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INFLUENCE OF WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION AND JOB SATISFACTION ON EMPLOYEE WELLBEING IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of workplace communication and job satisfaction on employee well-being among academic staff in Nigerian universities, examining their independent and joint contributions. A descriptive correlational survey design was employed with 250 academic staff (mean age = 40.20 years, SD = 8.75; 57.2% male) purposively selected from four universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. Standardized instruments included the Communication Survey Questions (CSQ), Generic Work Satisfaction Scale (GWSS), and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale. Data were analyzed using regression analysis. Findings revealed that workplace communication did not directly predict employee well-being ($\beta = -.086, p > .05$) but significantly influenced job satisfaction ($\beta = .525, p < .05, R^2 = .276$). Job satisfaction had a significant inverse influence on employee well-being ($\beta = -.333, p < .05, R^2 = .111$). Jointly, workplace communication and job satisfaction significantly predicted employee well-being ($R^2 = .145, p < .05$), with job satisfaction contributing more. The findings challenge the assumption that higher job satisfaction always improves well-being, suggesting that in high-pressure academic contexts, satisfaction may coexist with elevated strain. Enhancing communication practices alongside targeted well-being interventions is essential for promoting sustainable employee well-being in academic institutions.

Keywords: *employee well-being, workplace communication, job satisfaction, Nigerian universities, academic staff*

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Employee well-being has emerged as a critical determinant of organizational success and sustainability in the 21st-century workplace. Defined broadly, employee well-being refers to the holistic state of an individual's physical, psychological, and social health within the work environment, characterized by a balance between work demands and available resources (Grant et al., 2021). In academic institutions, particularly universities, the well-being of academic staff is increasingly recognized as essential for maintaining teaching quality, research productivity, and overall institutional effectiveness (Adeniji & Oyewunmi, 2023).

Globally, concerns about employee well-being have intensified due to rising rates of workplace stress, burnout, and mental health challenges. A global survey by Deloitte (2023) reported that 68% of employees do not utilize available well-being resources due to accessibility problems, highlighting the need for structural organizational changes beyond isolated HR initiatives. Similarly, the World Health Organization estimates that depression

and anxiety result in 12 billion lost workdays annually, costing the global economy approximately \$1 trillion (Financial Times, 2024). These statistics underscore that employee well-being is not merely a personal concern but a significant economic and organizational imperative.

In Africa, Nigeria stands out as one of the top-ranking nations for employee well-being, receiving a score of 69% in McKinsey's 2023 poll (McKinsey Health Institute, 2023). Despite this relatively positive ranking, significant discrepancies remain. Burnout rates vary considerably across sectors, and university academic staff face unique challenges including long working hours, insufficient support systems, financial insecurity, and infrastructural deficits (Ahmed & Khan, 2022). These challenges are particularly pronounced in developing countries where policies often misalign with employee needs, making employee well-being a pressing concern in both private and public universities.

Workplace Communication and Employee Well-being

Workplace communication encompasses the exchange of information, feedback, and expectations between employees and employers through formal and informal channels. Effective communication fosters trust, clarity, and collaboration, all of which are essential for improving organizational outcomes and employee well-being (Robbins & Judge, 2021). Recent research highlights a strong connection between workplace communication and employee well-being. Kundu et al. (2021) found that transparent and empathetic communication positively impacts employees' mental health and reduces stress. Conversely, Shahid and Islam (2023) emphasized that poor communication leads to misunderstandings, conflicts, and disengagement, ultimately diminishing employee well-being.

In university settings, the diversity of roles and hierarchical structures necessitates seamless communication channels. Faculty members, administrative staff, and management must align their goals and expectations to foster a conducive work environment. However, many universities struggle with fragmented communication systems, resulting in mistrust, work overload, and reduced morale among employees (Santos et al., 2022). In the Nigerian context, Ogunleye and Akindele (2023) observed that university staff often feel disconnected from decision-making processes and undervalued in their roles, a situation compounded by ineffective communication practices.

The Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), developed by Howard Giles (1973), provides a useful framework for understanding workplace communication dynamics. CAT posits that individuals adjust their communication styles through convergence (adapting to resemble others) or divergence (emphasizing differences) based on social and interpersonal contexts. In academic environments, convergence in communication, where supervisors and staff adopt mutually understandable styles, can enhance professional relationships, making employees feel valued and engaged. Divergence, on the other hand, may lead to conflict and reduced job satisfaction (Gallois & Callan, 1997). Applying CAT to university settings helps explain how communication patterns influence employee well-being.

Job Satisfaction and Employee Well-being

Job satisfaction, defined as the extent to which individuals feel fulfilled and content with their job roles, plays a crucial role in employee well-being (Locke, 1976). High levels of job satisfaction are associated with increased motivation, reduced turnover intentions, and better mental health outcomes (Kim & Lee, 2022). Conversely, dissatisfaction with work conditions, leadership, or compensation can amplify stress and negatively affect well-being.

Recent studies underscore the importance of job satisfaction in academia. For example, Malik et al. (2023) observed that academic staff in well-resourced institutions reported higher job satisfaction levels, which correlated with better mental health outcomes. In contrast, those in underfunded or poorly managed universities experienced significant dissatisfaction, leading to burnout and emotional exhaustion. Moreover, job satisfaction is intricately linked to workplace communication. Salako and Akingbade (2025) examined the influence of workplace happiness on organizational commitment among 397 healthcare workers in Ibadan. While examining different outcome variables, their findings offer indirect support for the framework of the present study. Salako and Akingbade (2025) found that workplace happiness significantly predicted affective and normative commitment, suggesting that positive psychological states at work foster emotional attachment to the organization. Importantly, the authors recommended enhancing "open communication" as a strategy to cultivate workplace happiness. This aligns with the present study's focus on workplace communication as a critical organizational resource. However, the present study extends this line of inquiry by specifically examining how communication and job satisfaction jointly influence employee well-being, rather than commitment, within the university sector. Effective communication channels often lead to increased job satisfaction by addressing grievances, fostering inclusivity, and ensuring that employees feel valued and heard (Rajesh et al., 2021).

The Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) Model, introduced by Bakker and Demerouti (2001), offers a valuable theoretical lens for understanding the relationship between job satisfaction and well-being. The JD-R model, which evolved from earlier stress theories including Karasek's Demand-Control Model (1979) and Siegrist's Effort-Reward Imbalance Model (1996), posits that workplace conditions consist of job demands (e.g., workload, time pressure, emotional strain) that lead to burnout when excessive, and job resources (e.g., social support, autonomy, recognition) that buffer these demands and promote engagement. Job resources promote work engagement, motivation, and job satisfaction through a motivational process, while also buffering the negative effects of job demands on strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

In the context of this study, job satisfaction can be viewed as both an outcome of available job resources and a resource itself that enhances well-being. However, when job demands are chronically high, as is often the case in Nigerian universities facing funding shortfalls and staffing shortages, even satisfied employees may experience diminished well-being.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) further clarifies the dynamics of job satisfaction. Herzberg distinguished between hygiene factors (salary, work conditions, company policies) that prevent dissatisfaction but do not motivate, and motivators (achievement, recognition, growth opportunities) that actively enhance satisfaction. In university settings, poor communication may function as a hygiene factor, causing dissatisfaction when absent, whereas effective communication that fosters recognition and professional growth serves as a motivator. Effective communication that fosters recognition, professional growth, and participative decision-making serves as a motivator, actively enhancing job satisfaction and engagement (Stello, 2011). Understanding this distinction helps explain why job satisfaction might not always translate into improved well-being, as satisfaction with hygiene factors alone may not provide the psychological fulfillment necessary for holistic well-being.

In the Context of Public vs Private Universities

The well-being of employees in private and public universities faces distinct challenges stemming from organizational differences. Private universities in Nigeria often emphasize performance metrics, tuition revenue, and profit generation, sometimes at the expense of employee welfare. Academic staff in these institutions may face high teaching loads, pressure to publish, and less job security, all of which can undermine well-being (Adegbite & Ojo, 2022). Public universities, on the other hand, frequently contend with bureaucratic inefficiencies, funding shortfalls, delayed salary payments, and infrastructural challenges. These structural disparities exacerbate issues related to employee well-being, including stress, low morale, and diminished job satisfaction.

A recurring issue in both types of institutions is the misalignment between workplace communication practices and employee expectations. Poor communication often leads to misunderstandings about roles, unrealistic workload expectations, and a lack of psychological safety. Such conditions undermine employee well-being, as noted in recent studies by Ogunleye and Akindele (2023), who highlighted that university staff in Nigeria often feel disconnected from decision-making processes and undervalued in their roles.

Ogun State serves as an ideal setting for this study due to its strategic position as a hub for higher education in Nigeria. The state hosts a substantial number of public universities (including Olabisi Onabanjo University and Tai Solarin University of Education) and private universities (including Babcock University, Crawford University, and Aletheia University). This diversity provides a unique opportunity to investigate workplace communication, job satisfaction, and employee well-being across different organizational settings. Additionally, the state's proximity to Lagos, Nigeria's economic center, adds another layer of relevance, as universities in Ogun State typically face spillover effects from Lagos, including competition for talent and shared socio-economic trends.

Problem Statement

Despite the growing recognition of employee well-being as a critical factor in organizational success, academic staff in Nigerian universities continue to experience significant challenges related to workplace communication and job satisfaction. Preliminary evidence suggests high rates of stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion among university faculty, with detrimental effects on teaching quality, research output, and staff retention (Ahmed & Khan, 2022; Ogunleye & Akindele, 2023).

The problem is multifaceted. First, workplace communication in many Nigerian universities is often fragmented, hierarchical, and ineffective. Staff report feeling disconnected from decision-making processes, receiving unclear instructions, and lacking constructive feedback mechanisms (Santos et al., 2022). Second, job satisfaction levels vary widely, driven by factors such as delayed salaries in public universities and excessive workloads in private institutions. Third, the relationship between communication, satisfaction, and well-being remains poorly understood in the Nigerian academic context, with most existing research conducted in Western corporate settings (Lopez et al., 2021) or in healthcare and banking sectors, with limited application to higher education in developing countries.

Critically, while some studies have examined workplace communication and job satisfaction separately, few have explored their joint and interactive effects on employee well-being in Nigerian universities. Even fewer have compared these dynamics across public and private institutions. This gap is particularly problematic because interventions designed to improve

well-being may fail if they do not account for the unique communication and satisfaction challenges in each sector.

Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following questions: To what extent does workplace communication influence employee well-being? How does workplace communication influence job satisfaction? What is the relationship between job satisfaction and employee well-being? And do workplace communication and job satisfaction jointly influence employee well-being among academic staff in public and private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria? The main objective of this study is to explore factors influencing employee well-being in universities.

Study Significance

This study provides a deeper understanding of the influence of workplace communication and job satisfaction on employee well-being among academic staff in Nigerian universities. The findings shed light on the patterns of work-related stress experienced by academic staff and the roles of communication and satisfaction in mitigating or exacerbating such stress. By identifying the relationships between employee well-being and key psychosocial variables, this research fills critical gaps in existing literature, particularly in the African higher education context.

The study serves as a baseline for designing targeted interventions, such as stress reduction programs and communication training, aimed at enhancing job satisfaction and fostering effective communication within universities. The findings will guide university administrators and policymakers in implementing evidence-based strategies to improve employee well-being, including revising workplace policies related to workload, working hours, and communication systems. By comparing private and public universities, the study provides valuable information to inform sector-specific improvements and policy recommendations.

Study Scope

This study focuses on examining the influence of workplace communication and job satisfaction on employee well-being among academic staff in selected private and public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The dependent variable is employee well-being, operationalized through psychological well-being dimensions. Independent variables include workplace communication and job satisfaction. The research was confined to academic staff members, excluding administrative and non-academic personnel, to provide targeted insights into the unique challenges faced in academic institutions.

METHODOLOGY

Design and Participants

A descriptive correlational survey design was used. A correlational design is appropriate when the goal is to examine the direction, magnitude, and significance of relationships among variables as they naturally occur, without any manipulation by the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The population of this study consisted of all academic staff (faculty members) employed in both private and public universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. Academic staff were defined as employees whose primary responsibilities include teaching, research, and academic service, holding ranks from assistant lecturer through professor. The known populations of academic

staff in the four selected universities were as follows: Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU, public) = 1,795 academic staff (OOU, 2025); Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED, public) = 890 academic staff (TASUED, 2025); Babcock University (private) = 1,250 academic staff (Babcock University, 2025); Aletheia University (private) = 50 academic staff (Aletheia University, 2025). The total known academic staff population across these four universities was 3,985.

A total of 250 academic staff were purposively selected from the four universities in Ogun State. A purposive sampling technique is a non-probability sampling method that involves the intentional selection of participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). Questionnaires were distributed as follows: 80 to academic staff at Olabisi Onabanjo University, 60 at Tai Solarin University of Education, 60 at Babcock University, and 50 at Aletheia University. This distribution was not strictly proportional to the population size of each institution but was determined by the researcher's judgment considering logistical convenience, access to participants, institutional cooperation, and the desire to ensure adequate representation from the smaller private university (Aletheia). The researcher visited each institution multiple times, coordinated with departmental heads and faculty representatives, and administered questionnaires in person during visits to departments and faculties. Participants were approached in their offices, common rooms, and after faculty meetings to maximize response rates.

Instruments

The study employed a structured, standardized questionnaire divided into four main sections, each aligned with the key study variables. The use of standardized instruments with established psychometric properties enhances the reliability and validity of the findings, allowing for comparison with other studies that have used the same measures.

Section A was a socio-demographic data form collecting demographic information for descriptive purposes and as potential control variables in analysis. Section B measured workplace communication using the Communication Survey Questions (CSQ), a 20-item scale on a 5-point Likert scale ($\alpha = .82$). Section C measured job satisfaction using the Generic Work Satisfaction Scale (GWSS), a 10-item scale on a 5-point Likert scale ($\alpha = .82$). Section D measured employee well-being using Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales, a 22-item scale covering six dimensions (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, self-acceptance) on a 7-point scale.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

To ensure the instruments were appropriate for the Nigerian university context, several validity procedures were followed. Face validity was established by having two experts in industrial/organizational psychology from the Department of Psychology, Olabisi Onabanjo University, review the instruments for clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness. Content validity was assessed by ensuring that items adequately covered all dimensions of each construct as defined in the operational definitions. Construct validity was supported by the fact that all instruments have been previously validated in similar organizational research contexts.

Prior to the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted with 30 academic staff from a university not included in the final sample (Covenant University, Ota). The pilot study served several purposes: (a) to test the clarity and comprehensibility of instructions and items; (b) to estimate the time required for completion; (c) to identify any problematic items that might

need rewording; and (d) to calculate preliminary reliability estimates. Based on pilot feedback, minor wording adjustments were made to two items for improved clarity. Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) from the pilot study were: CSQ ($\alpha = 0.81$), GWSS ($\alpha = 0.79$), and Ryff PWB ($\alpha = 0.85$). The main study yielded comparable or slightly higher coefficients as reported above, confirming acceptable reliability.

Procedure

Permission was obtained from university authorities. Questionnaires were administered in person after obtaining informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. Two hundred fifty (250) questionnaires were shared, but Two hundred twenty-two (222) were analyzed after data cleaning.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 26. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean, standard deviation) were computed. Hypotheses were tested using simple and multiple regression analysis at $p < .05$.

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics (n=222)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	127	57.2
	Female	95	42.8
Qualification	Bachelor's	62	28.0
	Master's	64	28.8
	Doctorate (Ph.D.)	77	34.8
University Type	Public	145	65.2
	Private	77	34.8

Note: Mean Age = 40.20 years (SD = 8.75). Full-time employees = 79.6%.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 2: Simple Regression of Workplace Communication on Employee Well-being

Variable	β	t	p	R	R ²	F
Workplace Communication	-.086	-1.361	>.05	.086	.007	1.853

Decision: H_{01} is retained. Workplace communication does not significantly influence employee well-being.

Table 3: Simple Regression of Workplace Communication on Job Satisfaction

Variable	β	t	p	R	R ²	F
Workplace Communication	.525	9.720	<.05	.525	.276	94.476

Decision: H_{02} is rejected. Workplace communication significantly influences job satisfaction, accounting for 27.6% of its variance.

Table 4: Simple Regression – Job Satisfaction on Employee Well-being

Variable	β	t	p	R	R ²	F
Job Satisfaction	-.333	-5.567	<.05	.333	.111	30.992

Decision: H_{03} is rejected. Job satisfaction has a significant negative influence on employee well-being.

Table 5: Multiple Regression of the Joint Influence on Employee Well-being

Variable	β	t	p	R	R ²	F	p (model)
Workplace Communication	.123	1.733	>.05	.349	.122	17.162	<.05
Job Satisfaction	-.298	-5.678	<.05				

Decision: H₀₄ is rejected. The joint model is significant, explaining 12.2% of the variance. However, only job satisfaction (negatively) makes a significant individual contribution.

Table 6 below provides a summary of the hypothesis testing results.

Table 6: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	Result	Decision
H ₀₁	Workplace communication does not significantly influence employee well-being.	$\beta = -.086, p = .175$	Not supported; null retained
H ₀₂	Workplace communication does not significantly influence job satisfaction.	$\beta = .525, p < .001$	Supported; null rejected
H ₀₃	Job satisfaction does not significantly influence employee well-being.	$\beta = -.333, p < .001$	Supported (but direction negative); null rejected
H ₀₄	Workplace communication and job satisfaction do not jointly influence employee well-being.	$R^2 = .122, p < .001$	Supported; null rejected

DISCUSSION

This study explored the influence of workplace communication and job satisfaction on employee well-being among academic staff in public and private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The findings offer meaningful insights into how communication dynamics and satisfaction shape well-being in academic organizational contexts, while also challenging some prevailing assumptions in the literature.

The first finding indicated that workplace communication did not directly predict employee well-being, diverging from studies like Ahmed et al. (2021). This suggests that communication alone may be insufficient in rigid, hierarchical academic settings where cultural or structural barriers limit its impact on psychological health.

The second finding confirmed that workplace communication significantly and positively influences job satisfaction, consistent with Ojo et al. (2020) and Igbinedion and Omoregie (2019). Open communication helps employees feel valued, directly enhancing satisfaction with their roles.

The most striking finding was the significant negative relationship between job satisfaction and employee well-being. This contradicts the prevailing literature (Okonkwo & Chukwu, 2019; Olawale et al., 2023) but aligns with concerns raised by Adebola et al. (2021). In Nigerian universities, high job satisfaction regarding pay or status may be coupled with excessive workload, limited resources, or career stagnation, leading to emotional exhaustion and reduced overall well-being. Satisfaction with specific job facets does not guarantee holistic psychological health.

Finally, the joint model was significant, confirming that communication and satisfaction together influence well-being. However, the negative contribution of job satisfaction dominated the model, highlighting the complex reality where satisfied employees may still be unwell due to chronic occupational stress.

CONCLUSION

Workplace communication enhances job satisfaction but does not directly improve well-being. More critically, job satisfaction in this context was associated with lower well-being, suggesting that Nigerian university staff may experience satisfaction alongside significant strain. Promoting employee well-being requires not only good communication but also systemic interventions addressing workload, autonomy, and mental health support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhance communication systems by implementing structured, transparent feedback mechanisms to build trust and inclusion.
2. Address work-related strain by investigating and reducing excessive workloads, role ambiguity, and limited autonomy.
3. Invest in well-being programs providing counseling, stress reduction workshops, and flexible scheduling.
4. Monitor job satisfaction contextually by assessing satisfaction alongside burnout and workload to identify paradoxical relationships.
5. Promote inclusive leadership by training leaders in transformational approaches that prioritize psychological safety and recognition.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This study provides empirical evidence from a non-Western academic context, challenging the universal assumption that job satisfaction always enhances well-being. It highlights the need for contextualized models of employee well-being in developing nations.

Suggestions for Further Studies

- Explore mediating variables such as burnout, resilience, or workload.
- Include non-academic staff for a comprehensive view.
- Conduct longitudinal or mixed-methods studies to capture causal dynamics and lived experiences.

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