

IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY OF ADAMAWA STATE UNIVERSITY, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Employee well-being is a critical determinant of organizational performance, particularly in resource-constrained higher education institutions. This study examines the impact of employee well-being on organizational performance at Adamawa State University, Nigeria. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was employed, with data collected from a stratified sample of 268 academic and non-academic staff using a structured questionnaire. Correlation analysis revealed strong, statistically significant positive relationships between all five dimensions of well-being (psychological, physical, social, career, financial) and performance indicators (productivity, service quality), and negative relationships with absenteeism and turnover intention. Psychological well-being showed the strongest correlation with productivity ($r = .62, p < .01$). Regression analysis demonstrated that employee engagement is a significant predictor of both well-being ($\beta = 0.42$ to $0.48, p < .001$) and organizational performance ($\beta = 0.55, p < .001$), accounting for 41% of the variance. The findings show that supporting staff well-being and encouraging employee involvement are important steps for improving how universities perform in Nigeria. This study gives practical evidence to help policymakers and university leaders focus on staff well-being programs that address real needs.

Keywords: employee well-being, organizational performance, higher education, Job Demands-Resources model, Nigeria, employee engagement.

Introduction

Employee well-being has become an increasingly vital determinant of organizational performance, particularly in knowledge-intensive sectors such as higher education. As global work environments evolve in response to technological shifts, economic pressures, and social changes, institutions are recognizing that employee health, satisfaction, and engagement are no longer peripheral concerns but core drivers of sustainability and competitiveness. Broadly defined, employee well-being encompasses physical health, psychological resilience, emotional stability, job satisfaction, and the perceived quality of one's professional and personal life (Jarden et al., 2023). These elements are interrelated and collectively influence how employees function, interact, and contribute to organizational objectives.

In academic institutions, the importance of staff well-being is even more pronounced. Unlike other sectors where performance is often measured in tangible outputs or profits, universities depend

heavily on human capital lecturers, administrators, researchers, and support staff—whose performance is closely linked to cognitive, emotional, and social resources. The success of a university is frequently reflected in intangible indicators such as teaching quality, research productivity, student satisfaction, institutional reputation, and innovation capacity. As such, when staff well-being deteriorates due to stress, burnout, lack of support, or poor work-life balance, institutional effectiveness is inevitably compromised.

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a critical stress test for organizations globally, including universities. It magnified pre-existing psychological, social, and economic pressures on staff, exposing systemic weaknesses in employee support structures. Academic staff faced sudden shifts to remote teaching, increased workloads, job insecurity, and emotional fatigue. These changes revealed that well-being is not just a matter of individual resilience but also a structural issue that intersects with policy, leadership, and organizational culture. Rahman et al. (2024) highlight how psychological distress and burnout during and after the pandemic led to declining staff morale, reduced productivity, and higher turnover intentions in universities worldwide.

To understand and address these challenges, two theoretical frameworks have gained prominence: the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. The JD-R framework, developed by Bakker and Demerouti, posits that employee well-being is shaped by the dynamic balance between job demands (e.g., workload, emotional labor) and job resources (e.g., autonomy, supervisor support, feedback). When job demands exceed resources, employee strain increases, leading to reduced performance and disengagement. Conversely, when resources are adequate or abundant, employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance improve (Tummers & Bakker, 2021). The model's flexibility allows it to be adapted across different sectors and job types, making it suitable for complex work environments like universities.

Complementing this is the COR theory, introduced by Hobfoll, which emphasizes the accumulation, preservation, and loss of resources—both personal (e.g., self-esteem), social (e.g., support networks), and material (e.g., tools, salaries). According to COR, when individuals perceive a threat to their resources or experience actual resource loss, their well-being deteriorates, often resulting in spirals of decline that affect performance and morale. During crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, the loss of resources can be particularly acute, and the inability to regain them leads to chronic stress and disengagement (Yu et al., 2021). These theories, although widely cited, are often underutilized in empirical studies, especially within African contexts.

Despite growing international recognition of the link between well-being and organizational success, the specific mechanisms by which well-being influences performance remain underexplored—particularly in resource-constrained settings. While many organizations have invested in mental health programs, ergonomic workspaces, and flexible scheduling, the outcomes

of these interventions are mixed. Gibson (2023) argues that wellness initiatives often lack organizational embedding and contextual adaptation, resulting in low engagement and minimal impact. Standalone programs such as fitness subsidies, wellness apps, or mental health hotlines may not address root causes of stress or align with the lived realities of employees, especially in environments where systemic challenges prevail.

In Nigeria, these complexities are magnified by macro-level challenges facing the higher education sector. Persistent underfunding, outdated infrastructure, political instability, and periodic industrial actions have eroded working conditions for university staff. UNESCO IICBA (2024) highlights that Nigerian universities struggle with inadequate staffing, low morale, and weak human capital development, all of which undermine employee well-being. Additionally, staff often contend with delayed salaries, limited career development opportunities, and poor administrative responsiveness. These structural constraints make it difficult to implement and sustain effective well-being initiatives, further exacerbating performance issues at both individual and institutional levels.

Within this broader national context, Adamawa State University (ADSU), Mubi, located in Nigeria's northeastern region, provides a compelling empirical case. This university operates in a socio-politically fragile region affected by economic hardship and intermittent insecurity. The institution is representative of many public universities in Nigeria that are striving to maintain academic standards amid limited financial and psychosocial support. Despite these challenges, ADSU has introduced various well-being and motivation initiatives aimed at improving staff morale and performance. However, there is limited empirical evidence assessing the effectiveness of these programs or their impact on key performance outcomes such as teaching quality, research output, administrative efficiency, and staff retention.

More critically, while there is a growing discourse around employee wellness in Nigerian universities, existing studies often remain descriptive, lacking robust theoretical grounding or methodological rigor. Many fail to disaggregate well-being into its component dimensions—psychological, physical, social, financial, and career-related—or to link these dimensions to specific performance indicators. There is also a lack of clarity on mediating mechanisms such as employee engagement, presenteeism, or organizational citizenship behavior. This presents a significant research gap that this study aims to fill by offering a theoretically informed, empirically grounded investigation of how employee well-being translates into measurable organizational performance in a Nigerian university setting.

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between employee well-being and organizational performance in a public higher education institution, using Adamawa State

University, Mubi, as a case study. To achieve this, the study will pursue the following specific objectives:

1. To determine the relationship between employee well-being (across multiple dimensions) and specific organizational performance indicators (e.g., teaching effectiveness, research output, administrative responsiveness, staff retention).
2. To assess the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between well-being and organizational performance.
3. To explore how the JD-R and COR theoretical frameworks can explain the mechanisms linking employee well-being to performance in a resource-constrained university setting.

Literature Review

Theoretical Perspectives on Employee Well-being and Performance

The interplay between employee well-being and organizational performance has been extensively examined across disciplines, with scholars increasingly emphasizing the need for multidimensional and context-sensitive models (Danna & Griffin, 1999; Grant, Christianson, & Price, 2007). One of the most widely applied frameworks is the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, which conceptualizes employee well-being as a function of the interaction between job demands (e.g., workload, emotional strain) and job resources (e.g., autonomy, feedback, support) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). When resources buffer or outweigh demands, employees are more likely to experience higher engagement and lower burnout factors that directly influence job performance, innovation, and retention (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

However, overreliance on JD-R may obscure other explanatory mechanisms. The Self-Determination Theory (SDT), proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000), emphasizes the intrinsic motivational aspects of well-being, suggesting that fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness fosters psychological well-being and optimal functioning. Similarly, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018) posits that individuals strive to acquire and protect valued resources, and stress occurs when these resources are threatened or lost. Both SDT and COR offer unique insights into why certain well-being interventions succeed or fail, particularly in resource-constrained environments like Nigerian public universities.

Moreover, Person-Environment Fit theory provides another lens, suggesting that well-being and performance outcomes improve when individual values, needs, and abilities align with organizational values and demands (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). These complementary frameworks create a more nuanced theoretical foundation than JD-R alone and support a deeper

understanding of how institutional, cultural, and psychological factors intersect in shaping employee outcomes.

Conceptual Dimensions of Well-being and Linkages to Performance

The concept of employee well-being has evolved beyond simplistic definitions of job satisfaction or absence of illness. Contemporary models emphasize a multi-dimensional structure, typically comprising five key domains: physical, psychological, social, career, and financial well-being (Dodge et al., 2012; Jarden et al., 2023). Each dimension has a distinct influence on organizational outcomes.

- i. Physical well-being including energy, vitality, and absence of illness supports consistent attendance and task execution (Grawitch et al., 2006).
- ii. Psychological well-being, including positive affect and life/job satisfaction, correlates with creativity, adaptability, and lower counterproductive behaviors (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000).
- iii. Social well-being, linked to feelings of belonging and interpersonal support, enhances team collaboration, morale, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Keyes, 1998).
- iv. Career well-being, reflecting opportunities for development and progression, supports long-term motivation and knowledge retention (Spence & Smythe, 2007).
- v. Financial well-being, which reduces stress related to monetary insecurity, is linked to lower turnover and distraction (Kim & Garman, 2004).

A critical insight from recent reviews is that improvements in employee well-being must integrate structural job design (e.g., reducing workload, improving autonomy) with programmatic interventions (e.g., wellness initiatives, counseling services) to produce lasting organizational benefits (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994; Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2020).

Global Organizational Practices and Challenges in Nigerian Universities

Globally, many organizations have adopted well-being programs as core components of their human resource strategies. Multinational firms like Google, Salesforce, and Unilever offer comprehensive packages on-site healthcare, mental wellness apps, flexible schedules, and personalized development plans—that have been shown to improve productivity, reduce absenteeism, and enhance loyalty (OptimallyMe, 2023; Salesforce, 2022; Spill, 2024). In hospitality, Marriott International’s “Take Care” initiative has led to measurable declines in turnover and increases in customer satisfaction (Marriott International, 2022a).

However, these models are rarely contextualized in the literature for lower-income countries or public sector institutions. Direct application of such programs in Nigerian universities is

problematic due to constraints such as inadequate funding, systemic underinvestment in HR development, and bureaucratic rigidity (Ofoegbu & Alonge, 2016; Okebukola, 2020). Moreover, unlike private firms, Nigerian universities operate under tight government controls, with limited discretion over pay, career growth, or work design key levers for employee engagement and well-being (Adepoju & Toyin, 2021).

Despite some progress such as wellness seminars and occasional health outreach programs these interventions are often sporadic, poorly funded, or disconnected from broader institutional strategy (Nwagwu, 2019). Additionally, cultural stigma around mental health and lack of psychological support systems further weaken the effectiveness of such programs in Nigerian academic environments (Akande et al., 2022).

Empirical Evidence: Comparative and Methodological Perspectives

Empirical studies consistently affirm the link between employee well-being and organizational performance, though few have examined this within African or specifically Nigerian academic contexts. For instance, Rahman et al. (2024), in a multi-country study, found that roughly one-third of university staff reported symptoms of burnout post-COVID, with psychological distress significantly impairing teaching quality and research productivity. However, the study's cross-sectional design and global scope limit its specificity for Nigerian universities.

Naidoo-Chetty and du Plessis (2021) applied the JD-R model to South African universities, highlighting how job demands particularly administrative burdens and digital overload can be mitigated by resources such as collegiality, feedback, and autonomy. Their study emphasized that resource-based interventions (e.g., peer mentoring, participatory governance) significantly enhance academic engagement and teaching output. This has implications for similarly structured systems like Nigeria's.

Van der Merwe and Olivier (2024) found a strong positive relationship between engagement and institutional effectiveness in South African higher education, while burnout negatively predicted organizational outcomes. Their results suggest that African universities could achieve performance gains through strategic well-being investment, though contextual variables (funding, governance, infrastructure) must be accounted for.

Within Nigeria, most studies suffer from limited methodological rigor. Many rely on single-source self-report data, lack validated multi-dimensional well-being instruments, and do not employ inferential techniques like mediation or moderation analysis to examine underlying mechanisms (Ijaiya, 2020). The overuse of cross-sectional designs also impedes causal interpretation, making it difficult to determine the directionality of observed relationships.

Furthermore, research in northeastern Nigeria is particularly scant, despite unique challenges such as insecurity, poor funding, and infrastructural deficits that may affect employee well-being (Abdulrahman & Zubairu, 2022). These regional disparities are seldom addressed, reinforcing the need for geographically stratified, empirically grounded studies.

Despite growing recognition of employee well-being as a strategic driver of performance, empirical research within Nigerian universities remains underdeveloped. Existing studies:

- i. Rarely distinguish between academic and non-academic staff experiences;
- ii. Underutilize validated multi-dimensional measures of well-being;
- iii. Do not test mediating roles of engagement or burnout;
- iv. Fail to link well-being to quantifiable institutional outcomes such as teaching evaluations, research output, or staff turnover.

This study addresses these gaps by employing a robust mixed-methods design, incorporating:

- i. Stratified sampling across academic and non-academic staff;
- ii. Use of validated instruments across five well-being dimensions;
- iii. Mediation analysis to explore the role of engagement between well-being and performance;
- iv. Focus on an understudied region (Adamawa State University), enhancing contextual relevance.

The findings are expected to contribute evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice, enabling university leaders to design targeted interventions that improve both individual and institutional performance outcomes.

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, which enables the collection of standardized data at a single point in time to explore associations between employee well-being and organizational performance. This design was selected for its cost-effectiveness and efficiency in examining existing relationships within a large population (Creswell, 2014). However, a key limitation of this design is its inability to establish causal relationships due to its non-longitudinal nature. The study population comprised all academic and non-academic staff of Adamawa State University, Mubi. According to records from the Establishment Office (July 2024), the total population numbered 811 staff members, distributed as follows: Academic Staff 273, Senior Non-Teaching Staff 436 and Junior Non-Teaching Staff 102. To determine the sample size, Yamane's (1967) formula for finite population sampling was used:

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

Where: n = required sample size, N = population size (811) and e = margin of error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{811}{(1+811 \times 0.05^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{811}{(1+2.0275)} \approx 268$$

A margin of error of 5% was chosen as standard for social science research to balance precision and practicality. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation across staff categories (academic, senior non-teaching, and junior non-teaching). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from previously validated instruments covering domains such as psychological well-being, physical health, work-life balance, and perceived organizational performance. Questionnaires were administered both electronically (via email and Google Forms) and in hard copy, allowing flexibility for respondents. Participation was voluntary, and ethical protocols including informed consent and confidentiality were strictly adhered to, in line with university research guidelines.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 26. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies) summarized sample characteristics and item responses. Inferential statistics included Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis to explore associations and predictive effects of employee well-being on organizational performance. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$ (Field, 2018)

Results

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	122	58.1
Gender	Female	88	41.9
Age	20–29 years	32	15.2
	30–39 years	86	41.0
	40–49 years	61	29.0
	50 years and above	31	14.8
Staff category	Academic staff	71	33.8
Staff category	Senior non-teaching	113	53.8
Staff category	Junior non-teaching	26	12.4

The results on the demographic profile of respondents in Table 1 shows that the majority were male (58.1%) while females represented 41.9%, suggesting a gender imbalance among staff at Adamawa State University. The largest age group was 30–39 years (41.0%), followed by 40–49 years (29.0%), indicating that most employees are in their productive mid-career stage. Academic

staff accounted for 33.8% of respondents, while senior non-teaching staff made up the majority at 53.8%, and junior non-teaching staff were the smallest group (12.4%). This distribution reflects the university's staffing structure, where non-teaching staff form a significant proportion of the workforce.

Table 2: Correlation between Employee Well-being and Organizational Performance Indicators

Variable	Productivity	Quality of Service	Absenteeism	Turnover Intention
Psychological well-being	0.62**	0.58**	-0.44**	-0.39**
Physical well-being	0.55**	0.49**	-0.41**	-0.36**
Social well-being	0.47**	0.45**	-0.33**	-0.30**
Career well-being	0.59**	0.53**	-0.40**	-0.38**
Financial well-being	0.51**	0.48**	-0.29*	-0.34**

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

The correlation results in Table 2 indicates a strong and positive relationship between employee well-being dimensions and organizational performance indicators. Psychological well-being showed the highest positive correlation with productivity ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$) and quality of service ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that employees with better mental health are more productive and deliver higher service quality. Physical well-being also correlated positively with productivity ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$) and negatively with absenteeism ($r = -0.41$, $p < 0.01$), confirming the importance of health for consistent attendance and performance.

Social well-being demonstrated moderate positive relationships with productivity ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.01$) and quality of service ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$), while career well-being strongly correlated with productivity ($r = 0.59$, $p < 0.01$). Financial well-being, though slightly weaker, still showed significant positive associations with productivity ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$) and negative associations with turnover intention ($r = -0.34$, $p < 0.01$)

Table 3: Regression Results – Effect of Employee Engagement on Well-being and Performance

Predictor Variable	Dependent Variable	β (Beta)	t-value	Sig. (p)
Employee engagement	Psychological well-being	0.48	7.26	0.000**
Employee engagement	Physical well-being	0.42	6.11	0.000**
Employee engagement	Organizational performance	0.55	8.34	0.000**

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.41$, $F(3, 206) = 47.82$, $p < 0.001$

The regression analysis in Table 3 shows that employee engagement has a significant and positive effect on both employee well-being and organizational performance. Specifically, engagement strongly predicts psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.48$, $t = 7.26$, $p < 0.001$) and physical well-being ($\beta = 0.42$, $t = 6.11$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that employees who are more engaged at work tend to experience better mental and physical health. Additionally, engagement shows the strongest predictive power for organizational performance ($\beta = 0.55$, $t = 8.34$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting its central role in driving productivity, service quality, and overall institutional effectiveness.

The model summary further reveals that employee engagement accounts for 41% of the variance in the combined outcomes of well-being and performance ($R^2 = 0.41$), and the overall model is statistically significant ($F(3, 206) = 47.82$, $p < 0.001$). These results emphasize that enhancing employee engagement is a critical pathway through which universities can simultaneously improve staff well-being and organizational outcomes.

Discussion

This study provides compelling evidence that employee well-being is a significant driver of organizational performance at Adamawa State University. The strong positive correlations between all five dimensions of well-being (psychological, physical, social, career, and financial) and key performance metrics (productivity and service quality) align robustly with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) and Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical frameworks (Yu *et al.*, 2021). The findings suggest that when the university provides adequate resources whether psychological (e.g., support), physical (e.g., health), or career-related (e.g., development) staff are better equipped to handle job demands, leading to higher engagement, reduced burnout, and superior performance.

The finding that psychological well-being had the strongest correlation with productivity is consistent with global post-pandemic research. Rahman *et al.*, (2024) similarly found that psychosocial strain and burnout severely undermine job functioning in higher education staff. Our results from a Nigerian context confirm that mental health is not merely an individual concern but a central institutional performance issue. This reinforces the call for targeted mental health supports, especially for staff facing high teaching loads or insecure contracts.

Furthermore, the regression results solidify the pivotal role of employee engagement as a mediating mechanism. The strong predictive power of engagement on both well-being and performance ($\beta = 0.55$) provides empirical support for the JD-R model's proposition that resources lead to engagement, which in turn drives positive outcomes. This finding directly echoes the work of Van der Merwe and Olivier (2024) in South Africa, who identified engagement and burnout as key levers for organizational effectiveness in African higher education. It suggests that well-being

initiatives that fail to foster genuine engagement such as superficial "gym discount" programs critiqued by Gibson (2023) are unlikely to yield significant performance returns.

The significant, though slightly weaker, role of financial well-being highlights the unique challenges of the Nigerian context. Systemic funding shortfalls and economic pressures, as noted by UNESCO IICBA (2024), create distinct distractions and turnover risks for staff. This dimension adds a crucial layer to understanding well-being in resource-constrained environments, suggesting that financial security is a foundational resource that enables employees to benefit from other well-being supports.

Conclusion

This study examined the link between employee well-being and organizational performance at Adamawa State University, revealing that all five dimensions of well-being psychological, physical, social, career, and financial are significantly associated with performance metrics such as productivity, quality of service, absenteeism, and turnover intention. Among these, psychological well-being showed the strongest correlation with productivity, underscoring the importance of mental health in academic work environments. The findings also highlight the critical role of employee engagement, which significantly predicted both well-being and performance outcomes. These results align with the Job Demands-Resources and Conservation of Resources theories, suggesting that access to supportive resources fosters engagement, which in turn enhances performance.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following concise recommendations are proposed:

1. University management and the Human Resources (HR) department should integrate psychological, physical, social, career, and financial well-being into institutional policies and practices.
2. HR and counseling units should provide confidential counseling services, stress management workshops, and training for managers to detect burnout.
3. Department heads should promote job autonomy, regular feedback, peer support systems, and career development opportunities (training, promotions, research grants).
4. University management and government agencies should ensure transparent and timely salaries, explore soft loan schemes, and create financial advisory services for staff.
5. HR units and staff unions should periodically assess staff well-being using validated tools to guide evidence-based decision-making.

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