# Well-Being among Academic Staff in Higher Education Institutions: A Review of Organization Support Theory (OST) and Job Demand Resources Theories (JDRs)

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#### Abstract

Well-being is a multidimensional concept that reflects employees' satisfaction with life, the prevalence of contentment and pleasure in their jobs, and in particular the emotions that the jobs provide the opportunities for employees to enhance their opportunities into self-fulfilment. This research on well-being aims to examine how job demand resources and organisation support affect employee well-being in higher education institutions. In deriving these factors of well-being, I considered two theories namely; Organization Support Theory (OST) and Job Demand Resources Theory (JDRs) to help me isolate gaps for future research. The review is in sequence. Though the paper may be of relevance to establishing the factors that influence employee well-being, it also emanates as a segment of a study in the higher education environment.

Keywords: job demand resources theory, organization support theory, well-being

Several scholars have defined the concept of well-being (Bennett et al., 2017; Ruggeri et al., 2020) as the frequents of happiness of employees on their job, and in particular, the feelings that the work gives the opportunities for employees to advance their potential into self-fulfilment. World Health Organization (2013) defined well-being, as a state in which employees acknowledge their potential to manage the usual stresses of life, to work effectively, and to benefit their communities. Thompson and Livingston (2018) describe well-being as key for managing issues associated with illness, crisis, and loss at the workplace. Allan et al. (2019) operationalize well-being as having four components namely: workplace positive emotions, job satisfaction, work engagement, and meaningful work. De Simone (2014) defined well-being using three constructs: social well-being, subjective well-being with four constructs: subjective, psychological, social, and workplace well-being.

Therefore, well-being is a multi-dimensional variable, and in this study, it is conceptualized as workplace well-being where according to Nielsen et al. (2017), is a condition of somebody's mental, physical, and overall health as well as acquaintance of satisfaction both at work and outside of work. It depicts all facets of an employee's working life long with the quality and safety of the work environment, the ambiance at work, and the work organization (Burke & Richardsen, 2019). Aryanti et al. (2020) defined workplace well-being as a sense of effort achieved from a job that is related to the emotions of workers'

overall intrinsic and extrinsic work values. Workplace well-being is grounded on internal and external values from work (Aryanti et al., 2020). Factors that influence workplace well-being include working climate, the quality of supervisor-supervise relatedness, job requirements, individual factors, working climate, and health and well-being notions (Danna & Griffin, 1999; Juniper et al., 2012). The impact of workplace well-being includes motivation and meaning in work (Hofmann et al., 2014).

World over, there emerged a global interest in the well-being of employees including academic staff. This is because embracing well-being at the workplace brings a lot of good organizational behaviours namely: exceptional job performance, low turnover intentions, low actual turnover, greater accomplishment and cognition placed into work, less truancy, and fewer job-related damages (Keeman et al., 2017). Research indicates that employee well-being (EW) is relevant for organizations. It plays an important role in employee motivation (Mugizi et al., 2021). Employee well-being enhances the performance and viability of organizations by affecting costs associated with illness and health care (Grawitch et al., 2006), truancy, turnover (Spector, 1997), and job accomplishment (Krishantha (2018). Employee's well-being hastens motivation and productivity at the personal as well as organizational echelon, whereas lack of it, the organization may visage cumulative financial as well as non-financial deficit (Krekel et al., 2019).

## **Purpose**

This research aims to find out the factors that influence EW in higher education institutions. In deriving the factors of EW, two theories were considered namely, OST anchored by Eisenberger et al. (1986), and JDRs by Bakker and Demerouti (2007). The review is in sequence. To achieve this objective, I looked at the current literature on theoretical review papers and/ or meta-analyses on the theory to apply to present the tenor of past research on the theory and the gaps left for future studies.

### Factors Associated with Employee Well-Being According to the OST

This study was guided by two theories that is; the Organisational Support Theory (OST) propounded by Eisenberger et al. (1986), and the Job Demand Resources theory (JDRs) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). OST postulates that employees desire to work for organizations that provide them with a pleasant work environment, cherish their efforts, and cater to their well-being (Malve-Ahlroth, 2020). According to Eisenberger et al. (1986), organizations provide tangible resources to the workers in organizations (well-being), and employees will reciprocate it with an increased effort to help the organization achieve its goals (Eisenberger et al., 2013). For instance, successful organizations often support their employees with an array of attractive benefits (e.g., career opportunities, retirement benefits, time to work on individual projects) intended to allure highly motivated employees and preserve proficient employees from departing for other organizations (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Such perceived organizational support lessens absenteeism and boosts the strength of the relationship between organizational support and employee absenteeism. Organizational support is greater for employees with a strong norm of reciprocity (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

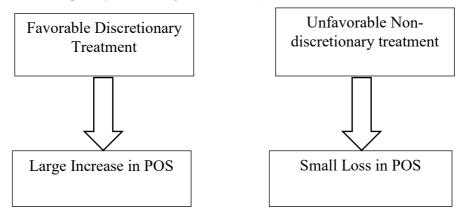


Figure 1: The effect of positive treatment related with organizational free choice on organizational support

Source: Eisenberger et al. (2016).

OST holds that employee relatedness, treatment, caring, endorsement, and recognition denoted by the organization and supervisors satisfy employees' socio-emotional needs, steering them to amalgamate organizational membership and role status into their social identification leading to managerial strength (Eisenberger et al., 2016). According to Eisenberger et al. (2016) supervisors who treat employees with honour and sympathy leverage employees' understanding of organizational equity and, eventually, serve to strengthen their conjectured organizational support.OST proposes that workplace social networks provide a web of relatedness among employees that makes work more pleasant for employees to thrive in organizations where they belong. Researchers like Stinglhamber et al. (2020), Hyton et al. (2012, and Zegenezyk et al. (2010) shows that various facets of an employee's web bestow organizational support: the number of co-workers on the web, the number of shared connections among web members; and the percentage of immense-performing co-workers on the web.

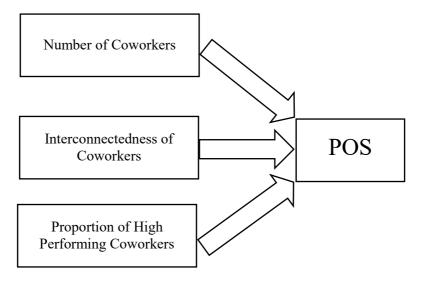


Figure 2: Promote strong social networks Source: Eisenberger et al. (2016)

The researcher conceptualized that if the university management gives academic staff a workplace environment such as perceived workplace climate, supervisory relationships, and peer group interactions (Agarwal, 2019; Rahim et al., 2020; Gioia, 2017; Rahimet al., 2019), they will develop wellness at their places of work. The working environment is an extensive factor that involves employees' work-related well-being and the breadth to which work acquaintances are gratifying and free of stress and other unfavourable personal repercussions (Mafini, 2016). OST proposes that a supportive organizational

environment relates to the workplace well-being of academic staff. Therefore, OST was the basis for relating the environment at the workplace to the well-being of academic employees.

Theoretical reviews of the OST have been captured by scholars such as Kurtessis et al. (2017). For instance; Kurtessis et al. (2017) studied OST and fortunately prognosticated the importance of contrasting relations, influences, or operational variables and mediation effects and noted that OST emphasizes the role of employer-employee relationships, collaborative reciprocity, ascription, and self-advancement. Stinglhamber et al. (2020) identified that co-worker levels of perceived organization support (POS)are favourably related to the key employees with positive outcomes regarding job contentment and organizational citizenship behaviours. They further observed that the influence of co-worker POS is enhanced when the key employee is faced with a low voice in the workplace. Eisenberger et al. (2020) observed that POS may be relevant in lessening the emotional or cognitive burden perceived by employees when jobs are exhausting. According to Caesens et al. (2016), organizations supporting employees every week predict enhanced work engagement which, in

turn, predicts positive weekly employees' well-being (i.e., raising positive affect about the organization and lessening negative affect regarding the organization and psychological strains at work). Maan et al. (2020) alluded that POS is positively determined by psychological empowerment and job gratification. Indeed, itis also indicated that the association between POS and job satisfaction lessens when employees' proactive personality increases rather than lowers. Panaccio et al. (2009) showed that perceived organizational support does not predict a lack of employment alternatives and is thus negatively associated with well-being.

OST has had critics, for instance, Shosset al.(2013) carried out a study on why organizations are blamed for abusive supervision and the roles of organizational support to the employees, and suggested that employees may vary in the extent to which they attribute responsibility to their employing organisations for abusive supervision, employers appreciate that supervisors act as part toward them on the basis of distinctive reasons and values as well as the common interests with the organization. Henceforth, anticipated unfriendly treatment is related to low supportive cause and therefore re-tribute against the organization in the guise of worthless work conduct directed against the organization and reduced in-role and extra-role performance (Vatankhah et al., 2017). Neves and Eisenberger (2014) alluded that organizational support emanating from abusive supervision likely reduces employees' motivation to assist the organization achieve its objectives. They thus suggested that the organization's failure to take remedial action to reduce the pervert may propose to employees that the organization cares less about their well-being. However, overall organizational support theory is reciprocated with increased positive work attitudes such as employee well-being.

An empirical study by Armeli et al. (2001) indicated that, for workers with low socio-emotional needs, the relationship between POS and performance was unexpectedly negative. Their findings revealed, "the prospect that employees with low socio-emotional needs may sight high POS as a batch of excellent feeling that gives a chance to rest on one's accolade" (Armeli et al., 2001). This might be appreciated in light of the danger-to-self-esteem model (Deelstra et al., 2003), based on the "too much of a good thing effect" (TMGT effect) recommended in the management literature (Burnett et al., 2015) adduced that, when POS is present in surplus, it can be perceived as self-threatening, i.e., employees may attribute POS as a manifestation of being inefficient and hence employees become inadequate to reciprocate for a high level of POS, in ultimate negative responses.

Finally, still, premise of the TMGT effect (Harris & Kacmar, 2018) proposed that employees realizing a high degree of organization support might at some moment believe that they have made enough efforts to repay for the positive treatment gotten from the organization, leading to varying POS-outcomes relationships that can either lead to negative effects and positive individual outcomes.

## **Factors Influencing Employee Well-being According to the JDRs theory**

Job demands-resources theory (JDRs) anchored by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) helped to steer this study. JDRs spell out how favourable working conditions influence employees in an organization, and how employees cordially influence their job conditions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). One critical presupposition of JDR theory is that all work environments can be modelled and sculptured using two disparate categories namely, job demands and job resources. Job demands are facets of the job that require effort and for that reason associated with determined physiological and psychological costs for example complex tasks, workload, and conflicts (Demerouti, 2001). Job resources concern those physical, psychological, social, or organizational facets of the job that assist employees concerned with job demands and attaining their goals. For example, social support, performance feedback, and skill (Deci & Ryan, 2008). The theory also postulates that Job demands and resources have distinctive and independent consequences on employee well-being, for instance, job demands may inaugurate a health-impairment process if exposed to daily workload changes for a long time may which change into chronic overload leading to chronic exhaustion and physical health difficulties (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Bakker and Demerouti (2007) put forward that high job demands are correlated with low levels of employee well-being due to effects like stress and burnout.

On the contrary, job resources inaugurate motivational processes that give meaning and satisfy people's basic needs (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The theory also conjures that job resources can cushion the impact of job demands on negative strains like pressure and stress because they help employees with the means it takes to cope with the job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). The theory also highlights that Job resources influence employee motivation and work engagement when job demands increase. Employees who are emotionally, physically, socially, and mentally well, will cope with challenging job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Bakker and Demerouti (2017) revealed that employees should make use of autonomy, skill variety, performance feedback, and task identity to deal with challenging job demands. Another proposition noted that personal resources like optimism and selfefficacy also buffer against the effects of job demands. Therefore, employees who are high in optimism and self-efficacy, have confidence that good things will happen to them and have the ability to handle unforeseen events (Bakker et al., 2013). The theory also conjectures that negative job strain brings selfundermining conduct (i.e., created stress, confusion, and conflict) which leads to higher levels of job demands and job strain like emotional exhaustion and work pressure (Wanget al, 2016). Finally, the theory presumes that employees who are motivated by the work they do are likely to use job-crafting behaviours, which result in higher levels of job and personal resources and ever-increasing levels of satisfaction (Tims et al., 2013; Vogt et al., 2016). Therefore, I conceptualize that if university management grants academic staff a workplace

environment that enhances job resources in terms of supervisory support, autonomy, collaborations, performance feedback, skill diversity, role clarity, and career opportunities, academic staff will flourish at work.

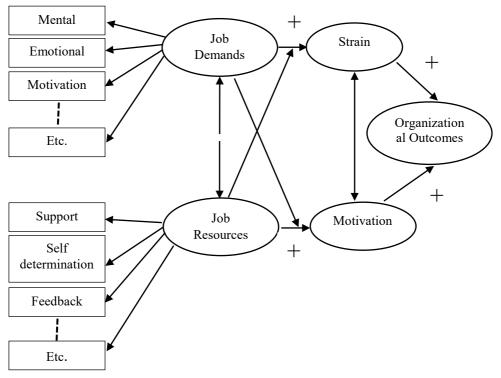


Figure 3: Job Demand Resource theory Source: Bakker and Demerouti (2007)

According to job demand resource theory, job demands (work overload, emotional demands, and poorly designed jobs) can cause strains and deplete employees' mental, emotional, and physiological resources, which leads to health impairment (Bakker et al., 2007). Job resources (interpersonal relationships, job security, and participation) are potential instigators of motivational processes (Bakker et al., 2014). Work resources (i.e., selfdetermination, positive and collaborative relationships, and supervisory assistance are critical for the growth of job strains and motivation, fulfilling human necessities or needs, and buffering the effect of job requirements on job stains (Bakker et al., 2017; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Proper feedback stimulates learning, in so doing, boosting job competence, whereas social assistance or support satisfies the need for self-determination (Bauer et al., 2014). Supportive co-workers and genuine feedback increase the possibility of being successful in attaining an individual's goals (job outcomes) (Hu et al., 2016). Job resources are essential in vitalizing the fulfilment of job goals, lessening job demands, and promoting employee growth and development (Bauer, 2014).

Theoretical reviews of JDR theory in academic environments such as Mudrak et al. (2018) have observed that job resources substantially predicted job engagement, job satisfaction, and the "health impairment process" (stress, mostly through work-family conflict). Han et al. (2020) revealed that demanding jobs were positively associated with emotional exhaustion and negatively associated with work engagement. They further indicated that job resources were positively related to work engagement and negatively related to emotional exhaustion.

Naidoo-Chetty and du Plessis (2021) noted that having a massive workload, job pressure, and constant research requirements resulted in academics feeling nervous and tired. Academics having to work in such demanding jobs resulted in lower levels of teacher efficacy, lower levels of job engagement, and burnout. Williams et al. (2017) revealed that positive well-being was predicted by a positive personality and positive coping. While negative outcomes were predicted by job demands and negative coping. Bakker & Demerouti (2018) suggested that employee well-being and performance are the results of components at both personal(employee) and organizational levels. They observed that central to job-demand resources theory, are job demands and job resources, which account for health and motivational results, respectively. Scholars revealed that variable job demands did not predict workplace well-being (Radic, 2020; Dominica & Wijono (2019).

Job-demanding resources have had critics. For instance, Mudrak et al. (2018) asserted that when employees fail to catch up with their job demands, they result in job stressors, namely, work overload, time pressure, and role conflict. More other theoretical reviews have been used in the same ways to confirm the psychological function of critical demands, resources, and results in the JDR model. For instance, theoretical reviews from Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory, Hobfoll's (2002) Conservation of Resources Theory, Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination, and Bandura's (1999) Social Cognitive Theory.

More other JDR theory critics can be drawn from explanatory theoretical frameworks that are incredibly required to substantiate why specific demands relate to specific resources. For instance, in the case of Kühnel et al. (2012) case, JDR theory discussed that role. The conceptual contrast between job demands and job resources is not as clear as assumed. For example, conditions in which an employee experiences a lack of resources. This implies that more effort has to be spent to accomplish work goals considering that the JDR argues that the cost of effort is a symbol of job demands, this reasoning leads to the varying conclusion that lack of resources may be implied as a job demand (Taris & Schaufeli, 2015).

Also to note, personal resources may account for at least five different roles in the job attributes well-being knot, though these roles are not mutually exclusive (Taris & Schaufeli, 2015). Personal resources can be interspersed into the JDR theory in various ways though at present there is no single best way of

stretching the JDR theory to encompass personal resources. For instance, they can be interspersed as mediators, moderators, "third variables," antecedents of job demands and job resources, or any blend of these. Thus personal resources do matter, but the specific explanatory framework determines how they should be interspersed into the model (Bauer et al., 2014). The JDR theory suggests that health impairment and motivational processes are autonomous, but it is quite viable that they portray two sides of the same coin. Thus, when health and well-being deteriorate, motivation decreases, and vice versa. Moreover, the JDR theory proposes clear unidirectional causal relations among demands, resources, and outcomes. However, many longitudinal studies manifested a critical review of the job demands-resources model, and reciprocal causation, specifically regarding the motivational process (e.g., Hu et al., 2011). Worthy to note, the JDR theory displays an individual-level path, but it has also been operational to higher aggregation levels. For example, Xanthopoulou et al. (2009) and Bakker et al. (2008) applied the JDR theory to employees working in teams. However, in doing so they ignored the compatibility principle (Bauer et al., 2014), which asserts that all variables in the theory must be operationalized at the same level of accuracy. For example, collective constructs (e.g., team resources) should be studied in connection to other collective constructs (e.g., team performance or team engagement).

#### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In this article, I showed that OST and JDR theories are suitable to prescribe the factors that are associated with the well-being of academic employees in higher education institutions. I reasoned out that OST might bestow to commitment of academic employees, even other positive academic employee attitudes and behaviours, if higher education institutions care for their well-being to fulfil institutional goals. Central to job demand-resources theory are those job demands and job resources, which account for health and motivational consequences, respectively. However, I as well substantiated that the well-being of academic employees sparks them to leverage their job demands and resources such as job crafting and self-undermining, and these bottom-up influences run next to the top-down changes initiated by the institution or its managers. Moreover, I argued that these processes befell over time in the framework of positive or negative patterns and those factors from diverse levels of the institution are involved in these processes. While more research is required to test their assumptions, OST and JDR theory have clear suggestions for practice. I'm hopeful that OST and JDR theory will continue to reinforce future researchers and practitioners in organizations and education institutions whose aim is to enhance employee well-being and effective workplace organizational functioning. I, therefore, recommend future researchers make use of both OST and JDR theories to benefit educators, and managers in education institutions to achieve their predetermined goals and as well take care of academic staff well-being.

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