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Article

Impact of empowerment and ICT on quality of work life: The mediating effect of trust climate

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Impact of empowerment and ICT on quality of work life: The mediating effect of trust climate

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Abstract: Aim of the study is to examine the impact of employee empowerment and ICT support on the employees' work life quality with the mediating effect of the hospitality firms' trust climate. Operational employees (n = 123) of the three star hotels of Bangladesh participated in the study. A partial least squares structural equation model (PLSSEM) was utilized in order to test a hypothesized model. Data were validated by a measurement model and hypotheses were tested by a structural equation model using the SmartPLS 3.0 software. Results indicate that climate of trust partially mediates the relationship between employee empowerment and quality of work life, and ICT support and quality of work life. The study also found that employee empowerment ($\beta = 0.299$), ICT support ($\beta = 0.326$), and climate of trust ($\beta = 0.192$) have strong effects ($p < .05$) on employees' quality of work life with a variance (R^2) of 42.1%, while employee empowerment ($\beta = 0.358$) and ICT support ($\beta = 0.393$) have significant influences ($p < .05$) on firm's climate of trust with a variance (R^2) of 38.1%. These findings may be utilized cautiously since the study was undertaken on the operational employees of the three star hotels in Bangladesh. This study provides new insights by defining the role of the hospitality firms in enriching the operators' life at work and the strategies that the hospitality managers can formulate to empower their staff, allow them effective technological support, and build an atmosphere with mutual trust for attaining positive employee focused outcomes.

Subjects: Hospitality Business Development; Human Resource Management; Strategic Management; Human ResourceDevelopment; Sport & Leisure Industries

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Keywords: quality of work life; employee empowerment; ICT support; climate of trust; hospitality industry; three-star hotels; operational employees

1. Introduction

Human resources are directly responsible for the production and delivery of services in the majority of service industries, and human actions are linked to consumer consumption experiences. For improving the service quality, employees spend a great deal of time (Lee et al., 2016), accordingly, they devote a significant portion of their lives to their jobs (Akman & Akman, 2017). Besides, they plan their personal/family time based on their job demands. These phenomena influence the early practitioners to make the work settings more humane and importantly, to enrich the operators' work life. Because a healthy work life stimulates employee attitude and performance, which also have an enormous contribution to corporate success (Adisa & Gbadamosi, 2018; Sari et al., 2019). Therefore, scholars talk about the "quality of work life" of people to benefit their overall life through fulfilling their needs and enriching their working conditions (Sirgy et al., 2001).

It has been reported that service operators in the hospitality industry do not enjoy their work life (Akter et al., 2021; Gordon et al., 2019). In recent years, the industry has become one of the world's largest and most rapidly expanding industries (Alshaabani et al., 2020). It contributes to the development of many economies, and in some nations, it acts as a major source of foreign currency earnings (Matthew et al., 2021; Sheehan et al., 2018). In Bangladesh, it acts as one of the major economic drivers (GOB, 2019) and is one of the nine largest employment-generating sectors (GOB, 2021). Due to the expansion of international business, tourism, and the hosting of international sports and events, the inflow of foreign visitors has also increased significantly. However, the hospitality industry of Bangladesh encounters human resource-related problems, e.g., employee unhappiness with their work and working life (Akter et al., 2021; Alshaabani et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2019).

One of the most difficult challenges for hospitality employees is providing prompt responses to customers/guests due to poor organizational arrangements, like a lack of authority to make work-related decisions, limited access to information, a lack of control on the job, and vague and meaningless responsibility (Alhozi et al., 2021, 2021; Rubel et al., 2021). If they are given adequate power and authority, resources, and liberty, they can solve the job-related issues by investing their creative ideas and insights for business development (Abuhashesh et al., 2019). Scholars claimed that for the accomplishment of a hospitality firm's objectives (guest satisfaction, sustainability, and profitability), empowering its employees is a basic and essential organizational function (Saban et al., 2020; Simsek, 2020). When a firm empowers its employees, it needs to provide technological support for accessing (job-related) information (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004). From this perspective, Bangladesh is still in the early stages of adopting the revolutionary benefits of modern ICTs in the hospitality industry, despite many other developing economies already having done so (Avi & Sardar, 2021; Rahman & Hassan, 2021; Tripura & Avi, 2021). The hospitality firms are not yet technologically equipped to cope with the changes in hospitality operations globally. By applying modern ICTs, they can improve their performance in marketing products and services, assessing customer demands, monitoring customers/tourists/guests, disseminating data and information, building employee capacity, and so on (Avi & Sardar, 2021; Rahman & Hassan, 2021).

Researchers accentuated empowerment to understand an individual's satisfaction with his/her work life (Nayak et al., 2018; Nursalam et al., 2018). Empowered employees are better prepared to meet challenges, as they have control over their jobs, get support from the team members, and are recognized for their accomplishments. It is one of the organizational approaches by which a firm can contribute to increasing the professional role development of the individuals. In addition, empowerment plays a crucial role in the organization for enriching the qualities of people's work lives (Nayak et al., 2018; Nursalam et al., 2018). Further, a firm can support its workforce by providing the appropriate technologies to communicate knowledge and information

inside and/or outside the team on time. This support is necessary for making an individual's (work and social) life happy and peaceful as well as for improving his/her well-being (Demerouti et al., 2001). Thus, a firm's ICT support benefits the working procedures that ultimately impact quality of employees' work life (Hannif et al., 2014).

Further, numerous local and international studies found organizational trust, mutual trust, trust in leaders, and climate of trust as the mediating variables between organizational factors and employee-related outcomes in the hospitality industry (Akter et al., 2021; Oh, 2022; Ozturk & Karatepe, 2019; Qiu et al., 2019). In this industry, the absence of trust among organizational members restricts mutual respect, knowledge sharing, open communication, collaboration, and creative performance. Instead, a high level of shared and mutual trust can help both managers and employees achieve firms' success in a shorter time and more effectively. Besides, during times of uncertainty, natural disasters, pandemics (e.g., COVID-19), and any other national or global economic and/or political unrest, shared trust would even help all the stakeholders of the hotels (Guzzo et al., 2021). Considering the nature of hospitality jobs, researchers claimed that no variable can affect an individual's attitude and behavior as much as trust does (Tan & Tan, 2000). Undoubtedly, if mutual and shared trust does not exist, organizational practices will fail to influence hospitality employee perceptions, i.e., employees will not be properly empowered, and ICT will not assist the people.

In addition to employees' QWL, empowerment and ICT support have implications for building shared and mutual trust within the organization. Empowerment, generally, takes place only when managers can trust the employees. On the other hand, in the participative decision-making process, employees get more knowledge about other people (including managers) and the organization as a whole, which generates their trust in others (Haq et al., 2018; Laschinger et al., 2012). Similarly, a trust climate is created within an organization, when appropriate technologies are utilized for sharing the knowledge and information transparently, accurately, and timely (Bondarouk et al., 2017). These corporate actions, therefore, can cause greater interpersonal contacts, which reintroduces the concept of mutual trust (Gill & Sypher, 2010). Afterward, trust between employees and managers results in the improvement of employee happiness with their work life (Cascio, 1992; Shaw, 2005). Besides, mutual and shared trust has been observed as an important outcome in the empowered (Laschinger et al., 2012; Vanhala & Ahteela, 2011) and ICT-enabled work environment (Bala & Bhagwatwar, 2017; Bissola et al., 2014), while it also has been identified as a predictor of quality of work life (Akter et al., 2021; Al-Shalabi, 2019; L. Jiang & Probst, 2015). Therefore, this study proposes that the impact of firms' empowerment practices and ICT supports on staffs' work life can be mediated by the shared trust among the organizational members.

The corporate roles in empowering employees and applying ICT were emphasized separately in different studies. However, enough idea of how empowerment and ICT-enabled practices could jointly impact employees' work life is not found yet. Besides, the knowledge is still lacking about the joint effects of empowerment and ICT to enhance people's work life quality through building a trust climate of a team. These multiple organizational factors may have different (direct and indirect) effects on employees' work life if they are taken together. Moreover, hospitality people's work life issues are studied only by a few research, while the issue in the developing and under-developed country context is not much explored. In light of this, the goal of this study is to investigate the effect of empowerment and ICT support on an individual's work life quality with the mediating effect of trust climate.

By addressing the identified research gaps and the corresponding goal, this study will explain how firms can utilize their technological and human efforts and contribute to the interests of the working people. Moreover, it can broaden the existing knowledge by elucidating the role of trust climate as an intermediate variable in the facilitation of QWL outcomes of employees. Therefore, this study offers an opportunity to find the paths for enhancing employees' work life quality in the

presence of the firm's initiatives of empowerment and ICT facilities. For this, the study proposes a conceptual model that will contribute to the development of the theoretical and the practical framework of QWL.

2. Literature review

2.1. Quality of work life

Walton (1973) for the first time pointed out the concept of "quality of work life" as the quality of human experience at the workplace. At that time, producers emphasized employer-employee relations as well as product quality, which were dependent on the organizational work environment for achieving a competitive position. Considering both the requirements, Walton (1975) defined quality of work life as an organizational process of employing mechanisms, which allow employee participation in the organizational decisions relating to their work lives. Thus, the QWL program was primarily implemented to improve the work environment. Since then, it has garnered much attention in business society as well as in academia. Later, based on the empirical investigation, Sirgy et al. (2001) defined QWL as "employee satisfaction with a variety of needs through resources, activities, and outcomes stemming from participation in the workplace". They considered the impact of the workplace on employee satisfaction in their professional life, personal life, and overall life. Remarkably, both Walton (1975) and Sirgy et al. (2001) concentrated on the satisfaction of employee needs because an improved work life enriches an individual's quality of overall life and a satisfied person can better contribute to organizational success.

However, Yousuf (1996) referred to QWL as employee perceptions about every dimension of work, including economic rewards, benefits, security, working conditions, organizational and interpersonal relations, and their intrinsic measurement taken by the organization in order to humanize the work environment. Kwahar and Iyortsuun (2018) defined QWL as a humanizing approach to a workplace in terms of job nature, physical work environment, social connections, compensation and benefits, managerial approaches, and employee relations. These researchers stressed the QWL for addressing the issues relating to organizational working conditions. Thus, researchers explained quality of work life from different perspectives, although industrial psychologists and management experts commonly explained QWL as "all about employee wellbeing".

2.2. Employee empowerment

It is an organizational practice of building employee perceptions of having greater authority to influence a firm's decisions (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004; Zimmerman, 2000). Empowerment broadly embraces some matters, like an individual's freedom to make decisions and take actions, a sense of control over a job, accountability in terms of work done, and responsibility for performance outcomes (Greasley et al., 2008). Consequently, s/he has control over the organizational success through his/her job (B.E. Hayes, 1994). Scholars categorized employee empowerment, as psychological empowerment: employee feelings of self-efficacy and experience of autonomy at the workplace; and structural empowerment: the delegation of authority along with the responsibility to the employees. A firm generates psychological empowerment in individuals through organizational initiatives, which is called structural empowerment (Zimmerman, 2000). When empowerment is fully deployed, greater possibilities are created for achieving corporate goals, since it facilitates organizational decisions by involving both employees and managers (Ardahaey & Nabilou, 2012).

2.3. ICT support

ICT produces interlinks between societies by supporting the entities through the access to knowledge and information. Information technology fundamentally facilitates organizational communication in the decision-making process (Majchrzak et al., 2005). The deployment of information technologies has consequences for the creation of the "global virtual team", where people work together toward common goals, even though they live in different locations (Adamovic, 2017). Application of appropriate technologies ensures the promptness of the dissemination of

information and removes the barriers posed by the users' location. Thus, ICT has contributed to the quality and quantity of organizational performance (Arbabisarjou & Allameh, 2012), which aligns with the quality of life of people in general (Bonomi et al., 2019). Therefore, ICT support can be defined as the technological support in the organizational information and communication systems for transmitting knowledge and information accurately and timely and allowing individuals access to information so that they can use the information at anytime from anywhere to solve (job-related) problems (Drent & Meelissen, 2008; Majchrzak et al., 2005; Saleem et al., 2017). ICT-enabled working environments cause employee satisfaction, work-life balance, and employee wellbeing by enabling flexible working arrangements (Adisa & Gbadamosi, 2018; Demerouti et al., 2014; Heischman et al., 2019; Korunka & Hoonakker, 2014).

2.4. Climate of trust

Trust facilitates open communication and cooperation among people that improves work satisfaction and the values of life at work. Individuals believe that other organizational members will act positively (based on their roles, relationships, experiences, and interdependencies), and these beliefs create the significance of a trusting climate. This climate can be identified by the trustworthiness of people, where they want to depend on others (Akter et al., 2021; Alshaabani et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2016). When team members demonstrate reliability and behave consistently, a trust climate is developed (Alshaabani et al., 2020; L. Jiang & Probst, 2015). It comprises belief in others' honesty and sincerity, mutual understanding, loyalty, information sharing, and open communication (Buvik & Rolfsen, 2015). In this climate, employees are found to be more knowledgeable, dynamic, and constructive (Blömeke et al., 2015). Thus, a trust climate strengthens cooperation among team members (Jiang et al., 2015), provides them with a feeling of security (Schulte et al., 2012), and makes people comfortable with their jobs (Ozturk & Karatepe, 2019). Besides, open communication and cooperation among the working people can cause the effective functioning of the organization (Farndale et al., 2011; Moye & Henkin, 2006).

2.5. Employee empowerment and quality of work life

Empowerment is a vital corporate practice to enrich the employee experience at work (Ardahaey & Nabilou, 2012) by humanizing the working environment and removing the barriers between employees and managers (Badawy et al., 2018; Nursalam et al., 2018). It builds self-efficacy in employees and decreases their emotional strain and occupational stress (Greasley et al., 2005). Researchers indicated empowerment as a predictor of employees' QWL. For example, Nursalam et al. (2018) demonstrated that empowered nurses more highly perceive the quality of their work life than others. Similarly, Badawy et al. (2018) found psychological empowerment as a stimulus for employees' QWL. Empowerment also causes employee satisfaction with their work and work life (Howe, 2014; Laschinger & Read, 2017). Even though the significance of empowerment for employees' work life is evident, the implications are still lacking in the case of employees in the hospitality industry, especially in developing and underdeveloped countries. Therefore, the present study attempted to extend the earlier research by incorporating both structural and psychological empowerment to examine the effect of empowerment on hospitality staff's QWL. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1: Employee empowerment has a positive influence on quality of work life.

2.6. ICT support and quality of work life

Firm performance and employee efficiency are mostly dependent on the exchange of knowledge and information (Morelos-Gómez & Posso-Martínez, 2018). Technological support also makes individuals' social life happy and peaceful (Nevado-Peña et al., 2019), since they can easily balance their work life and non-work life, which accordingly impacts their well-being too (Adisa & Gbadamosi, 2018; Demerouti et al., 2014). From another perspective, by disseminating new knowledge and information, ICT humanizes the workplace as well as enriches employees' working life

(Kotze, 2005). Empirical evidence shows that when jobs are designed by aligning ICT, employees can share information effortlessly with their team members (Hannif et al., 2014). These working people can get the benefits of schedule and place flexibility (Adisa & Gbadamosi, 2018; Demerouti et al., 2014), and accordingly, they highly perceive the quality of their work life (Hannif et al., 2014). However, no research has been found that investigates the impact of a firm's ICT facilities on employee-focused outcomes, especially their work life in the hospitality industry context. Thus, this study intended to explore the aforesaid effect and developed the following hypothesis:

H2: ICT support has a positive influence on quality of work life.

2.7. Employee empowerment and climate of trust

Trust is widely regarded, at the workplace, as a significant phenomenon, since trust promotes attitudes, behavior, and mutual understanding of organizational members (Buvik & Rolfsen, 2015; Hughes et al., 2018; Krog & Govender, 2015). Research has indicated that trust can be nurtured by the participative decision-making process (Gilbert & Tang, 1998; Krog & Govender, 2015). Managers distribute authority only when they can trust their employees. Afterward, when employees perceive that managers respect their trustworthiness, they consequently trust their managers and co-workers (Laschinger et al., 2005; Moye & Henkin, 2006). Thus, empowerment develops mutual trust (Vanhala & Ahteela, 2011). Research has exposed that employee empowerment facilitates trust development in the organization (Buvik & Rolfsen, 2015; Laschinger et al., 2012). However, these pieces of literature offer an inadequate explanation of the influence of a firm's empowerment practices on its trust climate. This gap influences the present study, which empirically investigates the association between employee empowerment and climate of trust. Therefore, a hypothesis can be developed as:

H3: Employee empowerment has a positive influence on climate of trust.

2.8. ICT support and climate of trust

Technological support helps an organization remove the boundaries between employers and employees (Bissola et al., 2014). Effective technologies ensure the authenticity and reliability of the information, which thereby helps build trust between the parties involved (Bissola et al., 2014; Bondarouk et al., 2017). When corporate information is communicated transparently and timely, a high level of trust is generated in individuals (H. Jiang & Luo, 2018). Thus, the deployment of appropriate and updated technologies results in the development of a trusting climate in the establishment (Bala & Bhagwatwar, 2017). Moreover, an updated communication system helps in trust-building throughout the organization (Buvik & Rolfsen, 2015; Khan et al., 2018). These pieces of evidence indicate that technological support for communicating knowledge and information can generate mutual trust between the parties involved, although the effect of ICT support on the climate of trust has not been investigated yet. Therefore, the current study aimed to explore the aforementioned impact and hypothesized as follows:

H4: ICT support has a positive influence on climate of trust.

2.9. Climate of trust and quality of work life

Satisfaction in an individual's working life is stimulated by the mutual trust among the working people and managers in the organization (Al-Shalabi, 2019). Research argues that trust climate and employees' work life may have a possible link (Akter et al., 2021; Blömeke et al., 2015; L. Jiang & Probst, 2015). The early scholars explained the significance of an atmosphere of shared and mutual trust in the organization; e.g., Cascio (1992) explained how the successful implementation of QWL practices mostly depends on trust between employees and managers. In addition, Shaw

(2005) indicated that the success of QWL programs is determined by the organization's ability to reinforce high levels of trust. Besides, empirical evidence demonstrated that a trust climate acts as a crucial factor in improving the level of employee satisfaction (Blömeke et al., 2015; L. Jiang & Probst, 2015) and enriching happiness with their work lives (Akter et al., 2021). Hence, researchers suggest building a trust climate in the firm to enhance the quality of employees' work life (Akter et al., 2021; Al-Shalabi, 2019; L. Jiang & Probst, 2015). Furthermore, an atmosphere of mutual trust encourages people to take risks and accept responsibility for mistakes or errors that arise in the team (Langfred, 2004; Mayer et al., 1995). This study hypothesizes as follows:

H5: Climate of trust has a positive influence on quality of work life.

2.10. Mediation effect of climate of trust

Trust is found, in the above discussions, as a key outcome of empowerment and ICT application of a firm, and as an antecedent of people's peaceful work life. Individuals cannot enjoy their work life unless they are provided with coordination and cooperation in the team, which is caused by a climate of shared and mutual trust (Braun et al., 2013; Dirks & Skarlicki, 2009). A team climate based on mutual trust stimulates social connections, maximizes resource utilization, and synthesizes multiple views that facilitate converting the managers' considerations into improved firm outcomes (Carmeli et al., 2012; Shih et al., 2012). Moreover, a trust climate fosters cognitive exchanges that encourage social persuasion (Shih et al., 2012), and thus it impacts employee-focused outcomes (Blömeke et al., 2015; L. Jiang & Probst, 2015).

Indeed, prior research has exposed that a climate of trust mediates the relationship between leadership and firm performance (Lin et al., 2016), organizational justice, conflict management, and employee relations (Sahoo & Sahoo, 2019), and transformational leadership and quality of work life (Akter et al., 2021). Therefore, this study proposes that a climate of trust can be instituted as a mediating variable in the association between empowerment and QWL and between ICT support and QWL. The following hypotheses are proposed:

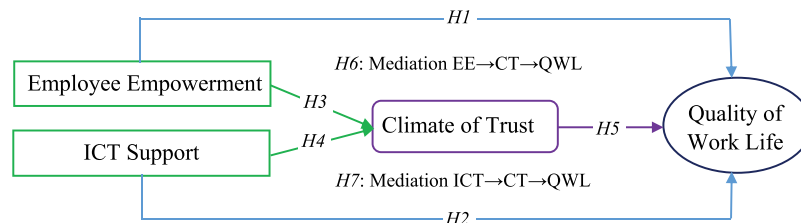
H6: Climate of trust mediates the relationship between employee empowerment and quality of work life.

H7: Climate of trust mediates the relationship between ICT support and quality of work life.

3. Development of theoretical framework and research model

Based on the concept of the socio-technical systems (STS) theory, the study proposed a theoretical framework that would illustrate the influence of employee empowerment, ICT support, and climate of trust on the quality of work life. The STS theory, advocated by Trist and Bamforth (1951), aims to optimize both the social and technical aspects of an organization to ensure its smooth operations. An organization comprises human beings (social systems) who require tools, techniques, and knowledge (technical systems), while both systems are interdependent (Pasmore, 1988). When an organization utilizes these systems effectively, the work life of employees are enhanced, as is organizational efficiency (Cherns, 1976; Pasmore, 1988). Socio-technical systems emphasize employee involvement in the work design that stimulates employee fulfillment and their wellbeing (Brooks et al., 2007). In the STS theory, researchers advocate employee empowerment in respect of their job satisfaction (Persico & McLean, 1994). Furthermore, the technical aspect of the STS theory indicates having an information system in an organization that includes effective communication channels to share knowledge and information (Cherns, 1976). The STS theory argues that an expected type of climate can be developed within an organization when both social and technical aspects are utilized (Persico & McLean, 1994). The theoretical framework

Figure 1. Proposed research model.



is presented through a model (Figure 1), including the hypotheses of the study, which will be tested through empirical analysis.

4. Methods

4.1. Data collection

The study carried out a questionnaire survey for data collection. The full-time operational employees of the three-star hotels in Bangladesh were the target population of the study. There are 20 three-star hotels in Bangladesh, according to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism of Bangladesh. 13 hotels consented to participate in this study, constituting the target population (N) of 437. The Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Table shows that the sample size is 201–205, when the population size is 420–440. Therefore, this study randomly selected 205 respondents from the population and distributed a self-administered questionnaire to the target respondents during March–April, 2021. A total of 147 filled questionnaires were returned, which led to a response rate of 71.7 percent. Due to the existence of missing and outliers values, 24 responses were removed. Finally, 123 completed responses were accepted for analysis. N. Hayes (2000) suggested that a typical questionnaire response rate between 20 percent and 30 percent may be considerable. Sekaran (2003) also approved a 30 percent response rate as an acceptable rate for data analysis. As a result, an overall response rate of 70.7 percent is considered satisfactory for further analysis.

4.2. Measures

Employee empowerment was measured by seven items of B.E. Hayes (1994). A sample item of this construct was: “I am allowed to do almost anything to perform a high-quality job”. ICT support was measured by five items: two items of Saleem et al. (2017), two items of Majchrzak et al. (2005), and one item of Drent and Meelissen (2008). A sample item of ICT support was: “I can access the information system at any time from anywhere”. Further, climate of trust was measured by four items of Huff and Kelley (2003). A sample item of trust climate was: “Managers in this company trust their subordinates to make good decisions”. In terms of QWL, these thirty-four items of Kwahar and Iyortsuun (2018). A sample item of quality of work life was: “Fair and unbiased promotion system”. Responses of all the measurement items were collected on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

4.3. Control variables

Prior studies exposed the influence of employees' demographic characteristics, e.g., gender (Ganesh & Ganesh, 2014; Mosadeghrad et al., 2011; Vanhala & Ahteela, 2011), age (Gupta & Hyde, 2013; Vanhala & Ahteela, 2011), work experience (Dhamija et al., 2019; Gupta & Hyde, 2013; Vanhala & Ahteela, 2011), marital status (Vanhala & Ahteela, 2011), and education (Mosadeghrad et al., 2011) on their quality of work life. Therefore, this study considers five demographic characteristics (age, gender, work experience, marital status, and education) of the respondents as control variables.

4.4. Data analysis

For analyzing the proposed research model, a partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used. Data were processed and analyzed by SPSS 21 and SmartPLS 3.0 software.

Respondents' information and the variables' descriptive statistics were examined by SPSS 21. After that, this study assessed the validity and reliability of the measures by analyzing a reflective measurement model. Further, the hypothesized relationships were tested by analyzing a structural model using PLS-SEM procedures. For testing the hypotheses and examining the mediation effect, a bootstrapping function (5000 resamples) was generated in SmartPLS 3.0.

5. Results

5.1. Respondent characteristics

The sample of this study consisted of about 65.9 percent male respondents and 34.1 percent female respondents. Most of the respondents were from the 35 to 44 age group (39.03 percent), followed by the 25 to 34 age group (36.59 percent), less than 25 years age group (14.63 percent), 45 to 54 age group (8.94 percent), and 55 to 65 age group (0.81 percent). In terms of marital status, the majority of the respondents were married (65.04 percent), whereas 25.2 percent were unmarried, 4.07 percent were separated, 4.07 percent were widowed and 1.62 percent were divorced. For education, respondents mostly had post-graduation (58.53 percent), while 37.4 percent had graduation, and 4.07 percent had a higher secondary certificate. The respondents were serving in different operational divisions, e.g., housekeeping (28.46 percent), food and beverage production (17.88 percent), food and beverage service (29.27 percent), leisure and lifestyle (13.82 percent), and the front office (10.57 percent). Out of all the respondents, 39.84 percent had 6 to 10 years of professional experience, while 30.89 percent had 1 to 5 years experience, 20.33 percent had 11 to 15 years experience, and 8.94 percent had more than 15 years experience.

5.2. Common method variance

This study undertook the Harman's single-factor test, to assess the common method variance. By an unrotated factor analysis on all measurement items, eight (8) factors were extracted with an eigenvalue greater than 1 (Appendix A). These eight (8) factors accounted for 72.6 percent of the total variance. Factor one accounted for only 40.23 percent of the variance. The value is considered good since it is not higher than 50 percent of the covariance (Kumar, 2012). In this study, the common method variance was not a major concern, since a single factor did not emerge and the first factor did not account for most of the variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

5.3. Descriptive statistics and correlations

The study conducted a descriptive analysis and correlation analysis of the constructs (employee empowerment, ICT support, climate of trust, and quality of work life). Table 1 demonstrates the scores of mean, standard deviation (SD) of the variables, and the correlation coefficients among the variables. Correlation coefficients confirmed that the variables have positive and significant correlations with each other.

5.4. Measurement model analysis

This study carried out a confirmatory factor analysis for assessing the reliability and validity of the measurement scales of the constructs. To examine the reliability and validity, the values of the measurement model are reported in Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients

Constructs	Mean	SD	Employee Empowerment	ICT Support	Climate of Trust
Employee Empowerment	3.25	0.70			
ICT Support	3.36	0.76	.29**		
Climate of Trust	3.29	0.69	.45**	.48**	
Quality of Work Life	2.98	0.76	.44**	.44**	.47**

Note: **p < 0.01 (1-tailed)

Table 2. Results of reliability and convergent validity

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Employee Empowerment	0.870	0.902	0.607
ICT Support	0.825	0.873	0.580
Climate of Trust	0.849	0.897	0.686
Quality of Work Life	0.972	0.974	0.575

5.4.1. Convergent validity

This study assessed the convergent validity using the factor loadings, composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and average variance extracted (Chin, 1998). The scores are exhibited construct-wise in Table 2 (Figure 2). The loadings greater than 0.6 were retained (Chin, 1998). Seven items (EE4, QWL4, QWL21, QWL26, QWL27, QWL30, QWL33) were removed from the model due to their lower loadings (Appendix B). Further, composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha met the minimum cut-off values (0.7), and the average variance extracted was higher than 0.5 for all the constructs. Therefore, the results confirmed the reliability and convergent validity of the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

5.4.2. Discriminant validity

This study assessed the model's discriminant validity using the cross-loadings of the indicators, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT; Hair et al., 2017). The cross-

Figure 2. Measurement model.

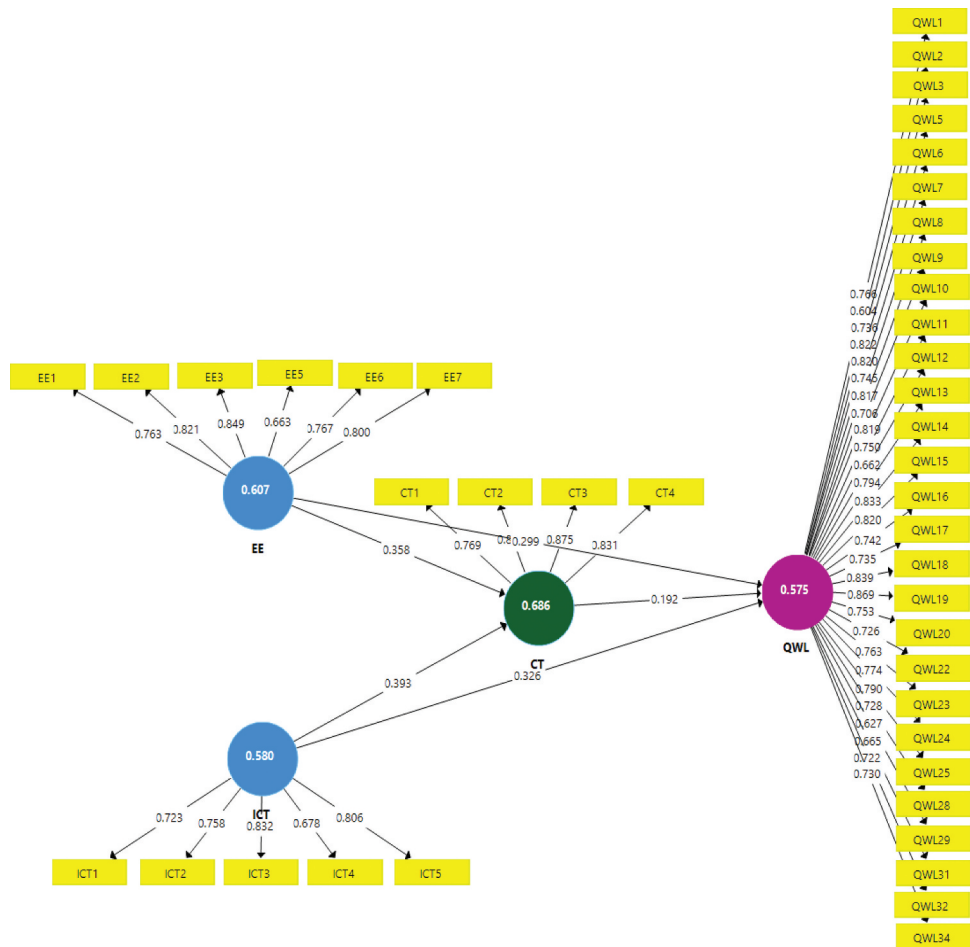


Table 3. Results of Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	Climate of Trust	Employee Empowerment	ICT Support	Quality of Work Life
Climate of Trust	0.828			
Employee Empowerment	0.495	0.779		
ICT Support	0.518	0.348	0.762	
Quality of Work Life	0.508	0.507	0.529	0.758

Note: Values in bold represent the square root of AVE, and other entries represent the correlations

loading results indicated that indicators' outer loadings with the corresponding constructs were higher than the cross-loadings with other constructs (Appendix B). Therefore, the measurement model is considered satisfactory (Hair et al., 2017).

In terms of Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion, the correlations between the constructs and the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct were compared (Table 3). As seen in the results, the square root of AVE (diagonals) was greater than the correlation (off-diagonal) of each construct indicating the required discriminant validity of the constructs (Hair et al., 2017).

Further, this study examined the HTMT outcomes that are presented in Table 4. The result of HTMT inference shows that the confidence interval does not show a value of one (1) on any of the constructs (Henseler et al., 2015), thus, all the values fulfill the criterion of HTMT. This result confirms the discriminant validity of the measurement model of this study.

5.5. Structural equation model analysis

5.5.1. Collinearity statistics (VIF) testing

To assess the collinearity issue of the structural model of this study, the Inner VIF values were checked. Table 5 shows all the Inner VIF values for the independent variables (Employee empowerment, ICT Support, and climate of trust). All the values were less than 5 thus indicating collinearity was not a concern in this study (Hair et al., 2017).

5.5.2. Hypotheses testing for direct relationship

The study tested the hypotheses using the bootstrapping function and the results are presented in Table 6 (Figure 2 and Figure 3). Five hypothesized relationships H1 (t = 3.516), H2 (t = 4.166), H3 (t = 3.906), H4 (t = 5.311) and H5 (t = 2.046) were found significant (p < 0.05) with a t-value higher than 1.645 (one-tailed; Hair et al., 2017). Hypothesis 1 ($\beta = 0.299$) indicated that employee empowerment has a strong influence on quality of work life. The result of hypothesis 2 ($\beta = 0.326$) also showed that ICT support has a significant impact on quality of work life. Therefore, H1 and H2 were accepted suggesting that employee empowerment and ICT support have significant impacts on quality of work life.

Table 4. Results of Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct	Climate of Trust	Employee Empowerment	ICT Support	Quality of Work Life
Climate of Trust				
Employee Empowerment	0.573			
ICT Support	0.562	0.394		
Quality of Work Life	0.513	0.517	0.523	

Table 5. Results of Inner VIF values

Construct	Climate of Trust	Quality of Work Life
Climate of Trust		1.616
Employee Empowerment	1.138	1.345
ICT Support	1.138	1.388

Furthermore, the result in support of hypothesis 5, exposed that climate of trust ($\beta = 0.192$) has a considerable influence on quality of work life. So, H5 was accepted. Similarly, the result of hypothesis 3 ($\beta = 0.358$) indicated the significant influence of employee empowerment on climate of trust. Finally, as of the result of hypothesis 4 ($\beta = 0.393$), ICT support has a strong influence on climate of trust. So, H3 and H4 were also accepted. The outcomes suggested that both employee empowerment and ICT support have significant direct effects on trust climate.

5.5.3. Coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2) analysis

The study evaluated the predictive accuracy of the model through the coefficient of determination (R^2) value (Table 7 and Figure 4). All the exogenous constructs (employee empowerment, ICT support, and climate of trust) explained 42.1% of the variance in quality of work life. Further, the exogenous constructs (employee empowerment and ICT support) were explaining 38.1% of the variance in climate of trust. Both the R^2 values (QWL = 0.421 and CT = 0.381) were higher than 0.26 that indicates a substantial model (Cohen, 1988).

Next, the impacts of the predictor constructs on the endogenous construct were evaluated using Cohen's (1988) f^2 . The value of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects respectively (Cohen, 1988). Results (Table 7 and Figure 4) indicated that employee empowerment (0.115), and ICT support (0.132) had close to medium effect in producing the R^2 for quality of work life, while climate of trust (0.039) had a small effect in producing the R^2 for quality of work life. Furthermore, employee empowerment (0.182), and ICT support (0.220) have a medium effect in producing the R^2 for climate of trust.

In addition, the study examined the predictive relevance (Q^2) of the model using the blindfolding procedure. As presented in Table 7, the Q^2 values for quality of work life (0.209) and climate of trust (0.235) are more than zero (0), which indicated the sufficient predictive relevance of the model (Hair et al., 2017).

5.5.4. Hypotheses testing for mediating effect analysis

The study assessed the mediation effect of trust climate between employee empowerment and quality of work life, and ICT support and quality of work life. As reported in Table 8, the indirect effect of employee empowerment on quality of work life (EE→CT→QWL) with $\beta = 0.069$ was found significant ($t = 1.726, p < 0.05$). Similarly, a significant ($t = 1.865, p < 0.05$) indirect effect of ICT

Table 6. Results of hypothesis testing

Hypothesized Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1: EE→QWL	0.299	0.085	3.516	0.000**	Accepted
H2: ICT→QWL	0.326	0.078	4.166	0.000**	Accepted
H3: EE→CT	0.358	0.092	3.906	0.000**	Accepted
H4: ICT→CT	0.393	0.074	5.311	0.000**	Accepted
H5: CT→QWL	0.192	0.094	2.046	0.020**	Accepted

Note: Level of significance $p < 0.05^{**}$

Note: EE = employee empowerment, ICT = ICT support, CT = climate of trust, QWL = quality of work life

Figure 3. Bootstrapping results.

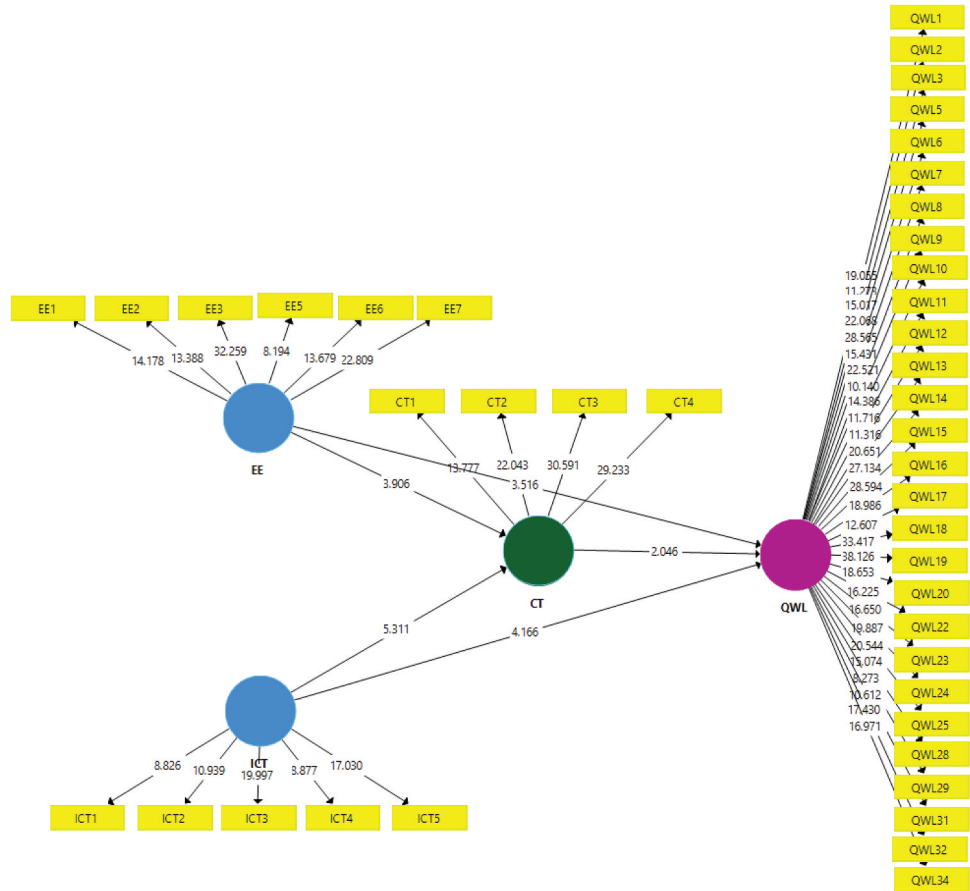


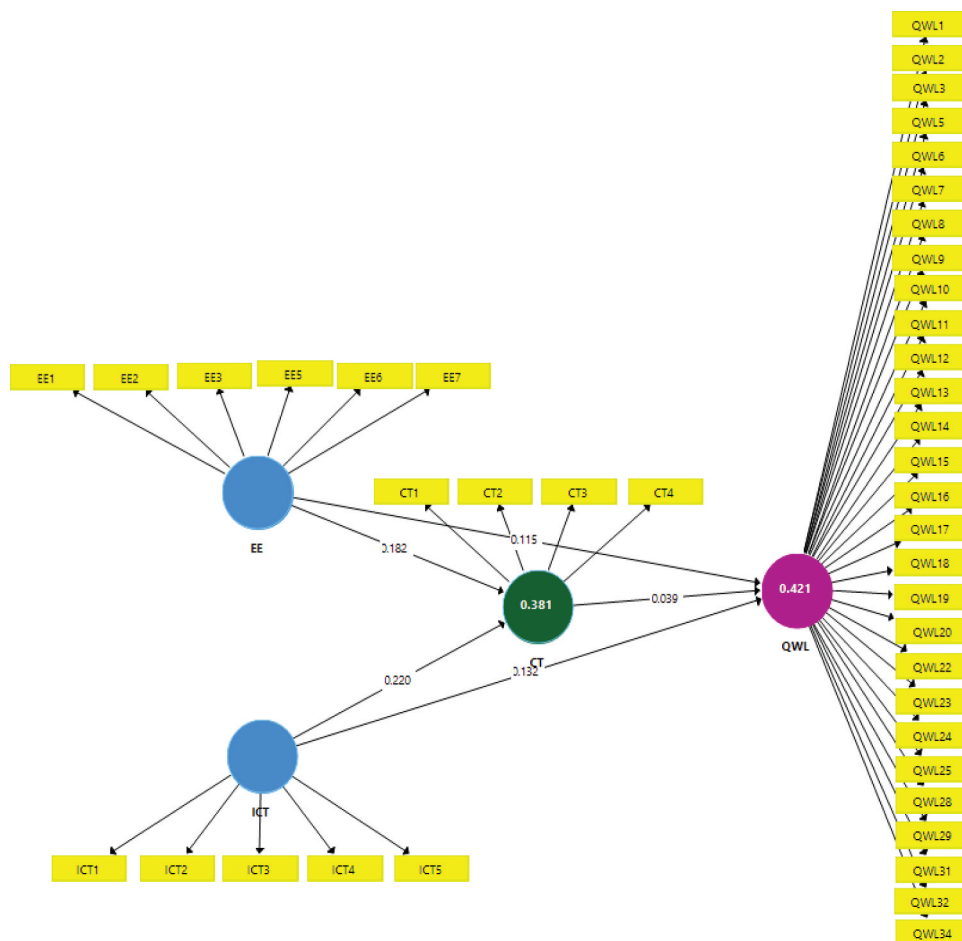
Table 7. Results of coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2) testing

Endogenous Construct	Exogenous Construct	R^2	f^2	Q^2
Quality of Work Life	Employee Empowerment	0.421	0.115	0.209
	ICT Support		0.132	
	Climate of Trust		0.039	
Climate of Trust	Employee Empowerment	0.381	0.182	0.235
	ICT Support		0.220	

support on quality of work life (ICT→CT→QWL) with $\beta = 0.075$ was found. Therefore, H6 and H7 were accepted.

Besides, the confidence intervals of the indirect paths were observed (Table 8), as of Hair et al.'s (2017) recommendation. In terms of both the relations, no zero (0) was observed between the confidence intervals based on the t-value. Moreover, all the effects of employee empowerment and ICT support on quality of work life were significant, which indicated the partial mediation effect of trust climate on both the relations (Badawy et al., 2018).

Figure 4. R² and f² results.



5.5.5. Control variable analysis

This study controls some factors (gender, age, marital status, education, division/department, and experience) which were identified as important on employees' QWL in the Bangladeshi hospitality industry. The results indicated that education ($t = 2.378$) was only found to have a significant influence on employees' QWL, whereas the other four control variables were found as insignificant (Table 9).

6. Discussion

This study surveyed the hospitality employees and revealed seven major findings aligning with the hypotheses of the study. First, the result confirmed that employee empowerment has a strong influence on employees' quality of work life. This finding is in line with the results of prior research that exhibited the positive association between empowerment and employees' work life quality (Howe, 2014; Nayak et al., 2018; Nursalam et al., 2018). These aforementioned studies exhibited how the empowerment practices of an organization stimulate employees' peaceful life at work. Second, ICT support was revealed as an influential factor of quality of work life. Previously it was found that when an organization utilizes appropriate technologies for transmitting knowledge and information in the work teams, it eases employees' assigned duties and enhances their happiness of work life (Bonomi et al., 2019; Demerouti et al., 2014; Hannif et al., 2014). Third, a significant effect of employee empowerment on trust climate was found. The finding matches with the earlier studies, which demonstrated that empowerment is a consequence of managers' trust in employees as well as a cause of employees' trust in the managers/corporation, thus empowerment predicts mutual trust at the workplace (Buvik & Rolfsen, 2015; Mone et al., 2011). Fourth, it was

Table 8. Results of mediation effect testing

Hypothesized Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	5% LL	95% UL	Decision	Mediation type
H6:EE→CT→QWL	0.069	0.040	1.726	0.042**	0.018	0.151	Accepted	Partial
H7:ICT→CT→QWL	0.075	0.040	1.865	0.031**	0.017	0.150	Accepted	Partial

Note: Level of significance $p < 0.05^{**}$

Note: Hypothesis is supported when there is no zero between LL and UL

Note: EE = employee empowerment, ICT = ICT support, CT = climate of trust, QWL = quality of work life

Table 9. Summary of the results of control variables

Constructs	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t value
Gender→ QWL	0.040	0.144	0.444
Age→ QWL	-0.089	0.142	-0.708
Marital Status→ QWL	-0.195	0.078	-2.157
Education→ QWL	0.209	0.116	2.378
Experience→QWL	0.216	0.103	1.707

Note: Level of significance $p < 0.05^{**}$

observed that ICT support has a significant influence on the climate of trust. Prior research exposed that institutional support in utilizing and accessing the appropriate technologies for communicating information among the team members consequences an atmosphere where people trust others (Bala & Bhagwatwar, 2017; Bissola et al., 2014). Fifth, this study found a significant impact of climate of trust on work life quality of people. This finding corroborates the results of prior studies revealing that a workplace with an atmosphere of shared and/or mutual trust can improve the peace and happiness of people’s work lives (Akter et al., 2021; Blömeke et al., 2015; L. Jiang & Probst, 2015).

Sixth, the results demonstrated the mediation effect of trust climate between employee empowerment and quality of work life. The results confirmed that both direct and indirect effects of employee empowerment on quality of work life were significant. It indicates the partial absorption of the direct effects of employee empowerment by the trust climate, consequently, the mediation is partial (Badawy et al., 2018). Finally, the results demonstrated the mediation effect of trust climate between ICT support and quality of work life. Both the effects of ICT support on the quality of work life were found significant, which indicates the partial absorption of the direct effects of ICT support by the climate of trust (Badawy et al., 2018). Thus, it can be confirmed that a hospitality firm’s trust climate partially mediates the relationship between employee empowerment and quality of work life, and between ICT support and quality of work life. These findings are consistent with the results of some prior studies that investigated the mediation effect of trust climate. For example, Akter et al. (2021) revealed the mediation effect of trust climate in the relationship between transformational leadership and quality of work life. Similarly, Lin et al. (2016) showed trust climate as a mediating factor between leadership and corporate success. Furthermore, Sahoo and Sahoo (2019) exposed the mediating effect of climate of trust in the relationship between organizational justice, conflict management, and employee relations.

7. Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for managers. First, since employee empowerment influences an organizational climate of trust that further affects employees’ work life quality, managers need to formulate effective empowerment strategies which will improve employee perception of life at work. And since, service-providing companies require independently responsive personnel in the frontline of the customer service operation, firms need to allow them greater freedom for decision-making. Second, the findings demonstrate that providing appropriate ICT support to the working people has a significant effect on their quality of work life. Thus, hospitality firms need to provide updated and appropriate technological support to the operators so that they can have access to the information whenever they need it for being independently responsive to their job. Third, the significant influence of climate of trust on employees’ quality of work life suggests that managers of hospitality firms should formulate strategies to enrich employees’ work life. Fourth, while establishing programs for employee empowerment and ICT support, hospitality managers in developing and under-developed countries could prioritize those measures that have the most potentials to positively affect employees’ work life quality. This is especially essential because hospitality companies and systems in under-developed nations have fewer resources. Therefore, it may be useful for these firms to begin with the most critical areas of empowerment and ICT support, then adopt additional measures depending on the performance

results. This strategy would assist the managers in striking a balance between the firm's success and the employee-focused results.

The findings of the study are consistent with the fundamental principle of socio-technical systems theory, which emphasizes employees' work life, strongly promotes employee empowerment for their job satisfaction, and argues for the adoption of a technical system in the organization that maintains its information flow. The study also contributes to the literature on hospitality personnel management. Firstly, the study findings suggest that hospitality firms' practices toward empowering and providing ICT facilities to employees have positive and different effects on their work life. In light of this finding, it can be acknowledged that the impacts are particularly substantial for the essentials of the firm's organizational practices. Thus, the study detects the dominating areas of these organizational practices (empowerment and ICT support), which can contribute to people's work life and corporate climate of trust. In accordance with the tenets of hospitality firms, this study affirms that hospitality individuals are independently responsive staff when they are allowed to participate in the firm's decisions and access information technology. Additionally, the elements of empowerment and ICT support contribute to the people's work and non-work life quality. Secondly, this study suggests that a trust climate can consequence the enhancement of employees' quality of work life particularly in the presence of organizational empowerment and ICT support as antecedents. It can be argued that a shared trust climate of a hospitality firm plays a significant role in enriching happiness in their work life. Third, the positive influence of employee empowerment and organizational ICT support on QWL suggests that the happiness of employees' work life is not just dependent on organizational success. It is also dependent on corporate endeavors and intentions for taking care of employee satisfaction and their well-being. Therefore, this study identifies several key aspects of firm-initiated antecedents for diversified outcomes of employee satisfaction in hospitality firms.

8. Limitations and future research directions

There are some limitations to this study. First, this research was carried out at three-star hotels, so future research may incorporate the diversified hospitality firms. Second, the study only looked at one country (Bangladesh). Thus, future research may look at the multi-country context for validating the proposed research model, because management styles and approaches in human resource issues greatly differ from country to country. Third, further studies may also explore the firms' working conditions that support or oppose the enrichment of an individual's work life. Finally, future research may observe the moderation effect of staff's socio-economic condition and job nature in the aforementioned relationships that will provide new insights regarding the QWL outcomes.

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Appendix A. Common Method Variance

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	20.114	40.227	40.227	20.114	40.227	40.227
2	4.806	9.612	49.839	4.806	9.612	49.839
3	4.298	8.596	58.435	4.298	8.596	58.435
4	2.205	4.410	62.845	2.205	4.410	62.845
5	1.418	2.836	65.682	1.418	2.836	65.682
6	1.231	2.462	68.144	1.231	2.462	68.144
7	1.166	2.332	70.475	1.166	2.332	70.475
8	1.062	2.124	72.599	1.062	2.124	72.599
9	.967	1.933	74.532			
10	.956	1.912	76.444			
11	.835	1.670	78.115			
12	.802	1.604	79.718			
13	.716	1.431	81.149			
14	.678	1.357	82.506			
15	.637	1.274	83.780			
16	.606	1.211	84.992			
17	.585	1.169	86.161			
18	.546	1.092	87.253			
19	.475	.951	88.204			
20	.432	.864	89.067			
21	.409	.817	89.885			
22	.399	.798	90.682			
23	.364	.729	91.411			
24	.350	.699	92.110			
25	.318	.635	92.745			
26	.299	.599	93.344			
27	.286	.571	93.915			
28	.260	.521	94.436			
29	.254	.508	94.944			
30	.235	.471	95.414			
31	.209	.419	95.833			
32	.204	.408	96.242			
33	.195	.390	96.632			
34	.164	.328	96.960			

(Continued)

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
35	.156	.312	97.271			
36	.154	.307	97.578			
37	.145	.290	97.869			
38	.137	.275	98.143			
39	.119	.237	98.381			
40	.114	.227	98.608			
41	.111	.223	98.831			
42	.092	.184	99.015			
43	.085	.171	99.185			
44	.077	.153	99.339			
45	.072	.144	99.483			
46	.067	.134	99.617			
47	.059	.118	99.734			
48	.051	.101	99.836			
49	.044	.087	99.923			
50	.039	.077	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Appendix B. Convergent and discriminant validity: Outer loadings and cross-loadings

Items/Indicators		Outer loadings	Cross-loadings			
			EE	ICT	CT	QWL
EE1	I am allowed to do almost anything to perform a high-quality job.	0.763	0.763	0.169	0.330	0.363
EE2	I have the authority to correct problems in my job when they occur.	0.821	0.821	0.332	0.324	0.507
EE3	I have a lot of control and freedom over how I do my job.	0.849	0.849	0.253	0.406	0.452
EE5	I do not need to get management's approval before I handle problems.	0.663	0.663	0.161	0.384	0.129
EE6	I am encouraged by the management to deal with job-related problems by myself.	0.767	0.767	0.227	0.335	0.340
EE7	I can take charge of problems that require immediate attention in the hotel.	0.800	0.800	0.408	0.513	0.468
ICT1	The information and communication system of the organization is modern and updated.	0.723	0.275	0.723	0.203	0.309
ICT2	I can access the information system at anytime from anywhere.	0.758	0.166	0.758	0.269	0.409
ICT3	The organization has a superior information storage capacity for further use.	0.832	0.308	0.832	0.449	0.406
ICT4	The information system is linked with other information sources for collecting new knowledge/information.	0.678	0.291	0.678	0.378	0.175
ICT5	My organization allocates the devices and equipment (internet, smartphone/computer, etc.) for accessing information and communicating with others.	0.806	0.288	0.806	0.545	0.573
CT1	There is a very high level of trust throughout this organization.	0.769	0.447	0.325	0.769	0.285
CT2	In this organization, subordinates have a great deal of trust for managers.	0.833	0.356	0.397	0.833	0.360

(Continued)

Items/Indicators		Outer loadings	Cross-loadings			
			EE	ICT	CT	QWL
CT3	If someone in this organization makes a promise, others within the organization will almost always trust that the person will do his or her best to keep the promise.	0.875	0.441	0.436	0.875	0.358
CT4	Managers in this company trust their subordinates to make good decisions.	0.831	0.402	0.517	0.831	0.606
QWL1	Adequate remuneration	0.766	0.441	0.453	0.301	0.766
QWL2	Timely payment of salaries and allowances	0.604	0.283	0.446	0.441	0.604
QWL3	Continuous review of pay based on response to change in cost of living	0.736	0.332	0.430	0.355	0.736
QWL5	Fair and unbiased promotion system	0.822	0.289	0.361	0.450	0.822
QWL6	Fair remuneration	0.820	0.430	0.385	0.326	0.820
QWL7	Rewards for good work	0.745	0.401	0.300	0.248	0.745
QWL8	Adequate and comprehensive grade and pay structures	0.817	0.283	0.286	0.354	0.817
QWL9	Appropriately implemented allowances and benefits (location allowance, overtime and shift payments)	0.706	0.193	0.425	0.314	0.706
QWL10	Adequate employee benefits	0.819	0.330	0.408	0.428	0.819
QWL11	Fair financial incentive plan	0.750	0.328	0.212	0.205	0.750
QWL12	Above-average industry median salary	0.662	0.394	0.198	0.136	0.662
QWL13	Reward management procedures and policies	0.794	0.460	0.293	0.288	0.794
QWL14	Stability of employment	0.833	0.246	0.415	0.472	0.833
QWL15	Satisfaction with present job	0.820	0.491	0.394	0.386	0.820
QWL16	Work position and prospects of career development	0.742	0.495	0.273	0.487	0.742
QWL17	Strict lay-off policies and faithfulness in implementing dismissal policies	0.735	0.261	0.423	0.372	0.735

(Continued)

(Continued)

Items/Indicators		Outer loadings	Cross-loadings			
			EE	ICT	CT	QWL
QWL18	Supportive management and stimulating job and career opportunities	0.839	0.468	0.360	0.473	0.839
QWL19	Pride in work/company	0.869	0.431	0.506	0.448	0.869
QWL20	Satisfaction with career opportunities	0.753	0.540	0.320	0.419	0.753
QWL22	Opportunity for management and operational decision making	0.726	0.618	0.374	0.391	0.726
QWL23	Frequency and sufficiency of relevant and targeted training programmes	0.763	0.412	0.515	0.423	0.763
QWL24	Training programmes aimed at improving interpersonal etc. skills	0.774	0.374	0.461	0.453	0.774
QWL25	Training programmes focusing on employee requirements to ensure promotion within	0.790	0.282	0.421	0.378	0.790
QWL28	Non-availability of home-life balance programmes	0.728	0.180	0.158	0.236	0.728
QWL29	Flexibility in performing work responsibilities	0.627	0.458	0.186	0.260	0.627
QWL31	Salubrious (healthy) work environment	0.665	0.392	0.405	0.248	0.665
QWL32	Continuous risk assessment and safety inspections in the organization	0.722	0.341	0.704	0.514	0.722
QWL34	Safety measures/policies at work	0.730	0.344	0.587	0.557	0.730

Note: Scores of non-shaded areas represent the indicators' cross-loadings



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