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THE EFFECTS OF HIGH WORK INVOLVEMENT ON THE WELL-BEING OF IT SECTOR EMPLOYEES IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Abstract: In the modern business environment, organizations focus on strategies and concepts that are in the domain of social responsibility, with the aim of strengthening their competitive position on the market. This paper deals with human resource management concepts based on new models, such as high employee involvement and employee well-being. The main goal of this research was to examine the relationship between high work involvement and employee well-being. The main research question relates to determining the effect that high work involvement causes on the well-being of employees. The theoretical and empirical part of the research is the methodology of the work. As part of the theoretical part of the research, an overview of the author's previous research on the topic of high work involvement and employee well-being was carried out. Empirical research was conducted on a sample of 100 employees (managers and professional workers) in organizations operating within the IT sector in the Republic of Serbia. The collection of the sample lasted during January 2024 through an electronic questionnaire. Using the PLS-SEM method within the Smart PLS software, the proposed relationship was tested. The results of the research indicated that there is a direct positive effect of high work involvement on the well-being of employees. Employees who are involved in making decisions, solving problems and proposing new ideas will have more developed mental, psychological and emotional aspects of life.
Keywords: high work involvement, well-being, social responsibility, IT sector, Republic of Serbia

INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, the Information Technology (IT) sector has experienced remarkable growth and development worldwide, becoming one of the key branches of the modern economic system. The Republic of Serbia is no exception to this trend on the contrary, it has been witnessing an increasing growth and significance of the IT sector in its economy. Interest in employees in the IT sector has been steadily rising over time. Recently, with the growing number of companies in the IT sector, there has emerged a need to explore the relationships within these organizations that contribute to the motivation, dedication, and increased productivity of employees.

High work involvement plays a crucial role in organizational development, as well as in enhancing the organizational performance of employees. It enables the exchange of information among employees and helps them understand the mission and vision of the organization, as well as the organizational culture, signaling to workers to respect each other, value their contribution to the organization, and thus improve their satisfaction and motivation (Ahmad et al., 2014). Employee well-being or psychological well-being, or the effectiveness of an individual's psychological functioning, is related to primary aspects of life such as work, family, and society (Wadhawan, 2016; Lee & Kim, 2023).

The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between high work involvement and employee well-being in the IT sector of the Republic of Serbia. The research subject is to determine the effect that high work involvement has on the well-being of employees.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. High work involvement and well-being of employees

High work involvement plays a crucial role in organizational development and in enhancing the organizational performance of employees. As emphasized by Wood and Ogbonnya (2018), it has historically been used as a means to overcome economic crises both at the organizational and national levels. High work involvement enables the exchange of information among employees and helps them understand the mission, vision, and organizational culture, signaling to workers to respect each other, value their contribution to the organization, thus improving their satisfaction and motivation (Ahmad et al., 2014). According to Kilroy, Flood & Bosak (2016) and Törnross, Salin & Magnusson Hanson (2020), high work involvement practices are designed to increase employees' empowerment, information, motivation, and skills. Nasurdin, Ling & Khan (2018) derive the concept of high work involvement from human resource management, where organizations encourage employees to contribute to organizational processes, recognizing them as vital drivers of organizational success. Employees are encouraged to make decisions and solve problems, propose new ideas and constructive solutions, delegate responsibility and authority to them, and are assured that the organization trusts them. The benefits of employee participation include being a sound business move and an effective instrument for harnessing employee creativity. From an economic standpoint, the cheapest and most effective method of motivation is high work involvement—employees will be more interested in their work if they are involved in decision-making processes and will feel a greater sense of belonging to the organization. According to scholars in this field (Kim & Sung-Choon, 2013; Guerrero & Barraud-Didier, 2014; Rana, 2015; Jekić, 2015; Wood & Ogbonnaya, 2018), high involvement management encompasses four main attributes: power (employees have the power to make decisions and participate in decision-making processes), information (employees exchange information), employees are rewarded, and they are provided with training to acquire necessary knowledge and skills. When these four attributes are applied together, they impact employee productivity and organizational performance positively. Employees in organizations that encourage the implementation of high involvement gain more skills for performing their tasks correctly, more information to rely on when making effective decisions. Different researchers have used various practices to measure high involvement management, including selecting the right person for the right job, training programs, and teamwork. If high involvement management is applied, it can stimulate positive feelings in the minds of employees about their work. High involvement management is considered a key finding of modern management that has a strong impact on individual employee performance and the organization itself (Ahmad et al., 2014).

In the contemporary business environment, managing the mental aspects of organizational members involves emotional labor, mental stress, and balancing work and life, becoming increasingly important according to Lee and Kim (2023). Literature analysis indicates that there is no clear definition of employee well-being. A person is said to have high psychological well-being when they are satisfied with life and experience positive emotions while avoiding negative emotions (anger, negativity, and depression). Contemporary organizations expect their employees to be proactive, take responsibility, and be committed to achieving the organization's goals. Employee performance, and therefore job satisfaction, is not possible without individual psychological well-being (Wadhawan, 2016). For employees, the level of well-being is associated with how satisfied they are with their work and how the organization treats them. It is emphasized that well-being supports and enhances greater employee involvement, and thus organizational performance and competitive advantage. According to Popescu et al. (2022), there are three main aspects of well-being: psychological, physical, and social. Psychological well-being focuses on individuals' subjective experiences, while physical well-being relates to objective physiological measures and subjective experiences of physical health. Social well-being concerns the quality of relationships with other people. Well-being is measured by objective indicators, individual perception assessment, questionnaire completion, conducting interviews, or direct observation of individuals (Popescu et al., 2022).

1.1.1. Relationship between high work involvement and well-being of employees

According to Bakker (2008), high work involvement can improve employees' psychological well-being by providing them with a sense of purpose and meaning in their work. When employees are emotionally engaged in their tasks, this can result in greater satisfaction and positive emotions in the workplace. Work involvement can also indirectly impact the physical well-being of employees. When employees are emotionally engaged in their work, it can reduce stress levels and improve overall health, contributing to better physical well-being. Job satisfaction, often stemming from high work involvement, can contribute to better interpersonal relationships among employees. A positive work environment can increase feelings of belongingness and support among colleagues, which positively influences social well-being. Vanhala, Von Bonsdorff & Janhonen (2009), Wood & Menezes (2011) determined that high work engagement has positive effects on employee well-being.

Based on the subject and aim of this study, and considering previous research on this topic, the main hypothesis to be tested is as follows:

H: High work involvement leads to positive effects on the well-being of employees in the IT sector in Serbia.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this section, the sampling procedure, the method through which participants had the opportunity to respond to questions, the timeframe for sample collection, as well as the presentation and description of the sample will be presented.

2.1. The questionnaire

During the research on the effects of high work involvement on the well-being of employees, an electronic questionnaire "Google Forms" was used, consisting of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire included control questions such as gender, age, level of education, position in the organization, organization size, market served by the organization, work experience, and work patterns. The second part of the questionnaire pertained to the assessment of high work involvement of employees as the independent variable and employee well-being as the dependent variable. The works of the authors Yang (2012) and Zheng et al. (2015) were used to create the second part of the questionnaire. For the purposes of research and measurement, a Likert scale was used, ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "strongly disagree"; 2 "disagree"; 3 "neutral"; 4 "agree"; and 5 "strongly agree" (Joshi, Kale, Chandel & Pal, 2015). The questionnaire link was distributed exclusively to employees in the IT sector in the Republic of Serbia.

2.2. Sample characteristics

The questionnaire relating to the effects of high work involvement on the well-being of employees was exclusively intended for managers and skilled workers (software engineers) in the IT sector in the Republic of Serbia. The created questionnaire was completed by 100 employees, including managers and skilled workers in the IT sector in the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The sample collection lasted throughout January 2024. Table 1 illustrates the sample structure according to gender, age, level of education, position of the employee in the organization, organization size, market served by the organization, work experience, and work patterns. The sample consisted of a higher representation of male respondents (58%), younger employees aged 18 to 25 (48%), with completed four-year academic studies (39%), in the position of skilled workers - software engineers (67%). The sample predominantly comprised employees in small organizations (45%) serving the international market (31%). In the sample structure, employees' work experience ranged from 1 to 5 years. The most dominant work pattern within the observed sample was a hybrid work model, combining work from home and office-based work (49%).

Table 1: Sample characteristics

Sample characteristics	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	58	58
Female	42	42
Age structure		
18 – 25	48	48
26 – 30	30	30
31 – 35	10	10
36 – 40	4	4
41 – 45	5	5
46 – 50	2	2
More than 50	1	1
Level of education		
High school	11	11
Three years of vocational studies	33	33
Bechelor's deree	39	39
Master's study	14	14
Ph.D.	3	3
Position in company		
Manager	33	33
Professional worker (software engineer)	67	67
Size of the organization		
Micro	6	6

Small	45	45
Medium	28	28
Big	21	21
Target market		
Locally	8	8
Regionally	15	15
Nationally	17	17
Internationally	31	31
Globally	29	29
Work experience		
Less than one year	14	14
1 – 5 years	58	58
6 – 10 years	18	18
11 – 15 years	4	4
16 – 20 years	3	3
More than 20 years	3	3
Work form		
Fully office work	35	35
Hybrid work model	49	49
Completely out of the office	16	16

Source: The authors' research

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To present the results of the research on the effects of high work involvement on employee well-being, statistical software such as "SPSS IBM" and "Smart PLS" was utilized. A Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis was conducted to adequately determine the effect between the research variables. The study aimed to ascertain the direct impact of high work involvement on employee well-being. Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics for the two observed variables.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for observed variables

	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
High involvement work practice	100	1,62	4,18	3,1937	0,56
Well-being	100	1,53	5,00	4,0676	0,75

Source: The authors' research

The results of measuring the reflective constructs within the established model are presented in the first part of the analysis, where the external loadings of indicators for each variable in the model were analyzed, along with reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Table 3 displays the external loadings of indicators for each variable in the observed model. According to Berber, Slavić & Aleksić (2020), loadings below 0.708 should be excluded from further analysis. As per Jevtić & Gašić (2024), loadings between 0.4 and 0.7 should be retained in the model only if they do not disrupt other indicators. After analysis, all indicators passed the test, with all indicators having loadings above 0.4.

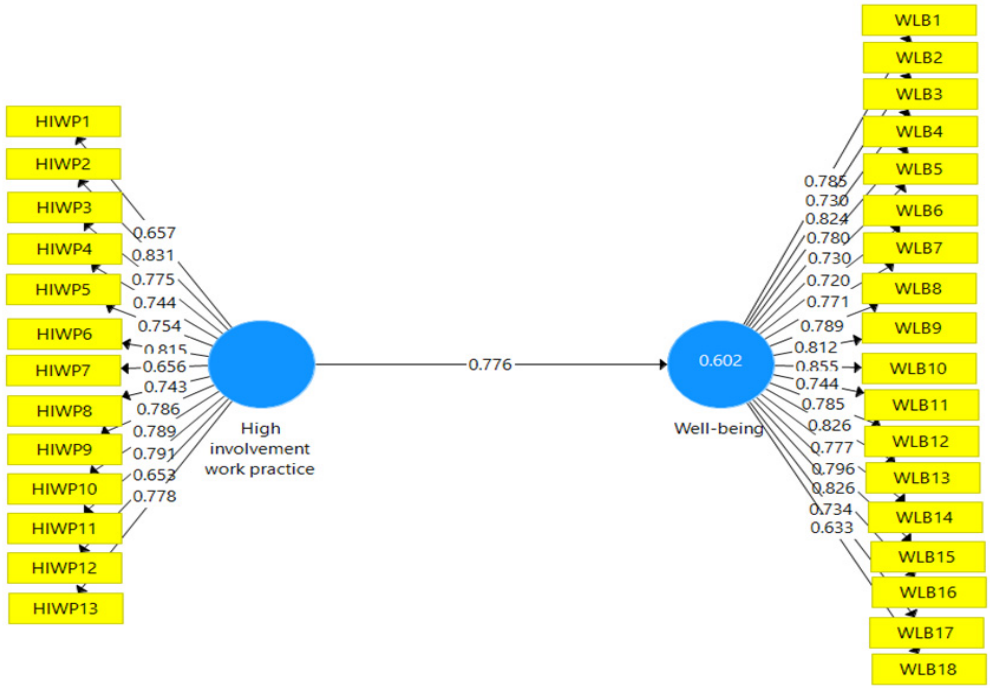

Figure 1: Path coefficient estimates
Source: The authors' research

Table 3: Reflective indicator loadings

Items	High involvemet work practice	Well-being
HIWP1	0,657	
HIWP2	0,831	
HIWP3	0,775	
HIWP4	0,744	
HIWP5	0,754	
HIWP6	0,815	
HIWP7	0,656	
HIWP8	0,743	
HIWP9	0,786	
HIWP10	0,789	
HIWP11	0,791	
HIWP12	0,653	
HIWP13	0,778	
WLB1		0,785
WLB2		0,730
WLB3		0,824
WLB4		0,780
WLB5		0,730
WLB6		0,720
WLB7		0,771
WLB8		0,789
WLB9		0,812
WLB10		0,855
WLB11		0,744
WLB12		0,785
WLB13		0,826
WLB14		0,777
WLB15		0,796
WLB16		0,826
WLB17		0,734
WLB18		0,633

Source: The authors' research

Reliability and convergent validity are presented in Table 4 and measured using Chronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). According to Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt (2014), the threshold value for Chronbach's alpha is 0.60, achieving convergent validity for all constructs in the model. According to Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2017), the threshold value for composite reliability is 0.70. For each construct in the model, composite reliability exceeds 0.90. The extracted average variance is greater than 0.50, as indicated by Jevtić & Gašić (2024) and Gašić & Berber (2021).

Table 4: Internal consistency and convergent validity

	Cronbach's alpha		Composite reliability		Average variance extracted (AVE)	
	Values	Criterion	Values	Criterion	Values	Criterion
High involvement work practice	0,936	**>0,60** (Hair et al. 2014)	0,944	**>0,70** (Hair et al. 2017)	0,568	**>0,50** (Gašić & Berber, 2021; Jevtić & Gašić 2024)
Well-being	0,961		0,964		0,600	

Source: The authors' research

Discriminant validity can be assessed based on cross-loadings analysis, Fornell-Larcker criterion, and HTMT (Berber et al., 2022). Cross-loadings analysis is presented in Table 5. The proposed model has adequate discriminant validity if each indicator of a specific construct is weakly correlated with other constructs (Grubor, Đokić, Milićević, Đokić, 2021). Certain indicators (HIWP2, HIWP5, WLB7, WLB8, WLB 10, WLB12) were excluded from the constructs due to incomplete fulfillment of the cross-loadings criterion. This decision was made to ensure the discriminant validity of the constructs and the reliability of the analysis results. The excluded indicators did not show adequate correlation with their primary constructs, which could lead to biased or invalid results. Therefore, these indicators were eliminated from further analysis to preserve the accuracy and reliability of the results.

Table 5: Discriminant validity – Cross-loadings

	High involvement work practice	Well-being
HIWP1	0,646	0,644
HIWP3	0,767	0,583
HIWP4	0,722	0,524
HIWP6	0,812	0,500
HIWP7	0,667	0,494
HIWP8	0,774	0,427
HIWP9	0,794	0,525
HIWP10	0,806	0,525
HIWP11	0,797	0,546
HIWP12	0,689	0,275
HIWP13	0,789	0,499
WLB1	0,483	0,806
WLB2	0,515	0,758
WLB3	0,518	0,852
WLB4	0,559	0,770
WLB5	0,470	0,730
WLB6	0,525	0,780
WLB9	0,629	0,701
WLB11	0,504	0,777
WLB13	0,586	0,839
WLB14	0,596	0,790
WLB15	0,565	0,801
WLB16	0,573	0,849
WLB17	0,537	0,758
WLB18	0,423	0,681

Source: The authors' research

If the loading of the first construct is higher than that of the second construct, the Fornell-Larcker criterion is fulfilled. Based on Table 6, it can be concluded that discriminant validity has been achieved according to the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Table 6: Discriminant validity – Fornell – Larcker criterium

	High involvement work practice	Well-being
High involvement work practice	0,754	
Well-being	0,691	0,780

Source: The authors' research

If there are certain deviations regarding discriminant validity, they can be overcome using the HTMT approach, which is the most accurate indicator of discriminant validity. The threshold value for HTMT is 0.90 (Hensler, Ringle & Sarsted, 2015). In Table 7, the displayed value is below 0.90, indicating that discriminant validity has been achieved according to this criterion.

Table 7: Discriminant validity – Heterotrait-monotrait – HTMT

	High involvement work practice	Well-being
High involvement work practice		
Well-being	0,709	

Source: The authors' research

The results of multicollinearity analysis are presented in Table 8. According to Shams, Niazi & Asim (2020) the limit value is 5, while Hair, Risher, Sarstedt & Ringle (2019), values for VIF below 10 are accepted, based on which all values in Table 8 are acceptable.

Table 8: Multicollinearity testing of indicators – VIF

Items	VIF
HIWP1	1,737
HIWP3	2,250
HIWP4	1,989
HIWP6	2,749
HIWP7	1,897
HIWP8	2,986
HIWP9	3,808
HIWP10	3,377
HIWP11	2,797
HIWP12	3,520
HIWP13	4,003
WLB1	3,142
WLB2	2,716
WLB3	4,369
WLB4	2,374
WLB5	2,648
WLB6	3,407
WLB9	3,547
WLB11	2,282
WLB13	3,996
WLB14	3,141
WLB15	3,469
WLB16	4,382
WLB17	3,149
WLB18	2,576

Source: The authors' research

The analysis of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, namely high employee work involvement and their well-being, is presented in the final step.

Table 9: Statistical significance testing – direct and specific (mediator) indirect effect

	Original sample	St. deviation	T statistics	p-values	Hypothesis
High involvment work practices → Well-being	0,691	0,066	10,443	0,000	H: Accepted

Source: The authors' research

In Table 9, the standard deviation, t-statistic, and p-value are displayed. Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between high employee work involvement and well-being ($\beta = 0.691$, $t = 10.443$, $p = 0.000$). The research results indicate that high employee work involvement has a positive effect on employee well-being. Therefore, based on the conducted research, it can be concluded that there is a direct, positive, and statistically significant impact of high employee work involvement on employee well-being. Our research findings clearly confirm the hypothesis of the existence of a direct positive relationship between high employee work involvement and employee well-being. These findings suggest that organizations that strive for a high level of employee involvement, particularly through decision-making processes, problem-solving, and support for innovation, can expect improvement in the mental, psychological, and emotional well-being of their employees. This is crucial considering that employee well-being is increasingly recognized as a key factor in achieving organizational goals, including productivity, employee loyalty, and client satisfaction. It is important to emphasize that our findings are consistent with theoretical propositions about the relationship between work involvement and employee well-being. The theoretical framework we used provided the basis for understanding this relationship, but our empirical research added concrete support to this theory in the context of the IT sector in Serbia.

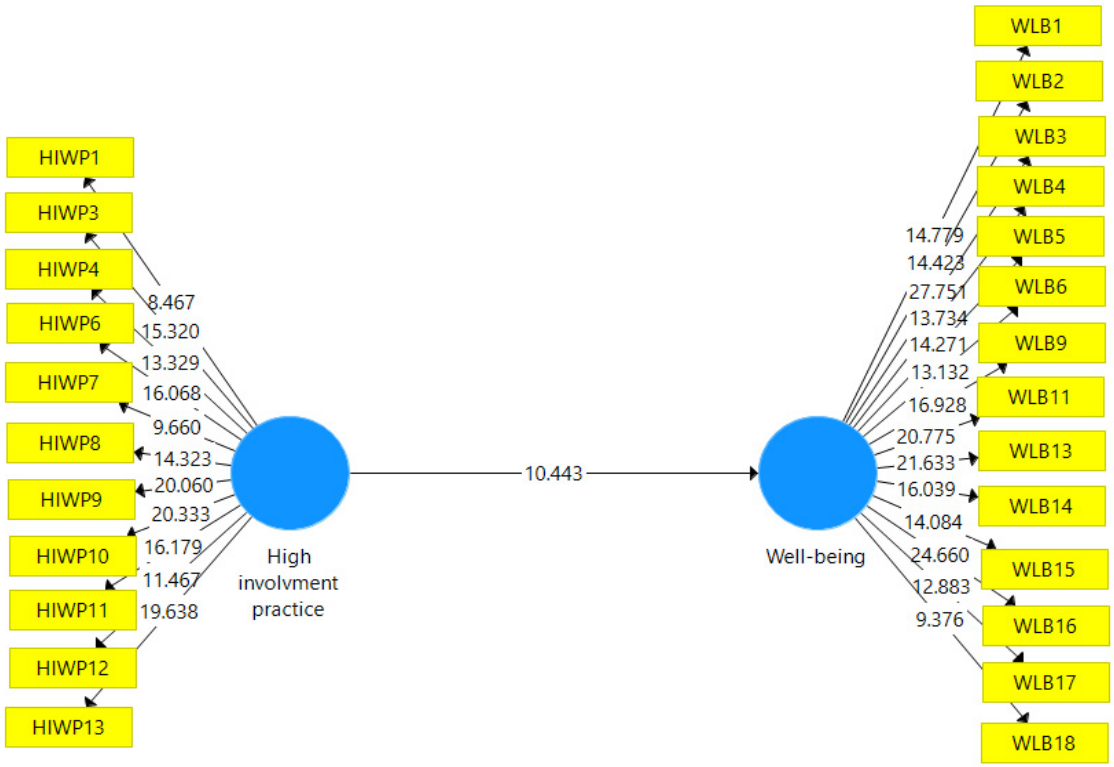

Figure 1: The path model with bootstrapping results
Source: The authors' research

CONCLUSION

Based on the conducted research on the relationship between high employee work involvement and employee well-being in the IT sector in Serbia, important conclusions can be drawn that contribute to understanding this key aspect of human resources in the contemporary business environment.

The research confirmed the existence of a direct positive relationship between high employee work involvement and employee well-being. The results clearly demonstrated that employees who are involved in decision-making processes, problem-solving, and proposing new ideas have more developed mental, psychological, and emotional aspects of their lives. This confirms the significance of human resource management strategies based on new models, such as high employee work involvement, in achieving employee well-being. As in the works of the authors of Vanhala, Von Bonsdorff & Janhonen (2009), Wood & Menezes (2011), it is concluded that there is a positive effect of high work involvement on the well-being of employees.

In the modern business world, organizations increasingly recognize the importance of social responsibility and caring for the well-being of their employees. Our research provides additional support to this trend, emphasizing that investing in strategies that encourage high employee work involvement can have a positive impact on employee well-being. This is not only a moral obligation of organizations towards their employees but also a strategic approach that can strengthen

their competitive position in the market. The results of our research highlight the importance of developing human resource management strategies that promote high employee work involvement as a key factor in improving employee well-being. This is not only beneficial for the organization itself but also for the broader community, contributing to the creation of a more productive, satisfied, and harmonious work environment.

Although we used valid methods for data collection and analysis, a sample of 100 employees may be relatively small and specific to the IT sector in Serbia, limiting the generalizability of our findings. Further research could expand the sample and consider other sectors and geographic locations to obtain more generalizable conclusions.

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