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Relationship Between Workplace Humor, Compassion, and Quality of Work Life Among Hospital Nurses

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Abstract: Quality of Work Life (QWL) encompasses factors that shape employee satisfaction, well-being, and happiness in the workplace. This study examines the relationship between quality of work life and humor types in the workplace, with compassion as a moderating variable. Humor is conceptualized as verbal and non-verbal communication that elicits cognitive or affective responses, while compassion reflects sensitivity to the suffering of others, coupled with a desire to alleviate it. The sample consisted of 179 hospital nurses in the Jabodetabek area who completed questionnaires assessing the quality of work life, humor types, and compassion. Data analysis using SPSS 22 revealed that positive humor, such as self-enhancing and affiliative humor, was related to quality of work life, whereas negative humor, such as self-defeating and aggressive humor, showed no significant relationship. Compassion moderated the relationship between positive humor and quality of work life. These findings highlight the importance of fostering compassion in hospital nurses to enhance their quality of work life.

Keyword: Workplace humor, compassion, quality of work life, and nurse

INTRODUCTION

The healthcare sector is a 24-hour operation. Hospital nurses, as front-line workers in the healthcare system, work in shifts. Often, nurses exceed their scheduled working hours, which can lead to high levels of stress (Weiland, 2023). A study on employee stress in healthcare environments across 17 countries found that nurses in most countries experience significant stress and pressure due to their demanding shift work (Lambert & Lambert, 2001).

In the healthcare sector, the demand for excellent service continues, but available resources are often limited. This creates excessive pressure on hospital nurses, leading to feelings of stress (Brooks & Anderson, 2005). The growing competition in healthcare infrastructure forces hospitals to increase productivity to meet managed care requirements. However, if increased productivity comes at the expense of nurses' quality of work life, such improvements are likely to be temporary (Brooks & Anderson, 2005). Poor psychological health and high rates of absenteeism among nurses are likely to result in lower quality of

patient care (Michie & Williams, 2003). Knox and Irving (1997) also suggested that factors influencing the quality of work life directly affect nurses' performance.

To anticipate the pressures faced by nurses, a quality work life is necessary. Quality of work life (QWL) is a concept that includes various aspects affecting employee satisfaction, well-being, and happiness at work (Easton & Van Laar, 2016). Quality of work life is a comprehensive program designed to enhance employee satisfaction, support workplace learning, and help workers better manage transitions and changes (Boonrod, 2009). High quality of work life is an integral part of organizations in attracting and retaining employees.

Tudose and Mairean (2023) examined the quality of life of healthcare professionals (professional quality of life [PQoL]). Stamm (2010) defines PQoL as the experience of individuals related to their work as helpers. PQoL includes two aspects: the positive (Compassion Satisfaction) and the negative (Compassion Fatigue). Compassion fatigue is divided into two parts. The first involves burnout-related issues like fatigue, frustration, anger, and depression. The second is Secondary Traumatic Stress, which includes negative feelings triggered by fear and trauma related to work.

PQoL can be predicted by workplace humor. Martin et al. (2003) distinguish four humor styles: self-enhancing humor (used for personal development), affiliative humor (used to strengthen relationships with others through jokes and other funny interactions), aggressive humor (used for personal growth at the expense of others), and self-defeating humor (used to improve relationships at one's own expense). Humor is a form of verbal and non-verbal communication that elicits cognitive or affective responses from those who understand it (Martin et al. 2003). Humor in organizational contexts is referred to as workplace humor, which involves communication that entertains and evokes positive emotions and thoughts in individuals, groups, or organizations (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006).

Workplace humor, especially self-enhancing and affiliative humor, is positively related to compassion satisfaction and negatively related to burnout and secondary traumatic stress among medical staff (Tudose & Mairean, 2023). Conversely, self-defeating humor is negatively related to compassion satisfaction and positively related to burnout and secondary traumatic stress. These findings suggest that individuals who tend to use positive humor at work can increase compassion satisfaction and reduce burnout and secondary traumatic stress among medical staff. In contrast, those who tend to use negative humor styles may have the opposite effect on PQoL.

In predicting PQoL, workplace humor is moderated by compassion (Tudose & Mairean, 2023). Compassion is the sensitivity to others' suffering, involving a deep desire to alleviate their distress (Figley & Figley, 2017). High levels of compassion are positively related to compassion satisfaction and negatively related to burnout and secondary traumatic stress among medical staff. When individuals have a high level of compassion, they are more likely to feel satisfaction in helping and responding to others' suffering. The ability to respond empathetically to others' traumatic experiences can help individuals maintain their mental health. Furthermore, compassion can moderate the relationship between affiliative humor and secondary traumatic stress. With compassion, the impact of humor on secondary traumatic stress can be altered or reduced.

Tudose and Mairean (2023) have explained Professional Quality of Life (ProQol) and its relationship with workplace humor moderated by compassion among medical workers. However, this study has not fully addressed the aspect of quality of work life (QWL). Research on Professional Quality of Life (ProQoL) often emphasizes emotional well-being and professional satisfaction in professions that involve direct service to others, such as healthcare workers and social workers. ProQoL includes aspects like job satisfaction, fatigue, and the emotional impact of work (Stamm, 2010). Meanwhile, quality of work life has a broader scope, covering working conditions, job security, work-life balance, and career development opportunities (Walton, 1973).

Therefore, it is essential to further investigate the relationship between workplace humor and quality of work life, with compassion serving as a moderating variable, specifically among hospital nurses in Indonesia, particularly within the Jabodetabek area.

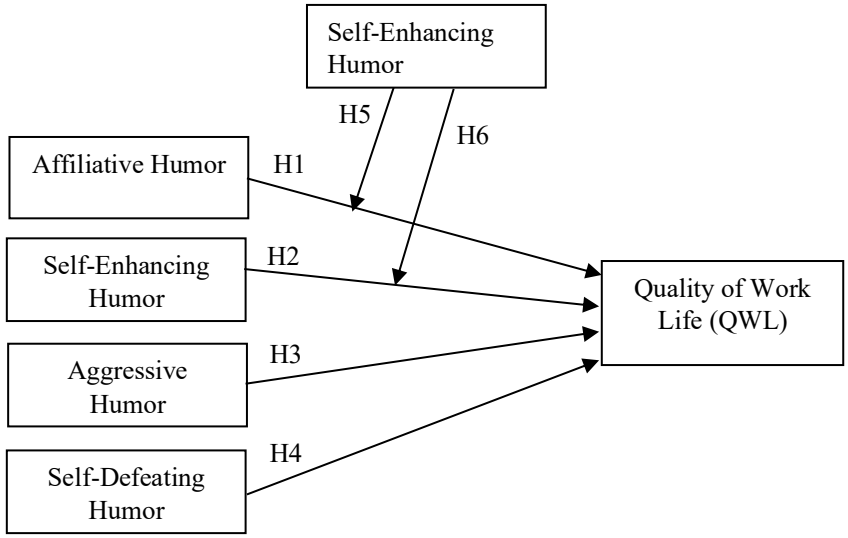


Figure 1. Research Model

METHOD

The number of participants in this study was 179 nurses. All participants were hospital nurses in the Jabodetabek area. The majority of the sample in this study were female (70.4%). The inclusion criteria for participants were working in a hospital and having daily interactions with patients. The researcher did not restrict participants based on demographic variables such as age and gender.

Three measurement tools were used in this study: (a) the Quality of Work Life Scale (Rostiana et al. 2015), (b) the Work-related Humor Styles Questionnaire (swHSQ, Scheel et al. 2016), and (c) The Compassion Scale (Pommier et al. 2020). Each measurement tool was formatted as a Google Form with a Likert scale format.

Quality of work life was measured using the Quality of Work Life Scale developed by Rostiana et al. (2015). The internal consistency reliability of this scale is $\alpha = 0.973$. The Quality of Work Life Scale consists of 47 items with ten dimensions. These dimensions include job characteristics (e.g., the freedom to determine how to work), social relevance of the employer (e.g., the institution/company's social responsibility towards the community), coworker (e.g., communication among colleagues), pay and benefit (e.g., medical assistance benefits), personal development (e.g., the opportunity to continue education while working), balance of work and family (e.g., the availability of time for family), promotion (e.g., opportunities for career advancement), working condition (e.g., the comfort of the workplace), supervisory (e.g., the supervisor's ability to guide subordinates), and work culture (e.g., the values of order/discipline at work). This scale is measured using a 6-point rating scale: 1= None/No idea, 2= Poor, 3= Less, 4= Fair, 5= Good, 6= Excellent.

Humor types were measured using the Work-related Humor Styles Questionnaire (swHSQ; Scheel et al. 2016), which was adapted into Bahasa Indonesia. The internal consistency reliability of this scale is as follows: (a) affiliative humor $\alpha = 0.843$, (b) self-enhancing humor $\alpha = 0.709$, (c) aggressive humor $\alpha = 0.890$, and (d) self-defeating humor $\alpha = 0.904$. This scale consists of 12 items measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (always). The swHSQ measures four humor styles: self-enhancing (e.g., I can cheer myself up when I feel down), affiliative humor (e.g., I enjoy making others laugh by saying things that are funny), self-defeating (e.g., I will make fun of myself if it makes others

laugh), and aggressive humor (e.g., I like telling jokes in public about someone's peculiarities (colleague), without considering their feelings).

Compassion was measured using The Compassion Scale (Pommier et al. 2020), adapted into Bahasa Indonesia. The internal consistency reliability of this scale is α = 0.826. This scale consists of 16 items rated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). One item was removed as it did not meet the criteria in the study, leaving 15 items. Compassion includes four dimensions: kindness (e.g., I take time to listen to others' concerns), common humanity (e.g., I can understand the weaknesses/faults of others), mindfulness (e.g., When others talk about their problems, I pay close attention to how they speak and observe their body language), and indifference (e.g., I do not care about other people's problems).

The average time required to complete the scales was 15-20 minutes. All collected data were processed using the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) program. The data analysis used to measure the moderating role of resilience was conducted using the MRA PROCESS Macro Hayes v.42.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on descriptive statistical analysis, using a 1- 6 scale (midpoint = 3), the scores for the quality of work life variable were relatively high (M = 4.70, SD = 0.68), as the mean value was greater than the midpoint.

Based on descriptive statistical analysis, using a 1-5 scale (midpoint = 3), the value for the affiliative humor variable among participants was relatively high (M = 3.68, SD = 0.84), as the mean value was greater than the midpoint of 3. The value for the self-enhancing humor variable was also high (M = 3.21, SD = 0.91), as the mean value was greater than the midpoint of 3. For the aggressive humor variable, the participants' scores were relatively low (M = 1.95, SD = 1.10), as the mean value was less than the midpoint. For the self-defeating humor variable, the participants' scores were also relatively low (M = 2.60, SD = 1.21), as the mean value was less than the midpoint.

Based on descriptive statistical analysis, using a 1-5 scale (midpoint = 3), the participants' scores for the compassion variable were relatively high (M = 3.73, SD = 0.56), as the mean value was greater than the midpoint. This means that the participants in this study perceived compassion as an important attitude that medical personnel should possess.

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation of Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Quality of Work Life	(.973)					
2. Affiliative Humor	.274**	(.843)				
3. Self Enhancing Humor	.151*	.347**	(.709)			
4. Aggressive Humor	-,112	.246**	.235**	(.890)		
5. Self-Defeating Humor	-,138	.367**	,126	.612**	(.904)	
6. Compassion	.367**	.339**	.292**	-,094	-,159*	(.826)
7. Age	-.172*	-,019	-,082	-,019	,074	-.196**
Mean	4,70	3,68	3,21	1,95	2,60	3,73
SD	0,68	0,84	0,91	1,10	1,21	0,56

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01

Note. SD = standard deviation; the numbers on the diagonal of the table in parentheses () represent the internal consistency reliability coefficients.

Based on the table results, quality of work life is related to affiliative humor, r(df) = .274, p < .01. The higher the affiliative humor, the higher the quality of work life. Quality of work life is also related to self-enhancing humor, r(df) = .151, p < .05. The higher the self-enhancing humor, the higher the quality of work life. Negative humor styles such as aggressive humor and self-defeating humor do not have a relationship with quality of work

life, meaning that higher or lower levels of aggressive humor and self-defeating humor do not relate to the quality of work life.

Table 2. Moderation Regression Analysis Results

Variable	*t*	*p*
Affiliative humor	2,880	0,005
Self-enhancing humor	2,133	0,034

To find out whether compassion has a role as a moderator variable, MRA testing was conducted. MRA PROCESS testing Macro Hayes v.42. Based on table 2, the results of MRA Process testing MRA test results show that compassion plays a role as a moderator of the relationship between affiliative humor and quality of work life, $t = 2.880$, $p < 0.05$. Compassion also acts as a moderator of the relationship between self-enhancing humor and quality of work life $t = 2.133$, $p < 0,05$. Further analysis was conducted with the graph below.

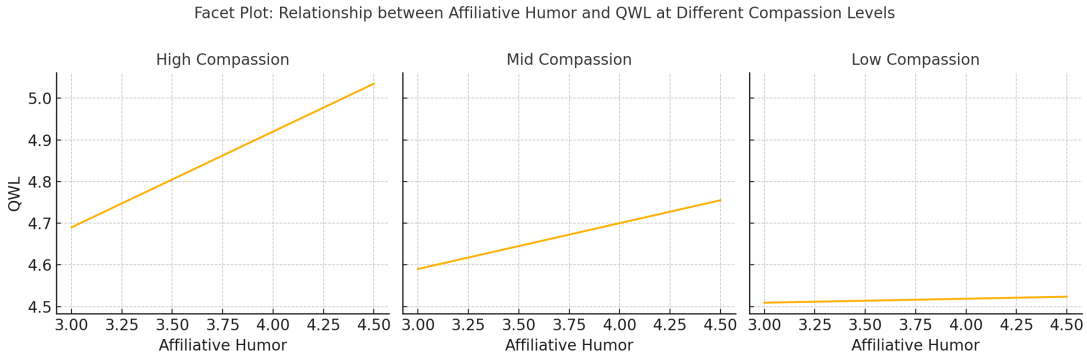


Figure 2. Moderated Regression analysis chart

Compassion moderates the relationship between affiliative humor and quality of work life. In the high compassion group, there is a strong and positive relationship between affiliative humor and quality of work life. In the low compassion group, there is a weak and negative relationship between affiliative humor and quality of work life. The facet plot for self-enhancing humor shows the relationship between self-enhancing humor and QWL at three different levels of compassion: high, medium, and low. High compassion shows a positive relationship between self-enhancing humor and QWL, medium compassion shows a very weak relationship between self-enhancing humor and QWL, and low compassion shows a negative relationship between self-enhancing humor and QWL.

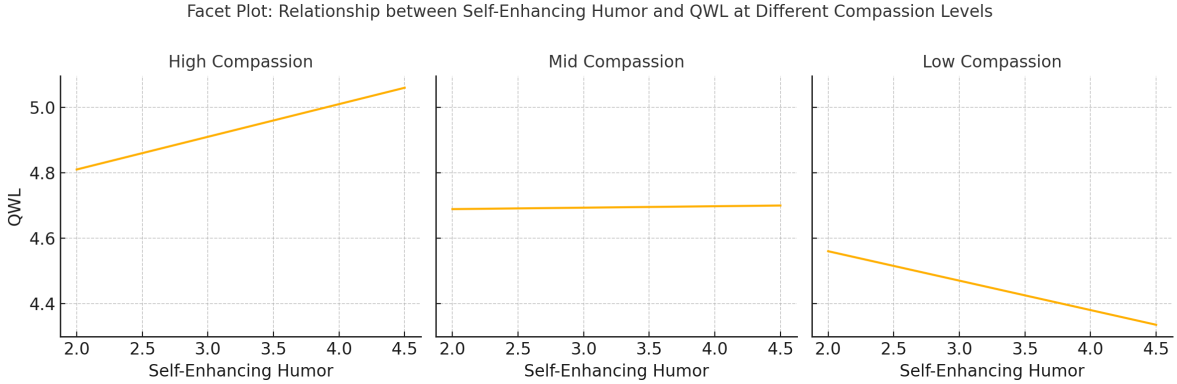


Figure 3. Moderated Regression analysis chart

Compassion also moderates the relationship between self-enhancing humor and quality of work life. Based on the graph, in the high-compassion group, there is a strong and positive relationship between self-enhancing humor and quality of work life. In the low-

compassion group, there is a strong and negative relationship between self-enhancing humor and quality of work life.

As shown in the figure self-enhancing humor, shows the relationship between self-enhancing humor and quality of work life at three different levels of compassion (high, medium, and low). High compassion shows a positive relationship between self-enhancing humor and quality of work life. Medium compassion shows a very weak relationship between self-enhancing humor and quality of work life. Low compassion shows a negative relationship between self-enhancing humor and quality of work life.

The results of this study indicate that affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor have a significant relationship with the quality of work life of nurses. The more individuals use positive humor, such as affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor, the better their quality of work life becomes. Therefore, individuals who use affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor tend to have more positive and satisfying experiences in their work. These findings align with previous studies, which found that affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor are related to professional quality of life (ProQol) (Tudose & Mairean, 2023). In other words, the more frequently nurses use affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor, the higher their level of satisfaction when helping others, and the lower their burnout, which includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of inadequacy related to their work.

Next, the researchers wanted to examine whether negative humor, such as aggressive humor and self-defeating humor, is related to the quality of work life. In this study, aggressive humor and self-defeating humor did not have a relationship with the quality of work life. These findings are consistent with previous research, which showed that aggressive humor and self-defeating humor are not related to quality of life and well-being (Leist & Muller, 2013). Aggressive humor also has no relationship with professional quality of life (ProQol) (Tudose & Mairean, 2023).

Compassion moderates the relationship between affiliative humor and quality of work life. This means that the more frequently nurses use affiliative humor, the better their quality of work life, but only if they have high compassion. In previous research, compassion was found to moderate the relationship between affiliative humor and secondary traumatic stress (Tudose & Mairean, 2023). Compassion also moderates the relationship between self-enhancing humor and quality of work life. This means that the more frequently nurses use self-enhancing humor, the better their quality of work life, but only if they have high compassion.

This study has several limitations. It uses SPSS for data analysis, and the statistical methods employed may not fully capture the complexity of the relationships between the variables. Limitations in the analysis techniques may affect the interpretation of the results, especially in identifying the moderating role of compassion. The study is cross-sectional, which means it cannot capture the dynamics of the relationships between workplace humor, compassion, and quality of work life over time. A longitudinal design may be required to understand the changes and developments in these relationships. Finally, external factors such as hospital policies, workload, and other working conditions that might affect the quality of work life were not included as variables in this study. This could be an area for future research to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

Despite these limitations, this study has several strengths. One of its strengths is its significant practical relevance and contribution to the healthcare sector in Indonesia. By examining the relationship between types of workplace humor and quality of work life among nurses, this study provides practical insights that can help hospital management create a more positive work environment that supports the well-being of nurses. This study also introduces compassion as a moderating variable, which provides a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the relationship between workplace humor and quality of work life. These findings demonstrate how compassion can amplify the positive effects of humor, such as

affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor, providing practical implications for workplace interventions. In previous research (Tudose & Mairean, 2023), it was found that compassion moderates the relationship between affiliative humor and secondary traumatic stress. In this study, it was found that compassion moderates the relationship between affiliative humor and quality of work life. Additionally, compassion also moderates the relationship between self-enhancing humor and quality of work life.

To expand the understanding and application of these findings, future research is recommended to use a longitudinal design to capture the changes and dynamics of these relationships over time, and to expand the sample to other regions in Indonesia or other countries with different cultures to increase the generalizability of the findings. Including additional variables such as workload, social support, and leadership could provide a more holistic picture of the factors affecting nurses' well-being. Further research could also explore cultural contexts and how they influence workplace humor and its impact on the quality of work life. Additionally, it is recommended that similar research be conducted in other service sectors, such as education, banking, and public services, to see whether the same findings apply and how humor and compassion affect the quality of work life in various contexts.

CONCLUSION

Affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor both positively influence the quality of work life, indicating that individuals who frequently use these types of humor experience greater satisfaction and well-being in their professional roles. In contrast, aggressive humor and self-defeating humor do not show any significant relationship with the quality of work life, suggesting that these negative forms of humor may not contribute to or improve workplace well-being.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the field of industrial psychology by demonstrating the moderating role of compassion in the relationship between humor and work life quality. Compassion strengthens the positive effects of affiliative and self-enhancing humor, showing that those with higher levels of compassion benefit more from these types of humor in the workplace. This finding underscores the importance of emotional intelligence and interpersonal sensitivity in enhancing workplace dynamics, offering valuable insights for organizational development in the healthcare sector.

By identifying the role of positive humor and compassion in improving work life quality, this research provides a practical framework that can be applied to enhance nurse well-being and, potentially, employee satisfaction in broader industrial and organizational contexts. The results of this study contribute to the advancement of psychological science, particularly in understanding how emotional factors like humor and compassion can be leveraged to create more supportive and satisfying work environments.

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