



EMPLOYEE WELLBEING AND JOB ENGAGEMENT OF ACADEMICS IN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT: *The study explored the nexus between employee well-being and job engagement of academics in universities. The study adopted analytic descriptive strategy and the target population of the study was 980 lecturers; a sample of 284 was selected through stratified sampling procedure. The data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire; the instrument was validated through content approach while the reliability of the measurement instrument was determined via Cronbach alpha internal consistency. The data were collected through online platforms and offline means. The data collected were analyzed by Process Based approach using Partial Least Square Regression with the Smart PLS software version 4. The results indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between psychological well-being and job engagement; there was a significant positive relationship between social well-being and job engagement; but there was a non-significant negative relationship between subjective well-being and job engagement and there was a significant positive relationship between workplace well-being and job engagement. In view of the findings, we concluded that employee well-being is critical to the job engagement of academics in universities and recommended that university authorities should fashion out programmes aimed at fostering the holistic well-being of staff members and performance on the job.*

KEYWORDS: Employee well-being, Job engagement, Academics, Universities.

INTRODUCTION



Organizational members occupy different roles and the degree to which employees execute tasks vary from one employee to the other. Accordingly, the bringing of organizational members and the total involvement of their emotional, mental and physical efforts to discharge duties and perform tasks facilitate productivity of entities. This no doubt requires the job engagement of the entire workforce. The notion of employee engagement was first brought into management scholarship by Kahn who explained the concept as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances (1990: 694).” From then till now, the concept has continued to attract scholarly attention and debates, resulting in diverse meanings in the management literature. As highlighted by Shuck et al. (2011), employee engagement plays a critical role in organizational performance. Employee engagement is the total attention of an employee’s mind to a job, characterized with dedication, enthusiasm and mental involvement (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Employees who develop the attitude of job engagement are more apt in achieving organizational goals with little or no supervision. In the study of Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), work engagement is described as a psychological state of employees with work-related positive outlook, constituting a trinity dimension of dedication, vigor and absorption. The critical nature of job engagement on organizational performance has continued to stimulate and attract the interest and attention of management practitioners and scholars (Shuck et al., 2011). The mental state of an employee determines the engagement level in a task. Organizations are extremely keen to see a positive work engagement from a highly esteemed workforce who serve as the foundation for an entity’s capability towards creating and sustaining value. The investigation of job engagement is vital in the public sector, where a great percent of employees are carefree and lack enthusiasm. Increased work engagement mindset of public sector employees is consequential for they are the front liners in tackling several crisis and conflict situations in a nation (Worldbank, 2020). Lack of motivation on the part of public servants grossly affects the entire polity.

Albeit, there is abundance of research scholarship on work engagement in private sector organizations but little or no studies as regards the public sector. This paucity of studies justify further investigation of work engagement in the context of the public sector entities (Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2013). Borst et al. (2019) looked into job engagement practices, comparing public-private sectors with greater positive influence on work engagement of employees. They found that a strong significant relationship exists between well-defined positive work engagement practices in the public sector than in the private sector.

Employees’ attitude to work is strongly predicated on the working conditions set by management or organizational leadership. This implies that there exists a relationship between work engagement and a good people oriented leadership. Wushe and Shenje’s (2019) point out in their study that there is a positive relationship between effective leadership and work engagement. Though effective leadership is a non-negotiable requirement that can give birth to a positive job engagement by staff members, Ancarani et al (2021) argued that the nature of leadership is a determining factor and that a laissez-faire leadership style hardly advocates for a strong work engagement ethics.

The public sector is a peculiar sector due to its nature and formation. Employees’ perceived organizational support could affect the work engagement of public servants (Rai &



Maheshwari, 2021). There is a need for work reformation when there is a lack of enthusiasm by public servants to carry out their primary functions in the offices they are employed or appointed (Hernaus et al., 2017). Also, job effectiveness is not only about the activity but should also be pictured based on its perceived meaningfulness (Mostafa & El-Motalib, 2020).

Improved conditions on the work environment do not only affect the employee but it has a greater impact on the organization's profitability and general health (Guest & Conway, 2002). Focus on employee well-being has become part of many organizations' strategic plans. It should be noted that humans are complex animals; as such the possible ways to bring about job satisfaction which could affect the employee's well-being can be multifaceted according to the nature of people in the organization. Among the several ways by which organizations can promote employee well-being are fitness programmes that help to reduce stress that can emanate from work conditions, a work environment that is flexible enough giving no room for frustration, superior financial knowledge, a friendly work environment and continuous employee development activities (Renee-Baptiste, 2008). The work environment becomes friendly and improves employee collaboration with team members and between groups when the well-being of the employee is prioritized (Lawson et al., 2009). Babic et al. (2020) argued that a stressful work environment fueled by work pressure can lead to low productivity in the workplace that can lead to an overall disadvantage to the organization.

Kinman and Johnson (2019) pointed out that a work environment characterized by fear, tension, worry, and uncertainty can negatively affect the employees' well-being, which could increase workers' absence to work, and over time lead to workers voluntary resignation. Organizations do not just desire to employ the best hands to work in their establishments; they are also interested in developing the worker and ultimately retaining them to continuously retain competitive advantage. This study is focused on examining different ways the workers' well-being can be achieved and how they correlate with job engagement of employees.

The primary objective of this study is to x-ray the nexus between employee well-being and job engagement of academic staff in universities. Four specific objectives guided the study and they are to examine the relationship between psychological well-being and job engagement of academic staff in universities; to determine the relationship between social well-being and job engagement of academic staff in universities; to examine the relationship between subjective well-being and job engagement of academic staff in universities; and to determine the relationship between workplace well-being and job engagement of academic staff in universities.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT



This research is anchored on Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Ryan and Deci (2022) explained that SDT provides a road map to understand motivational details that influence an employee personality that affects his / her well-being. The theory clearly explains the difference between a controlled form of motivation and an autonomous form of motivation as it relates to the employee well-being. The theory clarifies that an autonomous motivation emanates from a voluntary submission to organizations affairs as it is a matter of choice. On the one hand, a controlled motivation emanates from a situation fueled by compulsion and coercion that is conditioned by expected reward, threat of punishment, entrapment on the employee's ego, or other factors that can be from external forces. Ryan and Deci (2017) posited that employees that are motivated from an autonomous source tend to exhibit positive characteristics such as confidence, they become more excited, display vitality and increase interest on the job that leads to improved performance and an overall well-being. It is possible for a group of people to be intrinsically motivated with a combination of factors or some other external factors simultaneously. Scholars researching on SDT have devised various ways of analyzing statistically autonomy scores and its effect on an establishment (Sheldon et al., 2017). Furthermore, there is a growing interest in individual centered analysis on identifying variables that can lead to the individual well-being (Wang et al., 2017). Building on the aforementioned theory gives this study a focus as to the nature of people that work in organizations, so as to properly analyze the intrinsic and extrinsic factors of employee well-being and its relationship to job engagement.

Psychological Well-Being and Job Engagement

Psychological well-being is the mental satisfaction at work, which musters up happiness and professional growth. No matter the work condition or availability of resources, there would still be possible hurdles that employees are bound to face in their workplace. Huppert (2009) presented an analysis on how employees positively keep a balance with available resources in the institution they belong to and confront the hurdles they come across on a daily basis. According to Hiver (2017), teachers that teach language psychological well-being and their work engagement is mediated by the immunity they possess so as to be less emotional. Additionally, as reported by Greenier et al. (2021), the ability to control one's emotions and psychological health are important indicators of language teachers' job satisfaction.

Several scholars have attempted to define the concept of psychological well-being but it has been a difficult task (Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012). The well-being of EFL teachers might be adversely affected by a lack of emotional regulation, low self-confidence, and limited language skills (Talbot & Mercer, 2018). Hiver and Dornyei (2017) portrayed it as a vital key to advancing the career of the teacher professionally. Psychological well-being is an important factor that can increase the chances of success in the teaching profession. Furthermore, research indicates that the emotional component of teaching is closely linked to teachers' psychological health (Greenier, Derakhshan & Fathi, 2021). On a broader look on the concept of well-being, Sudibjoa and Sutarjia (2020) opined that well-being is not just about happiness but it is beyond that as it involves the mental energy to carry on in life with a positive mindset even when there are challenges and hurdles.

H₁: There is a relationship between psychological well-being and job engagement of academic staff in universities.

Social Well-Being and Job Engagement



People who are part of groups have a social identity, and they are particularly important during stressful times when dealing with uncertainty and the inability to influence the outcome increases the need for social support. This is particularly true for those with dependent personalities, who will suffer more as a result of their desire for companionship and acceptance (Godinic et al., 2015). This could adversely affect the employees' personality, self-reliant and cognitive strength. However, identity is usually being tied to acceptability in a given group that describes a person's social affiliations which is dynamically associated with societal conditions related to pressure arising from the worry of being poor, not being accepted into the group they aspire to be part of and marginalization; having a negative toll on the individual's self-esteem. Different forms of identity concerns have a way of granting people access to navigate situations that could have been hard to be done without group support (Wetherell & Mohanty, 2010). People get a social identity, a sense of belonging, and their basic urge for affiliation from groups. The self is made up of various semi-identities that an individual ascribes to himself; in order for these identities to remain stable mentally and to maintain a continual feeling of self, other individuals must validate them in a social setting (Wetherell & Mohanty, 2010). Cote and Levine (2002) also identified that a person's function within groups in organizational settings and their satisfactory acceptance into such groups can influence their self-worth which can have a great effect on their work engagement.

H₂: There is a relationship between social well-being and job engagement of academic staff in universities.

Subjective Well-Being and Job Engagement

Different people have personal views on the quality of their life as influenced by their cognitive judgment on themselves (Diener, 2013). This mental process of understanding with which people judge themselves, forms the subjective well-being. From the viewpoint of Sahai and Mahapatra (2020), subjective well-being is an individual's understanding of their personality and such data can be basically collected using a questionnaire. The questionnaire is developed with personal questions with which analysis can be made and possible findings can be inferred.

Greenier et al. (2021) in their study examined the correlation between workplace well-being and job satisfaction in an organization. The findings of the study showed a significant positive relationship does exist between workplace well-being, job satisfaction and subjective well-being of organizational members. It is an accepted fact that the well-being of employees can positively influence productivity in an organization. A great part of the individuals' mental state that helps him to be productive or counterproductive is part of his subjective well-being. Li (2021) went a step further in his research study to understand the emotional intelligence of employees and how it correlates with the subjective well-being of the employees using meta-analysis. After carefully studying the findings from analyzed data, direct association was found between emotional intelligence and the cognitive component of subjective well-being than with the affective component. It is important to note that subjective well-being of an individual is not only influenced by cognitive elements, but another important factor is the individuals' personal fitness (Benevene, De-Stasio & Fiorilli, 2020). They also further established that there are also other important aspects of subjective well-being of employees which may include workers' attitude to work, the amount paid as salary in relation to the cost of living and the nature of the work they are involved in. A close look on the result of these considerations gives deeper insight on the subject of employee well-being. Greenier et al. (2021) explained that the subject of employee well-being and its correlation to job satisfaction can be multi-dimensional



and as such can be divided into different elements. Greenier et al. (2021) identified six different elements to the study of subjective well-being. There are individual differences that affect how they react in the face of failure or success. Thus, there is a wide range of factors that bring about satisfaction and dissatisfaction in organizational settings.

Russell (2008) posited that employees' personal development and growth can be influenced by subjective well-being. Subjective well-being can be at different levels. According to Russel (2008), high levels of subjective well-being in employees can positively help them to enjoy reduced stress, minimize being bored at work and it will also reflect in the employee contributing to a positive work-environment that promotes organizational health. George and Brief (1992) and Russell (2008) also explained that, there is a positive correlation between job engagement and subjective well-being as employees with higher work engagement levels and higher levels of involvement portrays a higher level of subjective well-being. Garg and Singh (2019) confirmed that an employee's capacity to find job happiness and stay engaged is positively impacted by their personal growth.

H₃: There is a relationship between subjective well-being and job engagement of academic staff in universities.

Workplace Well-being and Job Engagement

Workplace well-being cuts across several aspects of an employee's work-life such as humanitarian, social networks, and ambitions (Colenberg et al., 2021; Jnaneswar & Sulphay, 2021; Liu, 2020). A sense of prosperity can be gained from work in general and from the intrinsic and extrinsic value of employment and it forms the workplace well-being of the employee (Anwarsyah & Salendu, 2012). Also, Page and Vella-Brodrick (2009) opined that employees' well-being can also involve their mental health and consciousness which has a tendency for greater reflection on their input to the organization. According to Fisher (2010), workplace well-being is an essential factor that contributes to organizational performance and reduces fatigue experienced at the workplace (Crede et al., 2007). Amornpipat and Burapharat (2019) clearly pointed out that workplace well-being is not just beneficial to workers, but it is also very important to organizations. The individual benefits of workplace well-being can be viewed from the perspective that it could improve the quality of life of persons in the larger society as it affects the individual economically and technologically (Jeffrey et al., 2006). Other very salient areas of the individual that can be affected by workplace well-being are longlife of the individual, productivity at the workplace, and increased success rate (Diener, 2013). On the other hand, organizations can find workplace well-being beneficial in aspects of finding dedicated and satisfied employees who will be willing to stay in the company to pursue the company's goals. Employees get involved in the entire organizational process, making them highly innovative and goal oriented by contributing to the overall success of the organization (Smith et al., 2018).

H₄: There is a relationship between workplace well-being and job engagement of academic staff in universities.

Research Strategy and Sample Procedure



The study adopted a quantitative-analytic descriptive design intended to collect data across large sections of university academics to determine the nexus between employee well-being and job engagement. The target population of the study was 980 academics in Bayelsa Medical University and University of Africa, Toru-Orua which are state government owned universities in the State. The total population was determined based on the records of the various Establishment Offices of the respective universities selected for the study. At the initial stage, the sample size was determined with Yamane sample determination formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where n = sample sought, N= population of the study, 1 = Theoretical constant, and e = error term

$$n = \frac{980}{1+980(0.05)^2} = 284$$

On the basis of the sample determined, a sample of 284 academics was selected from the population of the study through a stratified sampling procedure in consideration of the various staff categories and departments that constitute the university. For data collection, a structured questionnaire designed on a 5-point Likert scale was used; the questionnaire was distributed employing online and offline means of electronic platforms, emails and research assistants.

The measurement instrument was subjected to content validity involving academics in organizational behavior studies and administrators of universities. Further, the internal consistency of the measure was determined through Cronbach alpha. The validity was to ensure that the instrument adequately measured all aspects of the job engagement and employee well-being. The coefficients and descriptive statistics are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix of Employee Well-being and Job Engagement

	Job Engagement	Psychological Wellbeing	Social Wellbeing	Subjective Wellbeing	Workplace Wellbeing
Job Engagement	1.000				
Psych. Wellbeing	0.469	1.000			
Social Wellbeing	0.392	0.205	1.000		
Subjective Wellbeing	0.239	0.290	0.297	1.000	
Workplace Wellbeing	0.406	0.169	0.441	0.318	1.000
Cronbach's alpha	0.785	0.825	0.863	0.776	0.709
Mean	4.208	4.433	4.037	4.545	3.720
Standard Deviation	0.464	0.392	0.485	0.432	0.434

The method of data analysis was executed using SmartPLS version 4, with a process based approach to examine the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS



From the data analysis, the results demonstrated that there was a relationship between employee well-being and job engagement of academics in universities. With an adjusted R square of (R 0.36, $t = 4.63$, $p < 0.05$), 36% variance in job engagement of academics is accounted for employee well-being. In view of the t test and p values, the result further indicated on a general note that there is a significant relationship between employee well-being and job engagement and the model has a good fit. In specific terms of the hypotheses, psychological well-being had a significant positive effect on job engagement ($\beta = 0.45$, $t = 7.02$, $p < 0.05$), social well-being had a significant positive effect on job engagement ($\beta = 0.19$, $t = 3.16$, $p < 0.05$), subjective well-being had a non-significant negative effect on job engagement ($\beta = 0.017$, $t = 0.25$, $p > 0.05$), and workplace well-being had a positive effect on job engagement ($\beta = 0.27$, $t = 4.73$, $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, the path diagram shows the path analysis of the latent constructs of the independent and the dependent variables. The diagram clearly shows the coefficients and the p values of employee well-being and job engagement.

Table 2: Adjusted R Square on Employee Wellbeing and Job Engagement of Academics in Universities

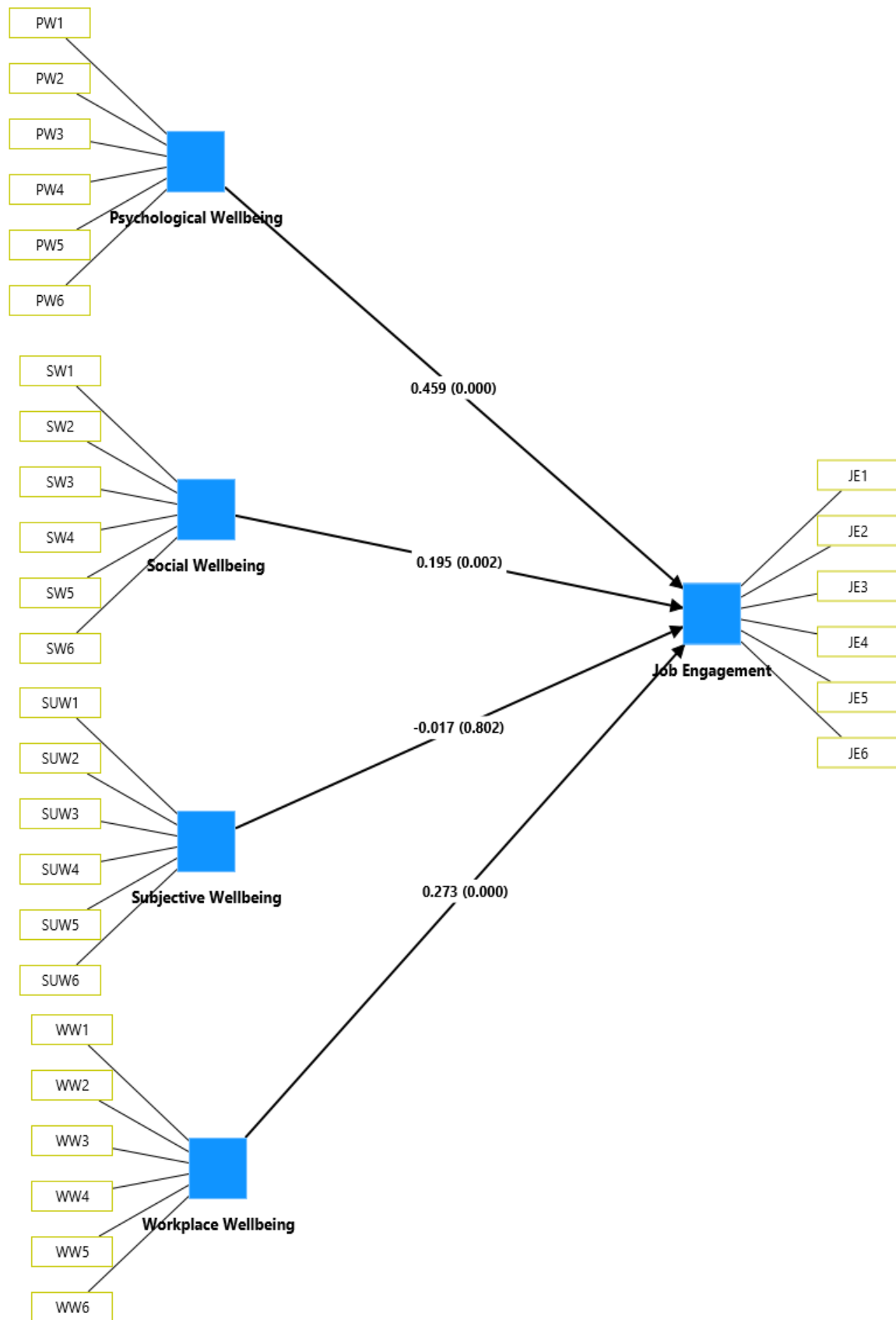
	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Job Engagement	0.351	0.365	0.075	4.684	0.000

Source: Data Analysis (2024)

Table 3: Bootstrapping Analysis for Dimensions of Employee Wellbeing and Job Engagement of Academics in Universities

Variables	B	Std. deviation (STDEV)	T statistics	P values	Remarks
Psychological Wellbeing -> Job Engagement	0.459	0.066	7.002	0.000	<i>H1: Supported</i>
Social Wellbeing -> Job Engagement	0.195	0.062	3.167	0.002	<i>H2: Supported</i>
Subjective Wellbeing -> Job Engagement	-0.017	0.068	0.250	0.802	<i>H3: Not Supported</i>
Workplace Wellbeing -> Job Engagement	0.273	0.058	4.738	0.000	<i>H4: Supported</i>

Source: Data Analysis (2024)





DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study investigated the nexus between employee well-being and job engagement of academics in universities. From the first hypothesis, the finding was that psychological well-being had a significant positive effect on job engagement of lecturers in universities. The finding is consistent with the prior study of Bakker and Demerouti (2008), who found that psychological well-being accounted for job engagement, motivation and job performance on the job. Employees who received emotional and mental support from the job supervisor promoted psychological well-being and thereby enhancing job engagement of staff. In a similar context, Schaufeli et al. (2002), demonstrated that psychological well-being is a critical determinant of job engagement in academic environments that engender stress. Besides the academic industry, prior studies like Robertson and Cooper (2010) had a similar and consistent finding that psychological well-being of employees resulted in higher levels of job performance. The related finding, irrespective of the differing sectors, reinforces the current empirical evidence that there was a nexus between psychological well-being and job engagement of academic staff of universities.

In the second finding of the study, there was a significant positive relationship between social well-being and job engagement of academics in universities. From previous studies, the role of social well-being has been underpinned, stating that social support to employees from colleagues and superiors fosters job satisfaction and engagement. Drawing on the study of May, Gillson and Harter (2004), social support in team related atmospheres promoted job engagement with a sense of belonging and cohesion. In the sphere of academic communities, collaboration in research is a common phenomenon and, thus, requires social well-being to promote job engagement. Further, a similar study of Khan (1990) underpinned the empirical evidence of the current investigation, indicating that social support received from colleagues and supervisors encouraged employees to bring into the job their entire being while performing duties and tasks assigned to them. Accordingly, social well-being is indispensable to build and sustain social relationships in the context of academic community and promote a higher level of job engagement.

In the relationship between subjective well-being and job engagement, there was no significant but positive relationship between subjective well-being and job engagement, which is consistent with the works of Schaufeli and Barkker (2004) and Hakannen et al (2006) that a higher level of subjective well-being influenced a greater level of job engagement. Accordingly, the finding of the current study partly aligns with the prior empirical evidence. The finding implies that academic staff with a happier mind and state would be highly engaged in academic assignments. Although, the current finding is not significant and this could be as a result of other intervening factors that were not part of study such as job demand, institutional pressure, and work life balance that could have affected the job engagement of academics.

For the last hypothesis that examined the nexus between workplace well-being and job engagement, there was a significant positive relationship between workplace well-being and job engagement of academics. The finding suggested that a work climate with supportive culture fosters enhanced job engagement among academics in universities. The current finding is consistent with prior empirical evidence. For example, Schafeli et al (2006) found that a supportive work environment stimulated higher levels of job engagement and this was further underpinned by the study of Saks (2008) that the provision of necessary resources and support to the workforce encourages job engagement.



LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES.

The current study has a few limitations and this is limited to the sample used in the study. Two state-owned universities were sampled, as against other universities in the country. More so, sample subjects excluded non-teaching staff of the universities investigated. Accordingly, future studies should examine all the universities and non-academic staff in their research. Further, the study relied only on quantitative methodology and therefore future studies should adopt both quantitative and qualitative research design to provide robust findings.

Declaration of Potential Conflicts

The authors declare that there is no potential conflict of interest to the publication of this manuscript.

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