



Employee work focus: Conceptualizing and developing a multidimensional scale

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Abstract

'Focus' has been conceptualized in a multitude of overlapping domains closely associated with constructs such as prioritizing, attention, concentration, cognitive control, etc. yet employee work focus (EWF) remains a fuzzy construct in the literature. This research aims at theorizing this construct and developing a scale to measure EWF. A qualitative inquiry was done using grounded theory and content analysis to develop an initial framework which was used to develop an initial pool of 40 items. Thirty-Two items were retained based on the values of the content validity ratio (CVR>0.51). Those were subjected to two rounds of exploratory factor analysis using a big sample pilot study followed by the main study with 434 professionals in total from service and manufacturing industries in Sri Lanka which resulted in a best-fit model of three distinct factors of EWF namely alternative search, right focus (ability to prioritize) and sustained focus (attention). Confirmatory factor analysis along with a series of scale development tests including convergent and discriminant validity tests led to the final 3-dimensional 14-item scale to measure EWF with factor loadings over 0.5 and Cronbach α of 0.853. The authors presented a theoretical framework of EWF based on the aforesaid factor structure along with insights from the qualitative inquiry conducted using 29 respondents and reviewing previous empirical findings in over 100 publications. Finally, the article highlighted the managerial and theoretical implications of the findings and related future research avenues.

Keywords: *Alternative Search; Attention; Employee Work Focus; Focus; Prioritization; Scale Development*

1. Introduction

There was no better evidence of the importance of 'Focus' in one's work life than three of the most successful business tycoons namely Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and Warren Buffett famously quoted for unequivocally attributing their success to being able to 'focus' when they were asked to name the single

Article History

Received Date: 07.08.2022

Revised Date : 05.09.2022

Published date: 30.09.2022

most important characteristic that earned them their success (McKeown, 2014; Zitelmann, 2019).

Although many scholars and practitioners have diversely conceptualized the domain of focus, no comprehensive attempt at theorizing and measuring the construct of Employee Work Focus (EWF) could be found in the past literature other than diversely related and peripheral constructs such as regulatory work focus (Akhtar & Lee, 2014; Higgings, 1997; Fellner et al., 2007), temporal work focus (Shipp et al., 2009), attention (Goleman, 2013, Mark, 2018 & 2017), state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), clarity (Sawyer, 1992), cognitive control (Goleman, 2013), cognitive engagement (Webster & Hackly, 1997), the concept of essentialism (McKeown, 2014), etc. Focus has also been identified as an important construct in decision sciences. (Wang & Ruhe, 200). Scholars such as Goleman (2013) advocate work focus as the sustainability of attention or its efficiency aspect while others like McKeown (2014), Wriston (2007), etc. remain as advocates of its effectiveness aspect; the right focus or the ability to prioritize. This study attempted to address this theoretical and empirical gap with the primary objective of developing a comprehensive, statistically validated, and reliable scale to measure EWF.

A study done by Bialowolski et al. (2020) revealed distractions at work cost an average manufacturing firm in the USA almost 15 times more than health-related absenteeism, recording \$10,086 and \$6,703 as the annual distraction-induced productivity loss for an average office and manufacturing employee respectively. Works of many scholars and practitioners such as Collins (2002), Coyle (2019), Wriston (2007), etc. have identified work focus as an ingredient of creating great companies and sustaining high-performance cultures in organizations of all forms. Efforts on reducing distractions would certainly improve work focus which remains a leading cause of improving productivity (Mark et al., 2017). Therefore, it is imperative for organizations to assess how focused their employees are at work to take subsequent actions that create greater productivity and performance. Findings of the qualitative inquiry of the present study itself revealed the lack of focus of individuals at work as a primary reason for declining individual and subsequently, organizational performance, particularly in the public sector of Sri Lanka that

contributed to the socioeconomic crisis in Sri Lanka as observed by Sharma et al. (2022).

The works of Gunathilake and Jayasooriya (2022) were mainly used as a frame of reference for carrying out the qualitative aspect of this study while the quantitative study was based on an initial conceptualization formed through the former and a rigorous review of over 100 related publications. Further, it was also intended to define the concept and develop a theoretical model of EWF as secondary objectives.

2. Literature Review

Work focus has widely been recognized as an ingredient of success at organizational and individual levels (Goleman, 2013). It was also considered an important competence in many competency frameworks for different job roles (Gunathilake & Jayasooriya, 2021). Wriston (2007) identified focus as one out of four critical components necessary to create and sustain a high-performance culture. It was also a dimension in the 5-item high-performance culture model of Gunathilake and Jayasooriya (2022) where they uncovered four sub-themes or factors of focus namely work engagement, work alignment, work clarity, and awareness. Notably, in their study focus has received the highest ranking as an indicator or a constituent of a high-performance culture.

Wriston defined work focus as “the ability to limit our goals to those few that allow us to concentrate our limited resources to not only establish clear priorities but also to accomplish something of significance” (2007, pp.13). Maxwell (1999) identified prioritization and concentration as the keys to having focus which in turn is demanded from a truly effective leader. In light of the explanation of effectiveness as “doing the right things” and efficiency as “doing things right” (Drucker, 2006, cited in Sharma et al., 2016), authors were convinced the two-dimensionality of EWF as the ‘clarity of priorities’ and ‘ability to sustain attention’. This argument was supported by the works of several scholars in the past literature (Goleman, 2013; Gunathilake & Jayasooriya, 2022; McKeown, 2014; Wriston, 2007). Maxwell (1999) articulated the two-dimensionality of EWF as “a leader who knows his priorities but lacks concentration knows what to do but never gets it done. If

he has concentration but not priorities, he has excellence without progress. But when he harnesses both, he has the potential to achieve great things” (pp. 53-54). McKeown (2014) highlighted the distinction of Focus as a noun characterized by being static and as a verb being dynamic in the face of changing demands. However, in the author's opinion, his model of four quadrants of focus both as a noun and a verb represent focus as right focus or prioritization and changes in sustained focus or concentration respectively. Therefore, this line of thinking reinforces the conception of EWF concluded in this study.

Alternatively, the flip side of focus, i.e., the distractions or human tendency for maximizing and one's level of awareness of such inhibitors, and the ability to eliminate, minimize or delay them could also be a constituent of EWF which affect the level of focus of employees (Goleman, 2013; McKeown, 2014). Collins (2002) so eloquently articulated this point as “good is the enemy of great” as the ability to settle with one great thing could mean the ability to forgo a few good things.

The focus has mainly been conceptualized as the ability to maintain sustained attention or concentration. Cognitive control, i.e., the ability to pay attention or a sustained focus on a given task for a considerable period is another area related to focus and attention research which associates itself with several constructs such as delay of gratification, allocation of attention, working memory, resistance to distractions, impulse inhibition, goal focus, etc. (Goleman, 2013). As stated by Goleman (2013), a longitudinal study done in New Zealand with 1,037 children aged 4-8 years showed a clear correlation between their cognitive controlling abilities and financial success when they were 32 years of age highlighting the importance of concentration in performance and success.

A plethora of research work reported on the cognitive and biological processes involved in intense focus with the meaning of extreme attention or intense concentration. According to Webster & Hackley (1997), attention focus is one of the dimensions of the three-dimensional construct of cognitive engagement which according to Balakrishnan & Dwivedi (2021) is an extension of the theory of absorption. Schaufeli and Bakker also identified cognitive absorption as a dimension of engagement (2010) which was used in this study

in operationalizing EWF. One of the best definitions of absorption could be found in the works of Tellegen and Atkinson (1974) who interpreted absorption as a disposition for having total attention that commands full engagement of one's perceptual, enactive, imaginative, and ideational capacity, which they termed representative resources, that leads to a heightened sense of the reality of the attentional object, resistance to distractions and changes in the sense of reality.

The theory of flow pioneered by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) is another most explored domain of attention research where Csikszentmihalyi introduced flow as a mental state when a person faces a task with a clear set of goals that requires appropriate responses and receives immediate feedback where attention becomes ordered and fully invested leading to a loss of self-consciousness, and a distorted sense of time (1990). According to Hernandez & Voser (2019), the state of flow is a mindset that pushes people to their limits, and Goleman (2013) defined it as a state of maximal cognitive efficiency or maximum neural harmony when one aligns excellence or skill, engagement, and ethics in what they passionate of doing. Hernandez and Voser (2019) outlined clear objectives, unequivocal feedback, concentration on the task, sense of control, loss of self-consciousness or awareness, distortion of time, autotelic experience, action-awareness merging, and challenge-skills balance as nine dimensions of their flow state measurement scale. Balakrishnan & Dwivedi (2021) observed both cognitive engagement and the theory of flow bring an experiential understanding of cognitive absorption theory.

Higging's Regulatory Focus theory (RFT) (1998) and subsequent research work have extensively studied self-regulation which could be regarded as the may-be-the-most researched aspect of focus. It distinguishes two types of goal selection and goal pursuit strategies namely promotion and prevention focus where the former advocates making achievement and the latter avoiding failure as primary drivers of selecting and pursuing goals (Fellner et al., 2007). Accordingly, RFT as a motivational theory identifies this dichotomy of focus as dual sources of motivation while recognizing the same duality in regulating one's decisions and behaviors as a self-regulation theory. Therefore, it can be argued the self-regulatory aspect (goal selection) of RFT advocates the

effectiveness aspect of EWF (right focus) while the motivational aspect (goal pursuit) of RFT addresses the efficiency aspect of EWF (sustained focus).

Temporal Focus Theory (TFT) is another related conception of focus that distinguishes the attention people devote to thinking about the past, present, and future (Shipp et al., 2009). There are several standard scales available to assess RFT & TFT. Considering the past literature in the domain of interest, the authors were convinced to employ a modified version of the conception of EWF by the works of Gunathilake and Jayasooriya (2022) as the initial framework for conducting the qualitative inquiry.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this research is to conceptualize EWF and thereby develop a measurement instrument of the aforesaid construct addressing the scarcity and lesser specificity of this domain. This cross-sectional research was conducted based on pragmatic research philosophy and mixed method using both qualitative and quantitative research methods (Saunders et al., 2014).

3.1. Scale Development

3.1.1. Item Generation

As suggested by Boateng et al. (2018) both deductive and inductive approaches were employed to define the construct and generate items due to the unavailability of an established theory in the domain of concern. In light of the past literature in the domain of interest, authors derived a framework of the construct mainly based on the works of Gunathilake & Jayasooriya (2022) which was employed as the initial base in qualitative data collection through two focus group discussions (N=12 each) and five in-depth interviews. A qualitative inquiry was conducted using grounded theory (Crosey & Rautenbach, 2021) to develop a model and clearly define the principal domain of concern. The content analysis technique was used with deductive coding in analyzing qualitative data derived for the research questions namely, “what defines EWF” and “what indicates the extent to which an employee is focused at work”. As suggested by Sharma et al (2016), semi-structured interview protocol was used based on the gaps identified during initial rounds of focus group discussions compared to the model derived from Gunathilake & Jayasooriya

(2022). This led to a definition of EWF as given under the results section and an initial pool of items and a conceptual framework illustrated in Table 02.

Item generation was based on the aforesaid framework illustrated in Table 02. which comprises items under two dimensions namely ‘right focus’ with the meaning of the ability to accurately and effectively prioritize one’s work and ‘sustained focus’, i.e., ability to maintain continued attention conceptualizing the efficiency aspect of focus. Items coded with VI, DE and AB were extracted from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) of Schaufeli & Bakker (2010) corresponding to its 3-dimensions namely vigor, dedication, and adsorption capturing the sub-theme of work engagement under the main theme sustained focus (SF). Items corresponding maximization sub-theme were derived from several maximization and maximizing tendency scales of Dalal et al. (2015), Diab & Gillespie (2008), Germeijs & De Boeck (2002), and Schwartz et al. (2002). Item coded HS2 was adapted from McKeown (2014) based on the insights from the qualitative inquiry.

Five items each to measure both goal and procedural clarity were extracted from the role clarity scale of Sawyer (1992). Accordingly, role clarity was conceptualized as a two-dimensional construct comprising goal and procedural clarity with the meaning of the extent to which an employee is clear on the goals that he/she is expected to achieve and the means to achieve them. Some items under this sub-theme were modified based on the works of Schaufeli & Bakker (2010). Four items under the code OA to capture organizational alignment were extracted from the strategic alignment scale of Biggs et al (2014). PA1 and PA2 items under personal alignment were captured from two items adapted from the Gallup Q¹² questionnaire (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010) and PA3 was devised from the insights gained from the qualitative inquiry.

According to Boateng et al. (2018) a scale is a manifestation of a latent construct employing multiple items which are used to measure behavior, attitude, or perception that can not be captured in a single variable or item. The process followed in the development and validation of the scale in this study as outlined in Table 01, was influenced by the well-accepted guidelines of

Boateng et al. (2018), DeVellis (2012), Hinkin (1995), Sharma et al. (2016), and Tay & Jebb (2016).

The content validity of the instrument was established by subjecting the initial 40-item pool to an expert validation using 14 experts from the industry and academia. According to the widely accepted method suggested by Lawshe (1975), each item was rated whether ‘essential’, ‘useful but not essential’, or ‘not necessary’ considering their representativeness, comprehensiveness, and clarity towards the primary domain of concern. Subsequently, the content validity ratio (CVR) was calculated using the following equation for each item based on expert validation scores using Lawshe’s method (1975, pp.567) where n_e is the number of cases an item was adjudged as essential and N is the total number of experts.

$$CVR = \frac{n_e - \left(\frac{N}{2}\right)}{\left(\frac{N}{2}\right)} \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

Items achieving a minimum of 0.51 CVR value were considered to have adequate content validity (Lawshe, 1975, pp.568). Accordingly, 32 items were qualified for further analysis as highlighted in Table 02. Cognitive interviews were conducted as suggested by Boateng et al. (2018) as a means of establishing face validity by administering the draft survey questionnaire with 32 items among 5 possible end-users and questioning their understanding that led them to their answers. This caused several changes in the wordings of some items such as changing the item “Considering all your work tasks, how certain are you that you know the best ways to do these tasks” adopted from Sawyer (1992, p.135) into “I know the best ways to do all my work tasks”. The initial item pool with 40 statements was evaluated on a 7-point bi-polar Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Item generation guidelines of DeVellis (2012) were followed to accommodate social desirability concerns and making the statements as simple, straightforward, and unambiguous as possible. Items coded HS1 and AS1 were reworded based on the comments received in cognitive interviews. As suggested by DeVellis (2012) certain items such as GC and PC coded ones were also reworded to bring uniformity to the scale.

Table 1. Scale Development and Validation Process

Stages	Process Steps
Item Generation (40)	Literature Review Content Analysis of in-depth interviews & focus group discussions (N=29) Expert Opinion
Scale Development (Pre-testing, Item Reduction, Exploration of Factor structure)	Pre-testing items by cognitive interviews (N=5) Item Reduction <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expert Validation (N=14, 8 items with CVR<0.51 were rejected) 2. Pilot Study (N=202), Exploratory Factor Analysis EFA-1 (3-factor structure, 10 items were rejected) 3. Main study (N=232) EFA-2 (3-factor structure, 8 items rejected)
Scale Evaluation (Confirmation of Factor Structure)	Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) (N=232, 14-item, 3-factor structure confirmed)

3.1.2. Item Reduction & Exploration

Both convenience and snowball sampling techniques were used to achieve two separate samples of over 200 subjects as recommended by Boateng et al. (2018). An online questionnaire was circulated via email and multiple platforms of social media such as LinkedIn, and WhatsApp in addition to a physical questionnaire among professionals in Sri Lankan manufacturing and service industries. The conceptual framework developed through the qualitative inquiry as illustrated in Table 02 was used as the measurement model for the scale. In the initial pilot study, 260 questionnaires were distributed and received 202 complete responses which were analyzed using SPSS 23.0 software. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was used to establish sample adequacy and data suitability for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1960, as cited in Sharma, et al., 2016). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and reliability analysis was done for the initial 32 items to establish the dimensionality (and respective weights) and internal consistency of the scale using principal component analysis and varimax with Kaiser normalization as extraction and rotation methods and Cronbach's alpha respectively. Factor and item retention were determined based on simultaneous examination of factor loadings (>0.5), eigenvalues (>1), communalities (>0.4), and scree plots as suggested by past researchers. (Boateng et al., 2018; DeVellis, 2012; Sharma et al., 2016). According to Hair et al. (2006) percentage of explained variance and the

interpretability of factor structure were also used in determining the number of factors explaining the construct (cited in Pradhan & Jena, 2017, pp.8). A new pool of 22 items (under 3 factors) retained by the first round of EFA was administered in the main study among 300 respondents. A sample of 232 respondents was selected for the second round of EFA which retained 14 items based on the same criteria highlighted above.

3.1.3. Scale Evaluation

The 14-item scale derived from the EFA was further subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) which is a structural equation modeling (SEM) technique used to analyze a structural model. (Pradhan & Jena, 2017) Analysis of movement structures (AMOS 23.0) software was employed in this multivariate methodology. The maximum likelihood estimation method was applied considering the covariance matrix of the items. As suggested by Boateng et al. (2018) absolute goodness-of-fit of the model was assessed using absolute and relative indices namely χ^2 goodness-of-fit, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), Goodness-of-fit indices (GFI), and adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI).

According to Strub et al. (2004), construct validity is an assessment of how well a set of items actually measure a particular latent unobservable construct, which could be established through two forms of validity, i.e., convergent validity and discriminant validity. Han & Perry (2020) defined convergent validity as the degree to which all indicators of a construct share a higher proportion of variance in common and when the variance captured by the construct is higher than the variance by the measurement error (Han & Perry, 2020, pp.236) or cross-loadings (Almén et al., 2018), it is considered to have higher convergent validity. The average variance extracted (AVE) was used to confirm convergent validity (AVE>0.5) (Latif, 2021). Almén et al. (2018) suggest AVE to be lower than composite reliability (CR) as an alternative criterion.

According to Boateng et al. (2018) discriminant or divergent validity is the degree of distinction between the construct under study with other constructs that should not be highly correlated with each other. Therefore it

indicates how well a given construct differs from other constructs and statistically establishes the individuality of the given construct. As suggested by Latif (2021) Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), a multitrait-multimethod matrix was used to assess the discriminant validity of the constructs with <0.90 as the benchmarking criteria.

Construct Reliability evaluates the degree to which a variable or a factor comprising a set of variables is consistent in measuring what it originally intended, which is usually assessed using composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (Straub et al., 2004). According to DeVellis (2012), 0.7 could be considered the benchmark for modest reliability for both CR and Cronbach's alpha. Based on the factor structure of the confirmed scale and the findings of the qualitative study a model of EWF was proposed at the end.

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Table 2. Results of the Content Analysis & the initial pool of items with CVR values based on expert opinion

Main Construct	Sub-Concept	Variable	Indicator/ Code	Content Analysis		Item Code	Initial Item Pool (40) Questions in the initial questionnaire	CVR	Source
				Frequency	%				
Employee Work Focus	Right Focus (ability to prioritize)	Work Alignment	Organizational Alignment (OA)	22	81%	OA1	I have a clear understanding of my organization's priorities.	.714	Biggs at al. (2014)
						OA2	I'm aware of how my day-to-day work aligns with the organization's priorities.	.857	
						OA3	I have a clear understanding of how my work group's operational priorities help the organization achieve its objectives.	.857	
						OA4	It is important to me to help the organization achieve its Objectives.	.714	
		Personal Alignment (PA)	16	60%	PA1	At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.	.571	Schaufeli & Bakker (2010)	
					PA2	The mission/purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.	.571		
					PA3	My job helps me achieve my priorities in life.	.714	Qualitative data	
		Role Clarity	Goal Clarity (GC)	24	89%	GC1	I'm aware of my duties and responsibilities.	1.000	Sawyer (1992)
						GC2	I'm clear on the goals and objectives of my job.	1.000	
						GC3	I understand how my work relates to the overall objectives of my work unit.	.857	

Sustained Focus (attention)	Work Engagement	Procedural Clarity (PC)	15	56%	GC4	I'm clear on the expected results of my work.	.857	Schaufeli & Bakker (2010)
					GC5	I'm aware of what aspects of my work will lead to positive evaluations.	.571	
					PC1	I know how to divide my time among the tasks required	.714	
					PC2	I know how to schedule my workday.	.571	
					PC3	I know how to determine the appropriate procedures for each work task.	.714	
					PC4	The procedures I use to do my job are correct and proper. **	.286	
		PC5	I know the best ways to do all my work tasks. **	.429				
		Absorption (AB)	25	93%	AB1	Time flies when I'm working.	.571	
					AB2	When I am working, I forget everything else around me.	.286	
					AB3	I feel happy when I'm working intensely.	.429	
	AB4				I'm immersed in my work.	.571		
	AB5				I get carried away when I'm working.	.286		
	AB6				It is difficult to detach myself from my job.	.714		
	Vigor (VI)	18	67%	VI1	At my work, I feel that I am bursting with energy	.571		
				VI2	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	.571		
				VI3	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work. **	.000		
				VI4	I can continue working for very long periods at a time.	.857		
				VI5	At my job, I am very resilient mentally.	.714		
				VI6	At my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well.	.571		
	Dedication (DE)	17	63%	DE1	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.	.571		
DE2				I am enthusiastic about my job. **	.429			
DE3				My job inspires me. **	.286			
DE4				I am proud of the work that I do. **	.143			
DE5				To me, my job is challenging. **	-.286			

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		Maximizing	Decision Difficulty (DD)	20	74%	DD1	I find it easy to make decisions.	.857	Germeijs & De Boeck (2003)	
						DD2	Once I have taken a decision, I stick to that decision. **	.714		
			Alternative Search (AS)	18	67%	AS1	I often fantasize about my role, goals, and ways of working that are quite different from the actual. (R)	1,00	Schwartz et al. (2002)	
						AS2	I'm uncomfortable making decisions before I know all my options. (R)	1.00	Dalal et al. (2015)	
			High Standards (HS)	17	63%	HS1	I usually don't settle with most circumstances at work. (R)	.857	Diab & Gillespie (2008)	
						HS2	I find it difficult to say No to people and different demands at work. (R)	.714	McKeown (2014)	
		Work Awareness	Prevention Awareness	4	15%		* Not considered for the initial item pool (as a component of the measurement model.)			
			Promotion Awareness	6	22%		* Not considered for the initial item pool (as a component of the measurement model.)			

Note: (R) denotes a reverse coded item, Items marked as ** were rejected due to poor content validity (CVR<0.51)

Source: Developed by Researchers based on the works of Gunathilake & Jayasooriya (2022) and Survey Data, 2022

4. Results

As the results of content analysis illustrated in Table 2, qualitative data analysis confirmed the two-dimensionality of the EWF construct namely right focus and sustained focus as identified by Gunathilake & Jayasooriya (2022). Following is an account of evidence from the qualitative data in support of the above claim.

Respondent 02 in the focus group discussion 01: *A man with the absence of attention and another with the presence of the same on a wrong goal/s could both be considered to have poor focus.*

Respondent 07 in the focus group discussion 02: *A focused person knows what he is expected to perform at work, he directs his efforts, attention, and energy with work that aligns with what he is personally fond of and what his department, team, and organization demanded.*

‘Concentration’ and ‘attention’ were identified as the codes most frequently associated with EWF which were categorized under the work engagement subtheme under the sustained focus theme. According to the findings of content analysis, ‘absorption’ was found to have the highest correlation with its parent construct, i.e., work engagement and with the primary construct, EWF. Further ‘awareness’ sub-theme with promotion and prevention awareness in the aforesaid framework was not represented in the qualitative data and accordingly, it was dropped from further analysis. Alternatively, a new sub-theme under the main theme of sustained focus (SF) was identified and coded as ‘maximization’ which resembled the maximization or maximizing tendency constructs (Dalal et al., 2015). Codes identified under this sub-theme closely correspond with the three-factor model of maximization (Schwartz et al., 2002) namely alternative search, decision difficulty, and high standards. A few pieces of evidence from the qualitative data are given below as a justification for the deductive coding of the aforesaid sub-theme and the inclusion of the maximization theme in the initial framework.

Respondent 03 (in-depth interview): *A focused person could be identified as having the ability to make the right decisions with no hassle since he is*

clear on what he is expected to do, what he is good at doing, and what he is fond of doing. He [...] makes decisions based on clear awareness of suitable options from an accurate search of alternatives [...] adapt a frame of reference or a set of standards guided by personal and organizational demands.

Respondent 04 in the focus group discussion 01: *You can't be everything to everyone. We all operate with our limitations of [...] leaving us no option but to narrow ourselves down to only what is important. For that, you must first select from your options so you should first know what your options are and then decide what's your priorities to focus on, where difficulty or easiness in decision-making and ability to let go are some overarching attributes of focus at work.*

Table 3. Summary of Sample Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample		Pilot Study (N=202)	Main Study (N=232)
Gender	Male	65.3%	61.2%
	Female	34.7%	38.8%
Marital Status	Married	68.9%	68.1%
	Unmarried	31.1%	31.9%
Age	20-30 Years	29.8%	28.4%
	30-40 Years	34.2%	43.5%
	40-50 Years	25.9%	20.7%
	Above 50 Years	10.1%	7.3%
Sector	Private	71.7%	74.5%
	Public	28.3%	25.5%
Industry	Construction & Real-estate	31.0%	36.6%
	Banking & Finance	14.9%	11.6%
	IT & Telecommunication	20.7%	16.7%
	Manufacturing	33.4%	35.1%
Highest Education Qualification	Certificate or Lesser	11.9%	11.6%
	Diploma Level	32.6%	25.4%
	Bachelor's Degree Level	37.7%	28.9%
	Master's degree or higher	17.8%	34.1%

Under expert validation, content validity ratios (CVR) were calculated as explained in the methodology section, and 8 items with CVR values less than 0.51 were rejected as per the recommendations of Lawshe (1975, pp.508). Summary of sample statistics with demographic data are given in Table 3 and accordingly both samples of the pilot and the main study present similar demographics to a greater extent. It comprises approximately 60% males and

68% married individuals with an educated sample of respondents of over 50% graduates. One-third of the same represented the manufacturing industry and the balance two-thirds comprises construction, banking, and IT & telecommunication industries.

In the first EFA with 32 items, DE1, VI2, OA1, DD1, and PA3 items were rejected due to being loaded into poorly interpretable or unrelated factors, or less than 3-item factors, and VI5, GC1, VI1, and HS2 were rejected due to lower factor loadings (<0.5). PC2 was rejected due to a lower communality value (<0.4) leaving only 22 items fit for further analysis. In the second round of EFA, items coded PC3, VI6, and AB2, were rejected due to lower factor loadings (<0.5) while PA1, PA2, AB5, and AB6 for having loaded under non-interpretable factors which violated the content validity.

Sample adequacy and data suitability for factor analysis were confirmed with a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure recorded 0.889 ($p=0.00$) as recommended by Kaiser (1960, as cited in Sharma et al., 2016). Second EFA resulted in four factors, and one was found non-interpretable with a completely unrelated combination of items leaving a 3-factor, 14-item model. Table 04 outlines the rotated factor loadings of the 14 items retained in the final scale. According to the cut-off criteria recommended by Boateng et al (2018), DeVellis (2012), and Sharma et al. (2016) all items were found to be satisfactory (>0.5). More specifically items other than OA4, AB1, and AB3 recorded excellent levels of loadings (>0.7). All items retained in the final scale recorded eigenvalues greater than 1, communalities greater than 0.4. This model accounted for 55.15% of variance which is satisfactory according to Hinkin (1995).

According to the cut-off criteria suggested by Almén et al. (2018) and Han & Perry (2020), the findings outlined in table 5 confirmed adequate convergent validity. Although the average variance extracted (AVE) value for SF and AS were recorded slightly lower than the cut-off criteria of 0.5 it could be accepted as the Composite reliability (CR) values were recorded higher than the benchmark (>0.7) for all factors (DeVellis, 2012; Latif, 2021).

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Table 4. Summary Statistics of Exploratory Factor Analysis of Final Scale Items

Item Code	Scale Items	Factor Loadings (N = 232, KMO=0.889)		
		1	2	3
	Right Focus (RF – Prioritization)			
GC3	I understand how my work relates to the overall objectives of my work unit.	0.861		
OA3	I have a clear understanding of how my work group’s operational priorities help the organization achieve its objectives.	0.818		
GC4	I'm clear on the expected results of my work.	0.815		
OA2	I’m aware of how my day-to-day work aligns with the organization’s priorities/goals.	0.814		
GC5	I'm aware of what aspects of my work will lead to positive evaluations.	0.775		
PC1	I know how to divide my time among the tasks required of my job.	0.719		
OA4	It is important to me to help the organization achieve its Objectives.	0.650		
	Sustained Focus (SF – Concentration)			
AB4	I’m immersed in my work.		0.750	
VI4	I can continue working for very long periods at a time.		0.719	
AB1	Time flies when I’m working.		0.654	
AB3	I feel happy when I’m working intensely.		0.606	
	Alternative Search (AS)			
HS1	I usually don’t settle with most circumstances at work.			0.759
AS2	I'm uncomfortable making decisions before I know all my options.			0.708
AS1	I often fantasize about my role, goals, and ways of working that are quite different from the actual.			0.706
	Variance explained by dimensions (%)	35.47	11.37	8.31
	Total variance explained (%)		55.15	
	Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity		2,584.14	
	df		231	
	Significance		0.00	

Note: Results of Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation, (R) denotes a reverse coded item, KMO (Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin)

Maximum shared variance (MSV) and average shared variance (ASV) were also found less than the AVE except for one instance with AS in terms of its MSV value. According to Latif (2021), discriminant validity was found

satisfactory with Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) for all three factors recorded less than 0.9. It could also be confirmed as a satisfactory level of reliability due to Cronbach's alpha recorded at 0.853.

Table 5. Convergent and Discriminant Validity measures among the Dimensions of EWF

Dimensions	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	HTMT		
					RF	SF	AS
RF (Prioritization)	0.915	0.607	0.183	0.153	0.779		
SF (Concentration)	0.774	0.464	0.307	0.211		0.692	
AS (Alternative Search)	0.704	0.411	0.623	0.380			0.648

Note: CR (composite reliability), AVE (average variance extracted), MSV (maximum shared variance), ASV (average shared variance), RF (right focus), SF (sustained focus), AS (alternative search)

The findings of the confirmatory factor analysis confirmed that the full model achieved a satisfactory model fit at $\chi^2 = 92.510$, $df = 65$, $N = 232$, $P = 0.14$. As per the recommendations of Boateng et al (2018), all relevant indices are outlined in Table 6. Such as χ^2 goodness-of-fit, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), Goodness-of-fit indices (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), etc. were found satisfactory.

Table 6. Model Fit Indices, Cut-off criteria, and final model values

	Index	Recommended cut-off value	Value in the model	Decision
Absolute Fit Indices	χ^2 / df	<3.00	1.423	Satisfied
	GFI	>0.90	0.948	Satisfied
	AGFI	>0.90	0.917	Satisfied
	AIC	Lower the Better	172.51	Satisfied
	Hoelter's CN (0.5)	>200	236	Satisfied
Non-centrality-based Indices	CFI	>0.95	0.982	Satisfied
	RMSEA(L090, HI90)	>0.08	0.043	Satisfied
	PCLOSE	>0.50	0.715	Satisfied
Relative Fit Indices	IFI	>0.90	0.982	Satisfied
	TLI	>0.95	0.974	Satisfied
	NFI	>0.90	0.942	Satisfied

The proposed model of EWF as illustrated in Figure 01 with relatively higher unstandardized path coefficient values and satisfactory levels of residual error values confirm a good fit for the final model. Therefore, it could be concluded that employee work focus (EWF) is a three-dimensional construct, with right focus (RF-ability to prioritize), sustained focus (SF-

ability to sustain attention), and alternative search (AS) being those dimensions.

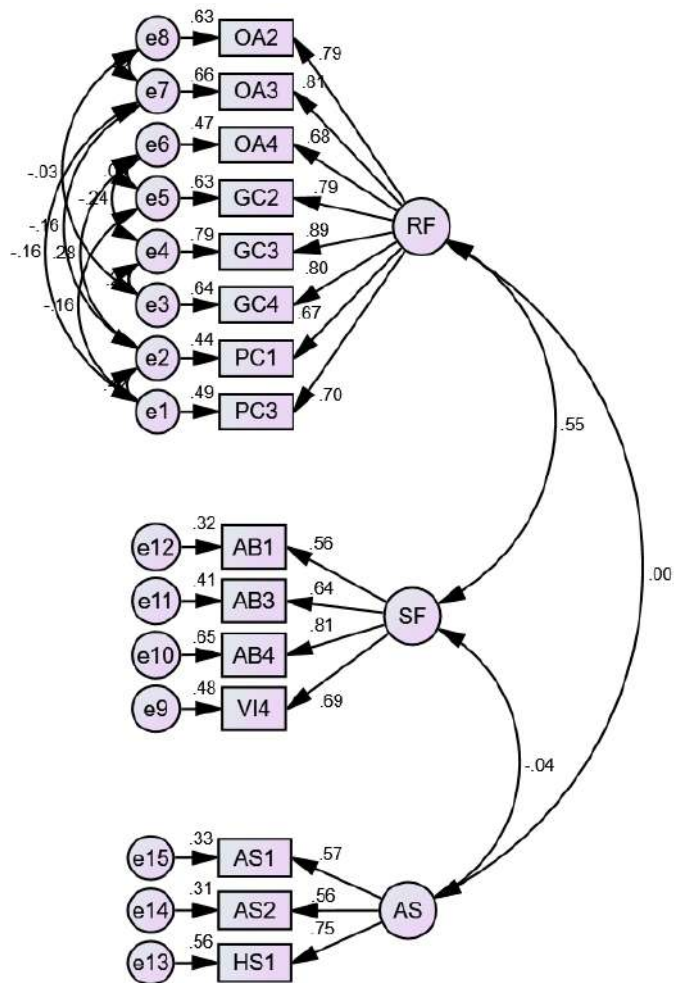


Figure 1. The final model with unstandardized path coefficients

4. Discussion

Based on the content analysis of qualitative data, the authors constructed the following definition of Employee Work Focus.

A cognitive capability of an employee to direct and sustain their energies (resources) only on accurately identified priorities at work in a way that meets both individual and organizational objectives.

Accordingly, EWF could primarily be identified as a decision-making process that is influenced by employee's awareness of clarity, and alignment with organizational goals, the meaningfulness of work to the individual, and the extent to which they incentivize the individual and his/her cognitive controlling capabilities such as the general tendency for maximizing, decision difficulties, etc. Based on qualitative data and the three-dimensionality of EWF derived through a statistical analysis of quantitative data, the authors propose a conceptual model of EWF as illustrated in Figure 2.

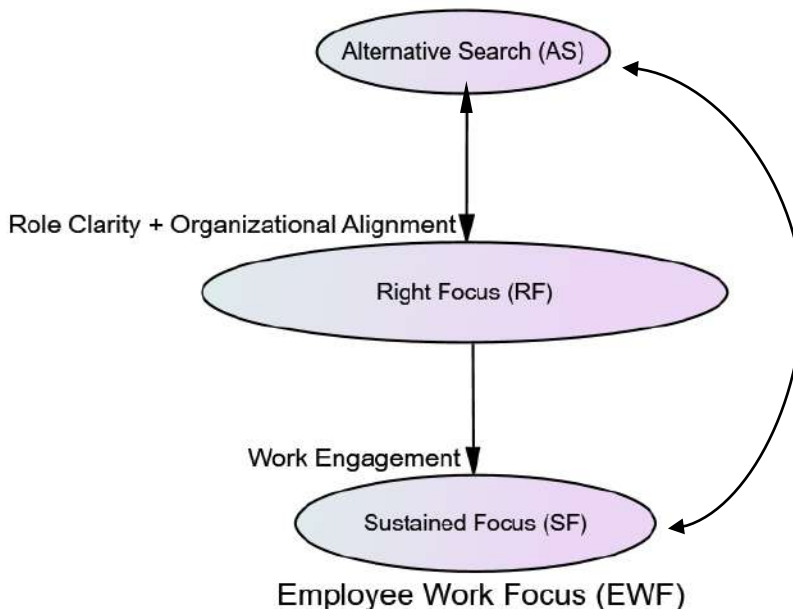


Figure 2: Final Theoretical Framework of EWF developed from primary data and existing literature in the domain of concern

Authors have identified some resemblance of the above model with established models of nomological constructs such as decision-making. Wang & Ruhe (2007)'s cognitive process model of decision-making provides a significant theoretical explanation of the proposed model and the association among the dimensions of EWF. It also provides the following justifications as characteristics of the EWF construct.

1. A decision-making competency as revealed in qualitative inquiry.
2. Its cognitive controlling aspect characterized by being able to stay on a purpose, a goal/s without being distracted as McKeown (2014) eloquently quoted as getting tricked by the trivial.

3. The aspect of prioritizing as a dimension of EWF with the idea of being able to distinguish between what to focus on and what not to.

Accordingly, an employee engages in a cognitive search of alternatives based on their clarity and awareness of priorities (importance against the urgency or the temporal aspects) and selects the best alternative/s to exert energy (resources) through an evaluation criterion based on priorities and perceptions. It is observed some people tend to continue with their alternative search behaviors incessantly (Diab & Gillespie, 2008) without being settled on one or few priorities and sustaining their efforts on such pursuits. This would be caused due to the perceived incentives of engaging in such alternative search behaviors outweighing the gains of rejecting them and their consequences which could be eliminated by having higher clarity, alignment with priorities, and making them appealing to the employees. Aligning employees with work that they are good at (PA1) and work they find deeper meaning and purpose associated with (PA2) and what the organization stands for (OA4) would help achieve this end of sustaining attention within EWF. Therefore, contrary to the popular conception of EWF or the focus in general, authors argue the right focus would be the most essential element of EWF as McKeown (2014) emphasizes in his conceptualization of focus construct as essentialism.

5. Conclusions

This study attempted to follow a range of widely accepted procedures in developing a psychometrically valid and reliable scale by employing both qualitative and quantitative methods. In a context where the primary construct was not clearly established a qualitative inquiry was initially conducted using grounded theory with reference to the available literature to clearly define the construct as highlighted in the results section. Data derived from a big sample pilot study and a subsequent main study with 434 respondents in total were analyzed using two rounds of EFA and the resulting model was further confirmed for its validity and reliability using CFA. The findings give rise to a 3-dimensional scale with 14 items thereby achieving the primary objective of this study. Further, a theoretical framework of EWF was developed extrapolating the findings of this study on existing literature as illustrated in Figure 2.

This along with a working definition of EWF leads to the achievement of both secondary objectives of this study.

As highlighted by Pradhan & Jena (2017) construct validity of any static scale of this nature could potentially be accrued over time with the changes in the social fabric and due to the influx of new studies warranting further fine-tuning of this scale. Testing the scale in a randomly selected sample and a different context would help increase its generalizability (Saunders, 2014) which could be proposed as a future research avenue. Further research could be warranted in establishing the nomological validity of the scale by testing some nomological networks of EWF including its potential relationship with outcomes such as individual work performance, organizational performance, accountability, subjective wellbeing, or high-performance culture as already identified by Gunathilake & Jayasooriya (2022) and Wriston (2007), or its antecedents such as the effectiveness of organizational systems or its constituent constructs such as work engagement, role clarity, maximization or maximizing tendency, etc. An empirical examination of EWF could have important implications for organizations and individual employees as a predictor of career and organizational success (Goleman, 2013; McKeown, 2014). Authors sincerely believe the attempt of theorizing this important construct would entice researchers to shed more light on the EWF construct in advancing the understanding of the domain.

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