerns for IT sector jobs is Job Satisfaction (JS). Time constraints cause considerable problems in meeting goals. Without Job Satisfaction, employees will be unable to work progressively and intend to resign (Spector, 1997). The behaviour and perspective of employees are different from one another. Job Satisfaction is a dynamic attitude toward the job and working environment (Davidescu et al., 2020). Organizations should ensure employees' job satisfaction and performance. Organizational structure should ensure the satisfaction of their employees. Few studies revealed a negative correlation between JS and employees' resignation (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012). When employees are treated without adequate income and facilities, emotional and intellectual aspects cause absenteeism and turnover intentions (Mihelic & Tekavcic, 2013; Holtom et al., 2008). Satisfied employees will work hard, attain their objectives, and meet organizational success. An organization's productivity depends upon the satisfaction of the employees (Elton Mayo, 1930).

In this fast, dynamic world, IT sector employees are facing trouble with balance in work-life due to their enlarged workload and work pressure. This may affect increased work-life conflict, stress, burnout, and decline in performance. These problems can be reduced by organizations that provide work autonomy practices to employees, enhance control over their work tasks, and allow them freedom in decision-making, scheduling work, setting deadlines, and using methodologies that suit them (Deci & Ryan, 2000). These provisions can assist IT employees in meeting a balance in work-life in a way that suits them to complete their tasks. In the IT sector, the conveniences provided by Work Autonomy cause JS and also by the intervening effect of WLB (Holland et al., 2019).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Work Autonomy

In the IT sector, the organization provides freedom for employees in decision-making, work methods, and control over their work. Autonomy enables employees to work more productively. Research shows that Work Autonomy enhances the intrinsic motivation of employees and tends to share knowledge (Foss et al., 2009). Autonomy causes employees to be proactive and take initiative (Foss et al., 2009; Parker et al., 1997). Employees who feel substantial freedom in their work will be more productive—autonomy reforms jobs to suit the employees to perform well (Patterson et al., 2005). Autonomy encourages creativity and innovative skills. Autonomy provides convenience to employees to do their tasks more effectively.

2.2 Job Satisfaction

Job Satisfaction is a state of emotional delight in employees' jobs (Al Jenaibi, 2010), a significant factor in organizations (Gykye & Haybatollahi, 2015). Job Satisfaction is essential for organizational aspects (Parnell & Crandall, 2003; Coyle & Adams et al., 2004). JS is one's perspective towards their job, whether it suits them or not. Some researches reveal that employees are satisfied in some facets of the job, and other factors are precluded (Spector, 2012). Job satisfaction is additionally more stable for people with the same job than job changes and is affected by job conditions (Dormann & Zapf, 2001). Job Satisfaction is considered a delightful feeling and a substantial factor in the organization (Al Jenaibi, 2010; Gykye & Haybatollahi, 2015). Organizations that value employees' emotional, physical, and mental well-being adopt strategies for acquiring job satisfaction.

2.3 Work-life balance(WLB)

WLB is the middle ground between two different roles handled by an employee: work and family life, which create pleasure in his lifetime (Shaffer et al., 2016). To work properly, the employee should maintain a healthy work-life during his career. WLB progressively affects employees' performance. WLB has a decisive role in the outcome of employee performance (Anwar, Hansu, & Janjua, 2013; Konrad et al., 2000; Ahmad, 2008). The unevenness in work and family life grounds corollaries in organizations, like low throughput and poor outcomes. In the IT sector, flexible work arrangements are possible to meet WLB. According to Byrne (2005), WLB manages the five facades of everyone's professional life, personal life, friends, physical and mental condition, and self-care. Problems in work-life- stress, rivalry, and workplace uncertainties create unevenness in WLB (Byrne, 2005). Without family and personal life, employees cannot fulfill and lead a proper life, only a professional life. Lack of WLB causes employees' job exhaustion and subsequent resignation (Haar et al., 2014).

Freedom (Work Autonomy) given in the workplace is significant in employees' Work-Life Balance as it can make them more productive and efficient (Iqbal & Khusnul, 2020). Employees can make suitable arrangements to meet their daily life requirements. Work Autonomy practices give substantial freedom for employees in decision-making, work schedule, location, etc., and control over their work. Work Autonomy practices make work more flexible; Work Autonomy significantly affects WLB (Bulger & Fisher et al., 2012; Holland et al., 2019; Iqbal & Khusnul, 2020; Mas-Machuca et al., 2020). From the studies, the following hypothesis can be generated

H1: WA has a significant positive effect on WLB.

Employees with WLB are deemed job-satisfied and more loyal to the organization (Iqbal & Khusnul, 2020). A proper work and professional life lead to substantial happiness for employees. They may feel more loyal and show morality towards the organization. WLB significantly affects JS (Musura et al., 2013; Taukder Vickers & Khan, 2018; Fan & Smith, 2017; Yumei Yang et al., 2023). Employees with WLB will have less stress/tension and conflict at work, causing job satisfaction (Dousin et al., 2019; Joo & Lee, 2017). Employees who are able to

balance multiple responsibilities in their lives are generally happier at work because of the happiness that comes with it, according to a study by Wu et al. (2013). Achieving equilibrium not only results in personal satisfaction but also provides a fulfilling work experience (Dousin et al., 2019). People who are more adept at balancing work and non-work obligations are more likely to be content with their jobs because they play a variety of roles that are significant to them (Haar et al., 2019). The hypothesis developed from the aforementioned research is

H2: WLB has a significant effect on JS.

Gozukara and Kolakoglu (2016) explained that WA significantly impacts JS in several jobs and organizations (Morgeson, Delaney-Klinger, and Hemingway, 2005). Work Autonomy can reduce job stress, develop intrinsic motivation, and develop Job Satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Work autonomy can trigger employee performance based on their capabilities, resulting in more satisfied employees. They have a feeling that the output is due to their decisions, actions, and efforts. Employees experience some relaxation and convenience at their work. Employees who experience WA are happier and more loyal to their organization (Iqbal & Khusnul, 2020; Novianti & Fuadiputra, 2021). Higher work autonomy causes increased job satisfaction and lowers stress levels in IT employees. (Foss et al., 2009). These studies created the below hypothesis

H3: WA has a direct significant effect on JS.

WLB is an intervening variable between WA and JS (Holland et al., 2019). Experiencing time and happiness through convenient practices makes the employees more satisfied. Work Autonomy provides more flexibility in employees' work schedules to meet their personal needs, avoiding work-life problems and improving Job Satisfaction (Bulger & Fisher, 2012; 2016; Mas-Machuca et al., 2020). A high level of WA causes better WLB and increased JS (Iqbal & Khusnul, 2020). From a study of Indian nursing professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic, work autonomy and superior support positively affect work-life balance and are associated with job satisfaction (Rashmi & Kataria, 2023). The following hypothesis is formulated from the studies.

H4: WLB has an intermediate effect on WA and JS.

A conceptual framework is developed according to the study and hypotheses (Figure 1). In this research model, Work Autonomy is the independent variable, JS is the dependent variable, and WLB is the mediating variable.

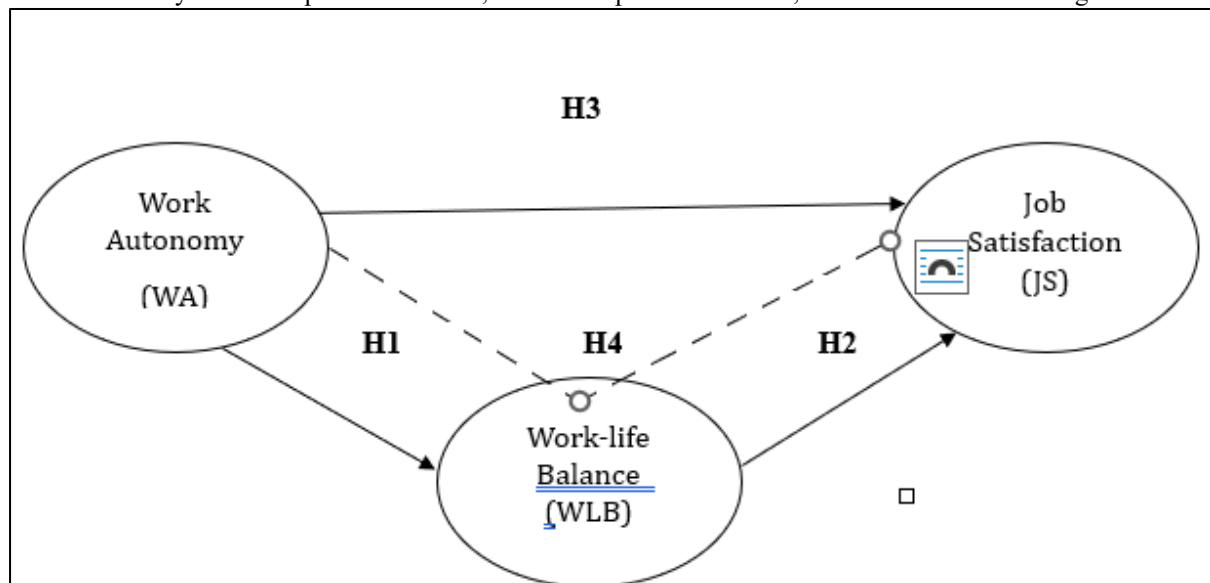


Figure 1 Research Framework

METHODOLOGY

The main motive behind the study is to measure the effectiveness of Work Autonomy (WA) on JS, the mediating effect of WLB, and the direct effect of WA on JS. The Structural Equation Model (SEM) in AMOS is used to find the relationship between the constructs WA, WLB, and JS. A questionnaire in Google Forms is used for data collection. A sample size of 337 is taken from IT employees in Bangalore. The questionnaire includes demographic variables and WA, WLB, and JS variables. A Likert scale of 5 points (ranging from Highly Agree-5 to Highly Disagree-1) is used for data collection. SPSS software and SEM are used for analysis purposes.

The demographic variables of the study are age, marital status, gender, income, designation, and experience. The Work Design Questionnaire (WDQ) by Morgeson and Humphrey measures work autonomy with four dimensions: task characteristics, social characteristics, knowledge characteristics, and work context characteristics. WLB is measured by the Fisher, Bulger, and Smith (2009) scale with three main dimensions such as Work Interference with Personal Life (WIPL), Personal Life Interference with Work Life (PLIW) and Work Personal Life Enhancement (WPLE) with four items, and JS is measured by Spector's Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) with nine dimensions with 7 items: pay & promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, , nature of work & operating conditions, coworkers and communication.

Table 1 Demographic variables of respondents

Sl. No	Particulars	Classification of Variables	Frequency	Percentage
			N=337	
1.	Age	21-25	101	30
		26 to 30	108	32
		31 to 35	74	22
		36 to 40	17	5
		Above 40	37	11
2.	Gender	Male	179	53
		Female	158	47
		Other	0	0
3.	Marital Status	Married	145	43
		Unmarried	189	56
		Separated	3	1
4.	Experience	Less than 5 years	195	58
		6-10 years	88	26
		11-15 years	20	6
		More than 15 years	34	10
5.	Income	Below 30000	101	30
		30001-60000	88	26
		60001-90000	64	19
		90001-1.2 Lakh	37	11
		Above 1.2 Lakh	47	14

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 illustrates that most employees are in the 26 to 30-year-old group (32%). 53% of respondents seemed to be male, and 47% were female. From the respondents, 43% are married, 56% are unmarried, and 1% are separated. Many employees have 0 to 5 years of experience (58%) and an income below 30,000 (30%).

DATA ANALYSIS

Confirmatory Factor Analysis(CFA) is done using AMOS software to ensure the data is free from multicollinearity issues and confirmed normal distribution (Kline,2015). To analyze the model, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was conducted. Fit indices obtained from SEM for the proposed model, according to Kline (2015), are RMSEA= 0.06<0.08, GFI= 0.932≥0.9, and RMR =0.021<0.08.

MEASUREMENT MODEL

The reliability test for the means of all constructs is conducted with the alpha values of WA, WLB, and JS being 0.904, 0.843, and 0.922, respectively. Alpha value which is greater than 0.7 shows strong reliability (Nunnally,1978). The AVE values obtained for all constructs are greater than 0.5, so the study shows significant convergent validity.

Figure 1 shows a fit model for the proposed model in the Structural Equation Model using AMOS software. Work Autonomy is measured using 4 variables, WLB by 3, and JS by 7.

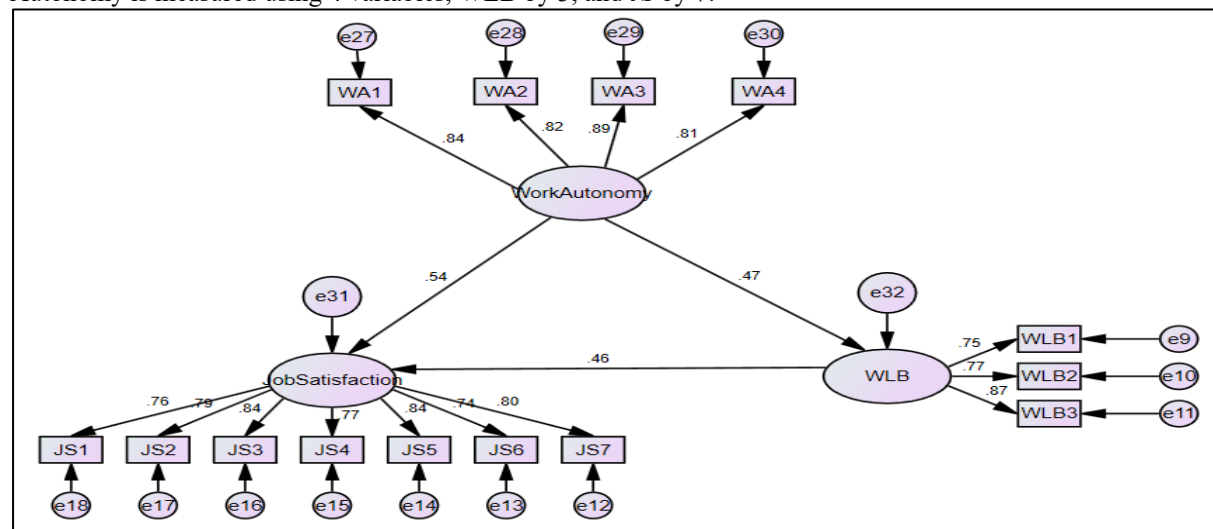


Figure 1: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

From Table 2, the CMIN/DF value obtained is 2.202 in the acceptable range of <5, indicating the model's fitness. The p-value obtained for the model is 0.000, indicating a statistically significant model. The obtained RMR value of 0.021<0.08 denotes a good model fit. The value obtained for GFI is 0.932, nearer to the recommended value

of 0.95, indicating a reasonable fit. The AGFI value obtained is 0.904>0.9, which points to a good fit. CFI value is 0.972>0.95, TLI value is 0.966>0.95, and are greater than the recommended value. The RMSEA value 0.06<0.08 implies a good fit of the model.

Table 2: Fitness of the Model

Models	CMIN/DF value	P value	RMR value	GFI value	AGFI value	CFI value	TLI value	RMSEA value
Proposed Model	2.202	0.000	0.021	0.932	0.904	0.972	0.966	0.06
Recommended value	<5	>0.05	<0.080	>0.95	>0.90	>0.95	>0.95	<0.080

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 shows the relationships between WA, WLB, and JS using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). WA has a strong direct relationship with WLB, with a standard estimate of 0.469. WLB positively influences JS, with a standard estimate of .461, which is also influenced by Work Autonomy (0.539). Thus, a mediating effect exists (Holland et al.,2019).

Table 3 Standard Estimates

	Unstandardi sed Estimate values	Standardized Estimate	Standard val Error.	Critical Ratio.	P value	Hypotheses
WLB ← WA	.469	.469	.063	7.478	***	H1 is accepted
JS ← WLB	.579	.461	.066	8.769	***	H2 is accepted
JS ← WA	.677	.539	.064	10.508	***	H3 is accepted

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 describes the CFA results of the discriminant and convergent validity of the constructs WA, WLB, and JS. Each construct's value is greater than 0.5, showing convergent validity of a higher level (Hair et al.,2017; Campbell& Fiske,1959; Liu& Li,2010). The square root of AVE values of WA, WLB, and JS are more significant than their corresponding values with other constructs, showing the constructs' higher discriminant validity (Larcker & Fornell et al., 1981).

Table 4 Discriminant Validity of the constructs

Constructs	WA	WLB	JS
WA	0.793		
WLB	0.714	0.802	
JS	0.755	0.469	0.840

Note: The values are square roots of AVE scores. Source: Primary Data

The bootstrapping technique (Cheng& Lau, 2008) confirms the mediation effect with 5000 bootstrap samples. The mediation effect of WLB between WA and JS is statistically significant. WLB partially mediates the relationship between WA and JS.

Mediation effect and total effect

Cheung & Lau's (2008) bootstrapping technique is applied to find the mediating role of WLB with work autonomy and job satisfaction using bootstrap samples of 5000. Table 5 explains the mediation effect and total effects of constructs WA and WLB on JS (target construct).

Table 5 Mediation Effect and Total Effect

Structural Path	Effects	Standardi zed Effect (β)	Confidence Interval		Significance?
			2.50%	97.50%	
WA → WLB → JS	Mediation Effect	0.216	0.142	0.315	Yes

WA→JS	Direct Effect	0.539	0.406	0.662	Yes
WA→JS	Total Effect (Direct + Indirect)	0.755	0.669	0.828	Yes

The above table shows a significant mediation effect. WA (exogenous) construct has a total effect ($\beta = 0.755$) on the construct JS(endogenous). These effects evidently prove hypothesis 4

H4: WA → WLB → JS

RESULTS

The analysis results indicate that WA significantly influences the WLB of IT employees, so hypothesis H1 is valid. WLB directly affects JS, causing the acceptance of hypothesis H2. Therefore, hypothesis H4 is accepted for mediating the role of WLB on Work Autonomy and Job Satisfaction and confirmed by Cheung & Lau's (2008) bootstrapping technique. The SEM results show a strong positive direct relationship between WA and JS. Hence, hypothesis H3 is accepted. The direct effect of WA on JS is found to be more than the mediating effect of WLB.

DISCUSSION

Employees who experience Work Autonomy feel motivated to do their jobs effectively, which leads to Job Satisfaction. WLB has a major impact on employees' daily life practices. Employees who work in automated jobs have better WLB and enhanced JS (Gozukara & Colakoglu, 2016; Holland et al., 2019). WLB causes increased employee Job Satisfaction, loyalty, and performance towards the organization (Iqbal & Khusnul, 2020; Naithani, 2010). Ozükara Nurdan Çolakoğlu explained that WLB improves employee welfare, organizational growth and performance (Wanget al., 2023). Achieving WLB is a challenging task for IT employees. The working culture and demanding nature of IT jobs cause work-life conflicts and stress to the employees and impact overall performance and Job Satisfaction (Byrne, 2005; Bonney, 2005). Irrespective of this study, Work-Life Balance is deemed high for female workers working in the banking sector with high WA and less workload, thus increasing JS. The study mainly with role of WA on JS, considering WLB as an intermediating variable. Satisfaction is obtained (Iqbal, R. F., & Khusnul, R. N., 2020). Work arrangements, a healthy lifestyle, and social gatherings make people happier and better.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The study refers to the effectiveness of WA on JS and WLB as an intermediating variable for IT employees. The Work Autonomy practices experienced by IT employees lead them to peace and happiness in their professional and personal lives. WLB mediates between WA and JS. The autonomy practices provided by the IT organization also directly impact employee job satisfaction. By providing Work Autonomy, organizations can attract and retain their talented employees, and they will work effectively with WLB and JS. This study reveals the significance of organizations' implementing work autonomy strategies for organizational culture.

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