

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE IN DIGITAL ECONOMY: BIBLIOMETRIC PERSPECTIVES OF RESEARCH

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Abstract

The quality of work-life gradually takes precedence over the world, and research into the field is on the rise. Everyday life hinges upon the quality of work-life, thereby making it relevant for discussion and investigation. By addressing the bibliometric research deficit from an international literature perspective, this study explores the thematic evolution and the state of quality of work-life concerning the internationally accredited scientific databases: Web of Science and Scopus. The presented paper gives an overview of previous studies, conducting the last decade on the issues of the quality of the work-life and digital economy. The analysis is limited by the most significant works, considering the citation index, related to human resource management in companies and making managerial decisions that directly affect the quality of work life. The results indicate an increase in discussions around the digital economy and its impact on the quality of work-life issues. Finally, the paper contributes to the literature in the field under study and makes recommendations for future longitudinal studies.

Keywords: Quality of work life; Digital economy; Bibliometric Studies; Thematic Evolution.

1 INTRODUCTION

The globalization of economic activities leads to the emergence of new phenomena in the labor sphere. Nowadays, the demands of employees in their work, its content, possibilities of self-realization, and social aspects of work are continually growing. Methods of improving the quality of working life (QWL) are one of the essential tools in the processes of human resource management in companies. The parameters connected with employee satisfaction with their work and affecting the quality of working life expand from year to year. In recent years, the economic aspects of labor and remuneration, although they remain a priority, obviously no longer cover the whole range of issues of the QWL. As shown by some studies, economic indicators that increase welfare, in general, can often simultaneously negatively affect the subjective parameters of the employee's QWL (Wiese, 2014). QWL attracts a wide range of specialists and scientists from various research fields. Thus, in the last five years, the Scopus database contains more than 22,000 scientific works one or another way devoted to QWL, and the Web of Science database includes more than 30,000 of them.

The most significant number of works related to QWL concerns the medical aspects of the work process and workers (or a member of their families) with various physical or mental problems, and ways to overcome them to improve QWL, despite the existing ailment (Courpasson & Monties, 2017; Follmer & Jones, 2018; Stoner & Stoner, 2014); gender and age differences of workers in the labor market (Menzi, Telyukova & Visschers, 2016; Sudbury-Riley, 2014; Andrade & Westover, 2018); family, leisure, or work priority ratios (Ollo-Lpez & Goñi-Legaz, 2017; Nawijn & Damen, 2014; Houshmand, Seidel & Ma, 2017; Gawlik & Jacobsen, 2016; Beigi, Shirmohammadi & Stewart, 2018; Howley, 2017); studies of the relationship between corporate social responsibility and well-being of employees (Ivanova & Bikeeva, 2016); studies of the impact

of participation in a cultural and sporting events on QWL (Wheatley & Bickerton, 2017; Gundolf, Jaouen & Gast, 2018). Finally, there is a significant amount of work in the categories of Economics, Business, and Management, considering the impact of management decisions on employees' QWL.

2 RESEARCH METHOD

The bibliometric methods have used to evaluate the efforts in a selected research area. The term "bibliometry" was introduced in 1969 by A. Pritchard and expanded the field of static bibliography. A bibliometry uses a different analysis of bibliographic data of publications (Pritchard, 1969). The presented work is a quantitative study and aimed not at obtaining specific information about the QWL problem in a digital economy, but at identifying trends and monitoring the development of this knowledge, as well as at searching for new fields for research. We retrieved more than 50,000 bibliographic records from the Web of Science and Scopus databases that matched the QWL search query (and its derivatives) in keywords, headings or annotations, and more than 10,000 bibliographic records matching the "digital economy" query. However, the enormous amount of literature of various sciences does not allow conducting a complete analysis of all of them. In this paper, the analysis is limited by the most significant works, taking into account the citation index related to human resource management in companies and making managerial decisions that directly affect QWL (sections are economics, management, and business). The study outlines the development of promising directions in several areas of the economy, the labor economy, and human resource management. The literature between 2014 and 2018 was used since it was during this period that the works related to the digitalization of the economy were most widespread.

3 THE QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND DIGITAL ECONOMY

The term "digital economy" in the scientific literature began to seem significant since 1999 (Lane, 1999; Tan, 1999), and studies in the field of "digital economy" has grown significantly over the past decade. Many authors make attempts to understand the digitalization of the economy, which creates a new economic reality in terms of social consequences (Sadovaya, 2018). The variety of articles and the number of authors/journals involved had increased exceptionally rapidly since the late 1990s when the term "digital economy" introduced. Furthermore, if from 1998 to 2009 the number of scientific works presented in scientific databases with the keyword "digital economy" ranged from 10 to 15 units per year, then from 2009 to 2016 a significant increase in the works devoted to this topic can be observed (25-45 works per year). Since 2017, there has been a sharp jump in interest in this topic: 2017 – 104 scientific works; 2018, there were already 237, which is not surprising since our whole life riddles with digital technologies, and today they are inextricably linked with all areas of life, including working life. In this regard, we consider it reasonable to believe that most people today involved in the labor process are associated with the digital economy.

At the same time, there are incomparably more studies for this period in the field of QWL. In a topographic analysis of 10 countries in which the most common scientific works on QWL are following: USA (152), England (100), China (62), Spain (56), India (52), Australia (48), Russia (35), Germany (33), Netherlands (33), and Brazil (31) (2014-2018, Web of Science).

Close the top ten research leaders are Germany, the Netherlands, Russia, and Brazil. Also, a significant amount of scientific work has submitted from countries such as Canada, Romania, Italy, Slovakia, France, Poland, South Korea, Switzerland, Malaysia, Portugal, Taiwan, Ukraine, Finland, and Norway. In Russia during this period, 35 works were published that are in the databases; in the Czech Republic during the same period, 26 works were published, which is also a very significant contribution to the development of knowledge about QWL.

A cross-analysis of requests revealed that today, only 19 works presented in the Web of Science database are simultaneously responding to both requests "digital economy" and "quality of work-life", which allows us to conclude about the potential opportunities and prospects for further research in this area. These works address issues of implementation of information systems in different areas of working life. Several works are exploring new opportunities for lifelong learning (Brikmane, 2013; Babic, Vukmirovic & Capko, 2015; Damiani & Agrusti, 2017). Others focus on the digital economy, recruitment potential and a labor market (Peshkova & Samarina, 2018, Sadovaya, 2018), or answers the question how digital technologies transform human functions in the process of work, improving the quality of working life and business efficiency (Bauer, Schlund & Vocke, 2017). Furthermore, for example, an attractive Work-Life Optimization model (WLO) is suggested, which incorporates information systems, analytics, and decision support into a Smart Service System (Westwood & Cazier, 2016). The primary purposes of these programs within an organization are to reduce work-life conflict, decrease turnover, improve company image and ability to attract talent, and improve performance.

At the same time, analysis of the scientific works studied the QWL showed a presence of indirect, but the precise impact of digitization on the QWL. The digitalization helps to measure the level of happiness in the workplace using a smartphone at different random times (Bryson & MacKerron, 2017), but digital technologies collectively institute a 'cruel optimism' which promises much but delivers little (Ashman, Patterson & Brown, 2018). Most studies indicate that the introduction of digital technology in the work process, on the one hand, simplifies the work process, and on the other, making it less deep, thereby worsening QWL. The results indicate a downward trend in QWL: physical stress increased, and work became more intense and less complicated (Greenan, Kalugina & Walkowiaky, 2014). At the same time, work in small enterprises, mainly in rural areas (where digital technologies are present to a much lesser extent), there is an increased level of organizational commitment, a high assessment of the quality of one's own working life and even a stronger civil society (Halbesleben & Tolbert, 2014). Besides, it should note that many works reveal the main side effect of the extensive use of digital platforms in the form of a decrease in labor demand in a high-tech economy (Sadovaya, 2018). This set of systemic changes forms qualitatively new requests for the principles of organizing the business, economy, and society, which require further research.

4 CONCLUSION

QWL is a large and highly heterogeneous field of research. In this paper, we focused on the organizational aspects of the impact of economy digitalization on QWL. The results of the analysis indicate an increase in discussions about the digital economy and its impact on QWL. Fragmentation and inconsistency of approaches to the question of studying the impact of digitalization on QWL were revealed, requiring further development based on a sophisticated approach that would harmoniously involve both objective and subjective aspects of this topic. Thus, the bibliometric analysis revealed the main trends in QWL studies and identified promising areas for further work.

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