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ETHICAL CLIMATE, INNOVATIVE WORK BEHAVIOR, AND WORK ENGAGEMENT: A STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL ON THE QUALITY OF WORK-LIFE OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

This research sought to determine the most suitable structural model for work-life quality using factors such as ethical climate, innovative work behavior, and work engagement. Four hundred local government employees from Region XI responded to a survey after being recruited through stratified sampling. The researchers used statistical methods such as mean and standard deviation, Pearson correlation coefficient, multiple regression, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyze the data. The results showed that ethical climate, innovative work behavior, work engagement, and quality of work-life were all high. Additionally, there was a significant relationship between ethical climate, innovative work behavior, work engagement, and the quality of work-life. The effect of the exogenous variables on the quality of work-life was 22 to 22.6%. Additionally, the study found that work engagement was the best predictor of the quality of work-life. The study found that Model 5 was the best fit structural model for quality of work-life. The model showed that work engagement, along with its corresponding manifest variables of vigor, dedication, and absorption, were predictors of the quality of work-life. The manifest variables for the quality of work-life were adequate and fair compensation, use of capacities at work, and opportunities at work. The paper discusses these results and their implications for Human Resource Management in local government units.

KEYWORDS: ***ethical climate, innovative work behavior, work engagement, quality of work-life, structural equation model, government employees, public administration SEM, Philippines***

INTRODUCTION

Seventy-five percent of employees in the Philippines are unhappy with their QWL compared to 87% in the rest of the world. In France and Belgium, 10% of employees in one workplace were experiencing depression [1]. Poor QWL can lead to various issues, such as health problems, personal relationship difficulties, and social life challenges. The Australian Institute reported that 24% of Australian workers have health issues due to poor QWL [2].

Quality of work life (QWL) has been a popular topic among public and private employees for over 30 years. One cannot discount the importance of quality of work-life. QWL is a process that aims to improve the work environment, methods, and outcomes of organizations while also enhancing employees' lives. Researchers have studied what employees consider to be important in terms of QWL. Quality of work life involves adequate and fair compensation, use of capacities at work, occupied space by the work in life, working conditions, opportunities at work, constitutionalism at work, and social relevance and importance of work [3].

Research has shown a significant relationship between ethical climate, innovative work behavior, work engagement, and quality of work-life [4], [5], [6], [7]. There are still other factors that affect QWL. For example, work-life balance and job satisfaction [8]. All these can impact employees' working capacity, social integration, opportunities, and many others. When employees are delighted with their quality of life, they become more dedicated to their job, which could result in higher efficiency and productivity [9], [10].

Although there have already been many types of research conducted on these topics, the authors have not yet come across a structural model of quality of work-life using ethical climate,

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innovative work behavior, and work engagement as exogenous variables, especially in the Philippine setting. Thus, to establish a model for QWL, the researchers challenged themselves to delve into this investigation. The findings of this study may become research-based data to solve the poor quality of work-life in some organizations.

OBJECTIVES

This study intended to determine the best-fit model for the quality of work-life among government employees. The researchers investigated whether ethical climate, innovative work behavior, and work engagement influenced the quality of work-life. To achieve this goal, the researchers established specific objectives to guide the study.

1. Assess the level of ethical climate in the workplace among government employees by evaluating various factors such as the ethical environment, employee focus, community focus, obedience to authority, code implementation, self-interest, efficiency, rules and procedures, personal ethics, and adherence to laws and professional codes.
2. Describe the level of innovative work behavior among government employees by assessing core self-evaluations, organizational support for innovation, co-worker exchange, and creative self-efficacy.
3. Appraise the level of work engagement among government employees by measuring factors such as vigor, dedication, and absorption.
4. Ascertain the quality of work-life among government employees by evaluating factors such as adequate and fair compensation, working conditions, use of capacities at work, opportunities at work, social integration at work, constitutionalism at work, and the occupied space by work in life.
5. Determine the relationship between various factors and the quality of work-life among government employees, particularly the relationship between ethical climate and quality of work-life, innovative work behavior and quality of work-life, and work engagement and quality of work-life.
6. Determine the significant influence of ethical climate, innovative work behavior, and work engagement on the quality of work-life among government employees.
7. Determine the best fit structural model for the quality of work-life among government employees.

HYPOTHESIS

1. There is no significant relationship between ethical climate and quality of work-life, innovative work behavior and quality of work-life, or work engagement and quality of work-life among government employees.
2. There is no significant influence of ethical climate, innovative work behavior, or work engagement on the quality of work-life among government employees.
3. There is no best-fit structural model for the quality of work-life among government employees.

METHODS

This study examined the relationships between different variables using quantitative methods. The researchers used descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation to describe the levels of the variables. They also used inferential statistics like Pearson r to determine if the relationship between variables was significant and multiple regression analysis to find out how vital the predictor variables were in the relationship [11], [12], [13]. In addition, the researchers used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to create the best model for understanding government employees' quality of work-life.

Studies that build structural models use SEM [14], [15]. SEM can show the relationships between observed and unobserved variables and provide meaningful and valid results [16], [17], [18], [19], [20]. Moreover, SEM can also identify the factors that create a causal relationship between dependent and independent variables using mathematical models and theories [21], [22], [23]. It provides consistency in research where it is essential to have a good fit [24], [25].

On the other hand, the researchers used stratified random sampling to recruit 400 regular government employees from the LGUs of Davao, Digos, Mati, Panabo, Samal, and Tagum to participate in the survey. The study included only the regular employees in its sampling because they could provide accurate answers to the questionnaire due to their length of service. Excluded as samples were the casuals and the job orders.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1
Ethical Climate of Government Employees

Indicator	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Environment	0.64	3.95	High
ee Focused Climate	0.64	4.02	High
Community-focused Climate	0.63	3.88	High
ıce to Authority	0.59	4.05	High
ıplementation	0.51	4.06	High
erest Climate	0.65	4.12	High
ıcy Climate	0.57	4.03	High
ıd Procedures Climate	0.69	3.83	High
l Ethics Climate	0.84	3.85	High
l Professional Codes Climate	0.83	3.89	High
Overall	**0.29**	**3.97**	**High**

Table 1 presents the survey results on the ethical climate in government workplaces. The survey included ten variables related to ethical climate, all of which received high mean scores. The overall mean score was 3.97, indicating that government offices frequently observed the variables of ethical climate. The standard deviation of .029 suggests that the responses were consistent among survey participants.

The study found that government employees experienced a high ethical climate in their workplace, reflected in the frequent observation of various aspects of ethical climate, including ethical environment, employee-focused climate, community-focused climate, obedience to authority, code implementation, self-interest climate, efficiency climate, rules and procedures climate, personal ethics climate, and adherence to laws and professional codes.

Assessing the ethical climate of organizations is crucial because it affects employee behavior. Employee perceptions of their workplace's climate can influence their attitudes toward their organization [26], [27]. Employees who view their organizations as egoistic and less ethical are likelier to engage in corrupt practices influenced by individual motives [28]. Therefore, promoting a moral climate can help employees perform their work honestly. Administrations can encourage ethical behavior by implementing spiritual retreats and seminars on Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability in Public Service (ITAPS). These activities can help improve or shape employee values.

Table 2
Innovative Work Behavior of Government Employees

Indicator	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
Core-Self Evaluation	0.47	3.95	High
Organizational Support for Innovation	0.64	3.79	High
Co-worker Exchange	0.51	4.05	High
Innovative Self-Efficacy	0.44	3.99	High
Overall	**0.29**	**3.95**	**High**

Table 2 presents the results of a survey on innovative work behavior among government employees. The survey measured core self-evaluation, organizational support for innovation, co-worker exchange, and innovative self-efficacy. The overall mean score was 3.95, indicating a high level of innovative work behavior among respondents. The standard deviation of 0.29 suggests that the responses were consistent with the expected answers.

The survey found that government employees experienced a high level of innovative behavior, as reflected in

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their frequent experiences of core self-evaluation, organizational support for innovation, co-worker exchange, and creative self-efficacy [29]. This finding supports previous research suggesting innovative behavior can inspire employee trust and improve company performance [29], [30]. Without effective leadership, employees may turn to their peers and others for support [31], [13].

Table 3
Work Engagement of Government Employees

Indicator	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
Vigor	0.51	3.96	High
Dedication	0.54	3.96	High
Absorption	0.48	3.94	High
Overall	**0.36**	**3.95**	**High**

Table 3 shows the results of a survey on work engagement among government employees. The overall mean score was 3.95, indicating a high level of work engagement among respondents. The standard deviation of 0.36 suggests that the responses were consistent. Respondents reported high levels of vigor (M=3.96, SD=0.51), dedication (M=3.96, SD=0.54), and absorption (M=3.94; SD 0.48) when engaging in their work. These results suggest that government employees frequently demonstrate these indicators of work engagement.

The survey found that government employees experienced high work engagement, as measured by vigor, dedication, and absorption [32]. Increased creativity, task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and client satisfaction are associated with high levels of work engagement [33]. Organizations can provide supportive leadership to improve work engagement. This leadership type can inspire employee innovation and creativity [34], [14], [35]. Organizations must provide unrestricted movement and exercise opportunities to maintain good health, essential for work engagement [36]. In contrast, [37] found that vigor and dedication are the core dimensions of work engagement.

Table 4
Quality of Work-life of Government Employees

Indicator	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
Adequate and Fair Compensation	0.92	3.38	Moderate
Working Conditions	0.60	3.58	High
Use of Capacities at Work	0.49	4.11	High
Opportunities at Work	0.50	3.90	High
Social Integration at Work	0.78	3.70	High
Constitutionalism at Work	0.83	3.87	High
Occupied Space by the Work in Life	0.60	4.15	High
Social Relevance and Importance of Work	0.51	4.07	High
Overall	0.28	3.85	High

Table 4 presents the level of quality of work life among government officials. The data shows an overall high quality of work life, with a mean score of 3.85 and a standard deviation of 0.28. However, the adequate and fair compensation indicator received an average mean score of 3.38 (SD=0.92), suggesting that respondents only sometimes experienced sufficient and just compensation.

The high quality of work life found in the study suggests that respondents often agreed with the survey statements. According to [38] and [39], several elements contribute to an organization's quality of work life. In this study, the indicators of quality of work life (QWL) included adequate and fair compensation, working conditions, use of capacities at work, opportunities at work, social integration at work, constitutionalism at work, occupied space by the work in life, and social relevance and importance of work [40].

Studies have shown that when employees are given ownership of their work and recognized for their contributions,

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their productivity can peak [41]. Furthermore, employees tend to identify more with organizations that acknowledge their potential and uplift their morale, leading to increased commitment [42]. Employees who enjoy a high quality of work life in their organization will likely want to stay [43

Table 5
Relationship between the Exogenous Latent and Endogenous Latent Variables

Exogenous Variables	Quality of Work-life (Endogenous Variable)								
	AFC	WCS	UCW	OAW	SIW	CAW	OSC	SRW	Overall
Ethical Climate	.190**	.226**	-.040	-.005	-.085	.278**	.169**	-.091	.228**
	.000	.000	.419	.915	.089	.000	.001	.069	.000
Innovative Work Behavior	.313**	.203**	.132**	.063	-.061	.067	.038	.015	.245**
	.000	.000	.008	.206	.220	.182	.448	.762	.000
Work Engagement	-.037	.045	-.019	.048	.183**	.361**	.447**	.134**	.354**
	.463	.367	.703	.336	.000	.000	.000	.007	.000

** The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Legend:

AFC – Adequate & Fair Compensation
WCS – Working Conditions
UCW – Use of Capacities at Work
OAW – Opportunities at Work
SIW – Social Integration at Work
CAW – Constitutionalism at Work
OSC – Occupied Space by the Work in Life
SRW – Social Relevance and Importance of Work

Table 5 presents the results of a correlation test between the exogenous variables (ethical climate, innovative work behavior, and work engagement) and the endogenous variable (quality of work life), with a significance level of $p<0.05$. The results show that all tests are significant and reject the null hypothesis that no significant relationship exists between the exogenous and endogenous variables. The result means that all exogenous variables substantially connect with the endogenous variable, quality of work life. The significant relationship between the variables is evident in a 2-tailed test, which indicates that the mean scores are substantial in both the upper and lower tails of the distribution. A 2-tailed test determines whether the mean is significantly greater or less than a specified value (X), resulting in a p-value of less than 0.05 and indicating significance.

Other research supports this finding. For example, [7] Menzel (2019) found that organizations with an ethical climate achieve a high quality of work life, indicating a significant relationship between these variables. Additionally, an ethical environment can alleviate distress. [44] found that when an organization offers an ethical environment, employees experience less emotional and moral pain. Moreover, [4] found that happy employees are more likely to be innovative, impacting work-life quality. [45] also found that happiness at work influences employees' creative skills. [3] emphasized the importance of balancing work and other aspects of life to achieve a high quality of work life, as failure to do so can result in adverse outcomes. Finally, [6] found that work engagement and work-life balance are closely related. They emphasized that employees are more likely to want to stay in their organization when they achieve work-life balance. Interestingly, [46] reported that working from home can increase work-to-life conflicts and negatively impact work-life balance. However, work engagement can positively mediate such conflicts.

Table 6
Influence of the Exogenous Latent Variables on Quality of Work-life

	Endogenous Variable			
Exogenous Variables	B	β	t	Sig.
Constant	1.158		4.397	.000
Ethical Climate	.173	.177	3.973	.000
Innovative Work Behavior	.235	.244	5.463	.000
Work Engagement	.272	.356	8.017	.000
R	.475			
R^2	.226			
ΔR	.220			
F	38.545			
ρ	.000			

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Table 6 presents a regression analysis testing the influence of the exogenous variables (ethical climate, innovative work behavior, and work engagement) on the endogenous variable (quality of work life). The data shows that all three exogenous variables significantly influence the quality of work life. The combined influence of these variables accounts for 22.6% (R2=.226) of the variance in quality of work life, indicating that 77.4% of the variance is due to other factors beyond the scope of this study.

Examining the individual beta coefficients reveals that work engagement has the most decisive influence on the quality of work life (B=.272, p=.000), followed by innovative work behavior (B=.235, p=.000) and ethical climate (B=.173, p=.000). The F-value of 38.545 with p=.000 indicates that the regression model has significant predictive capability. In other words, work engagement has the most significant impact on the quality of work life. For every unit of change in government employees' work engagement, there is a corresponding change in their quality of work life, holding other factors constant.

A study by [47] found that an organization's ethical climate can affect its employees' organizational citizenship behavior. Therefore, organizations must promote an ethical environment and implement corporate strategies supporting moral values, which can help employees become better members of the organization and improve overall organizational performance [47], [48], [49].

Leadership types can also influence employees' innovative behavior. [50] found that transformational and transactional leadership styles can facilitate employees' creative behavior and increase their creativity. In addition to leadership style, intrinsic motivation and occupational self-efficacy strongly support employees' innovative behavior [51], [12], [14]. These findings suggest that organizations should modify their leadership styles and promote intrinsic motivation to encourage employee creativity. However, extrinsic motivation may also play a role [52], [53].

Finally, studies have shown that a high quality of work life can help alleviate life's pressures and improve mental health. For example, burnout can negatively impact an employee's mental health. However, when employees enjoy a high quality of work life, they are more likely to enjoy their work and avoid mental health issues [54], [55]. Additionally, employees with a high quality of work life are more likely to achieve a work-life balance [56].

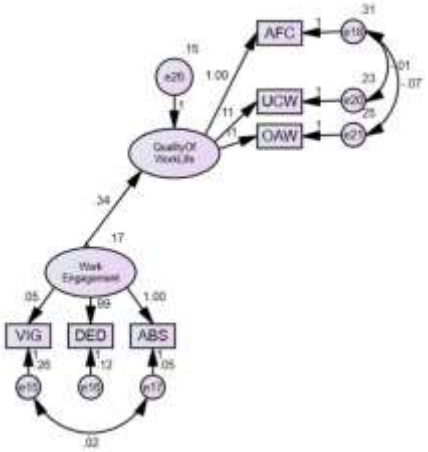

Figure 1. **The Best-Fit Structural Model for Quality of Work-life**

Legend:

Work Engagement		*Quality of Work-life*	
VIG	Vigor	*AFC*	Adequate and Fair Compensation
DED	Dedication	*UCW*	Use of Capacities at Work
ABS	Absorption	*OAW*	Opportunities at Work

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Table 7
Generated Values for the Best-Fit Model

INDEX	CRITERION	MODEL FIT VALUE
Probability Value (P-value)	> 0.05	.093
Chi-Square/Degrees of Freedom (CMIN/DF)	0 < value < 2	1.448
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	> 0.95	.986
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	> 0.95	.975
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	> 0.95	.972
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	> 0.95	.952
Root Mean Square of Error Approximation (RMSEA)	< 0.05	.034
P of Close Fit (P-Close)	> 0.05	.837

Figure 1 presents the best-fit structural model for quality of work life. At the same time, Table 7 displays the generated values for this model, which meet the criteria for a good fit in structural equation modeling (SEM). The model shows work engagement with its manifest variables (vigor [VIG], dedication [DED], and absorption [ABS]) as the best predictor of quality of work life. Of the eight observed variables for quality of work life, only three remained in the model: adequate and fair compensation (AFC), use of capacities at work (UCW), and opportunities at work (OAW). This result indicates that these three variables are the most relevant for determining the quality of work life.

CONCLUSION

This study's findings suggest a significant relationship between the exogenous variables of ethical climate, innovative work behavior, work engagement, and quality of work life. Additionally, the exogenous variables significantly influence the quality of work life. The findings suggest that the HR department of the organizations involved in this study should conduct action research to establish the grounds why the levels of these exogenous variables did not reach the very high mark, which is the expected level; develop a strategic plan based on the findings of their action research, and reengineer and recalibrate their policies to fit the present demands. These actions will help to improve the quality of work life for employees in these organizations. Future researchers may replicate this study in other locales to validate the findings of this study.

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