



## ASSESSING EMPLOYEE WELLNESS FOR QUALITY DELIVERY IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN ONE DEVELOPING COUNTRY

**Racheal Mafumbate**

*University of Eswatini*

Employee wellness is a crucial determinant for ensuring quality delivery within institutions of higher education in developing country contexts. With a growing emphasis on holistic well-being in educational settings, understanding and addressing the wellness of faculty and staff members becomes paramount for sustaining institutional effectiveness. Therefore, I conducted this study to determine the impact of employee wellness on quality delivery in higher education institutions in a developing country. Thirty participants were purposively chosen from three institutions of higher learning. The selection comprised heads of departments, deans and directors, lecturers, and non-academic staff members. The data was gathered through in-depth interviews, observations, and focus group discussions. The research investigated the multifaceted dimensions of employee wellness, encompassing physical health, psychological well-being, social support networks, and work-life balance. Drawing upon two relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, the study explores the factors influencing employee wellness within the unique context of higher education institutions in the target developing country. The study explored employee wellness in various aspects of institutional performance, including teaching quality, research output, administrative efficiency, and the overall organizational climate. By illuminating the interconnections between employee wellness and institutional effectiveness, this research aims to provide insights for policymakers, administrators, and practitioners to develop evidence-based strategies and interventions that promote a culture of wellness, thereby enhancing the quality of education delivery and fostering a conducive working environment within higher education institutions in developing countries. Based on the findings, the study recommends prioritising and integrating comprehensive employee wellness programs into institutional policies and practices to support the holistic well-being of faculty and staff members in higher education institutions in developing countries.

**KEYWORDS:** Employee wellness; Higher education institutions; Quality delivery; Developing country; Institutional Effectiveness

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**CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:** Racheal Mafumbate. University of Eswatini. Email: [rmafumbate@uniswa.sz](mailto:rmafumbate@uniswa.sz)

## INTRODUCTION

This study underscores the critical role of assessing employee wellness in enhancing quality delivery within higher education institutions in developing countries. Emphasizing holistic well-being as pivotal to institutional effectiveness, the research employs a qualitative approach to explore the multifaceted dimensions of faculty and staff wellness, encompassing physical health, psychological well-being, social support, and work-life balance. By drawing on both theoretical frameworks and empirical data, the study investigates factors influencing employee wellness specific to the context of these institutions. It further examines how wellness impacts teaching quality, research productivity, administrative efficiency, and the overall organizational climate. Finally, the results validate the use of proven strategies and interventions to integrate wellness programs into institutional policies. The goal is to create a supportive work environment that improves the quality of education and promotes health among faculty and staff in higher education sectors in developing countries.

### Background

Institutions of higher education in developing countries face multifaceted challenges ranging from limited resources and infrastructure to rapidly evolving educational demands (Smith, 2018; Brown & Johnson, 2020). Amidst these challenges, the well-being of faculty and staff emerges as a critical determinant of institutional success and quality delivery (Jones, 2019). Employee wellness encompasses not only physical health but also psychological well-being, social support networks, and work-life balance, all of which significantly impact productivity, job satisfaction, and the overall organizational climate within academic settings (Green & Brown, 2021; Lee, 2017). Research increasingly underscores the pivotal role of employee wellness in fostering institutional effectiveness (Roberts & Patel, 2022). In higher education, where the quality of teaching, research output, administrative efficiency, and the overall educational experience hinge on motivated and healthy faculty and staff, addressing wellness becomes paramount (White, 2019). The well-being of educators directly influences their capacity to innovate, collaborate, and engage effectively with students, thereby shaping the quality and relevance of educational offerings (Garcia & Nguyen, 2020).

The significance of assessing employee wellness is particularly pronounced in developing country contexts, where socio-economic disparities, cultural norms, and institutional challenges amplify the complexities of maintaining well-being (Kumar & Singh, 2021). These settings often require tailored approaches that consider local contexts and realities, necessitating a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing wellness within higher education institutions (Chen, 2018). To comprehensively explore the nexus between employee wellness and institutional performance in a developing country context, this study adopts a qualitative approach (Smith, 2023). By integrating focus group discussions, interviews, and document analysis, this research aims to uncover the intricate dynamics of employee wellness within higher education institutions, shedding light on both challenges and opportunities for improvement (Anderson & Lee, 2019). This variety of research methods makes it possible to look at wellness in all its aspects and how they affect different parts of how institutions work. This gives us important information that we can use to make policies and plan strategic interventions that will make institutions work better overall (Taylor & Clark, 2020).



In essence, the assessment of employee wellness in developing country higher education institutions is not merely an academic exercise but a pragmatic necessity. It aligns with global trends towards promoting holistic well-being in educational environments and underscores the imperative of nurturing a supportive and healthy workforce to ensure sustained quality delivery and organizational excellence (Thomas, 2021).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study utilized Hettler's (1970) wellness and performance management theories as an integrative framework. The wellness and performance management theories collectively advocate for a balanced approach to enhancing employee health, engagement, and productivity, ultimately supporting organizational effectiveness and long-term success. Wellness theories underscore the significance of holistic employee well-being, addressing physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions to enhance the overall quality of life within the workplace. These theories advocate for nurturing a supportive environment that fosters employee health and satisfaction (Rhodes et al., 2002). In contrast, performance management theories concentrate on optimizing individual and organizational productivity through strategic goal-setting, continuous feedback mechanisms, and developmental opportunities (Allen, 2013). The primary objective is to align employee efforts with organizational goals to drive efficiency and effectiveness.

Integrating wellness principles into performance management practices facilitates a comprehensive approach where employees are not only motivated to achieve performance targets but also supported in maintaining their health and well-being (Mattke, 2013). This integration ensures that wellness initiatives contribute to higher levels of employee engagement and job satisfaction, reinforcing positive behaviors and attitudes crucial for sustained high performance and reduced turnover (Zhang, 2019). Organizations gain insights into the broader impact of employee well-being on organizational outcomes, such as productivity and job satisfaction, thereby promoting a culture that views employee wellness as integral to overall organizational success (Hoert, 2018). This integrated approach fosters a positive organizational culture that prioritizes employee well-being through leadership support, policies promoting work-life balance, and a supportive work environment (Jimmieson, 2014). When performance management practices align with these cultural values, employees feel valued and motivated, contributing to improved morale, retention, and organizational sustainability.

### **Statement of the problem**

In developing countries, higher education institutions face a pressing challenge regarding the assessment and promotion of employee wellness as a fundamental determinant of institutional success (Brown & Perez, 2021). Despite growing recognition of the importance of holistic well-being in educational settings, there remains a gap in understanding the specific dimensions and factors influencing the wellness of faculty and staff members within these contexts (Gupta & Kumari, 2020). This study seeks to address this gap through a comprehensive investigation using a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, interviews, and document analysis. The study examines the impact of employee wellness on an institution's effectiveness, as measured by factors such as teaching quality, research output, administrative efficiency, and organizational climate. The goal is to find important insights that can help people come up with strategies and interventions that work. These insights are crucial for policymakers, administrators, and practitioners seeking to prioritize and integrate comprehensive employee wellness programs within higher

education institutional policies, thereby fostering a conducive and supportive environment for faculty and staff members in developing countries.

### **Research objectives**

#### **The study is guided by the following objectives:**

- Identify the key factors that influence employee wellness in higher education institutions in developing countries.
- Evaluate the impact of employee wellness on higher education institutions' educational delivery quality and institutional performance.
- Identify strategies and interventions that can enhance employee wellness, thereby improving the quality of delivery in higher education institutions in developing countries.

#### **The study aimed to answer the following research questions:**

- What are the key factors influencing employee wellness in institutions of higher education in developing countries?
- How does employee wellness impact the quality of educational delivery and institutional performance in higher education institutions?
- Which strategies and interventions can we implement to improve employee wellness, thereby enhancing the quality of delivery in higher education institutions in developing countries?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative research design to investigate the assessment of employee wellbeing and its impact on institutional effectiveness within higher education institutions in a developing country context. Qualitative methods are chosen to explore the multifaceted dimensions of employee wellness comprehensively, including physical health, psychological well-being, social support networks, and work-life balance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The qualitative approach allows for a deeper understanding of the subjective experiences and perceptions of faculty and staff members regarding their wellness within the organizational context.

### **Participants**

Thirty participants were purposively selected from three institutions of higher learning in the target developing country. The selection criteria included heads of departments, deans and directors, lecturers, and non-academic staff members. Purposive sampling was chosen to ensure representation across different roles within the institutions, capturing a diverse range of perspectives on employee wellness (Patton, 2015). This approach facilitates a rich and nuanced exploration of the factors influencing wellness among faculty and staff members in higher education settings.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection methods included in-depth interviews, observations, and focus group discussions. In-depth interviews were conducted with heads of departments, deans, and directors, as well as selected faculty and staff members, to gather detailed insights into their perceptions and experiences related to employee wellness (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Observations were carried out to observe the physical work environment and daily interactions among employees, providing contextual information on workplace dynamics. Focus group discussions were held to facilitate interactive exchanges among participants, eliciting collective viewpoints on issues related to wellness and institutional effectiveness (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach, which involved identifying patterns and themes within the qualitative data collected from interviews, observations, and focus group discussions (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The process included coding the data to categorize responses according to key themes such as physical health, psychological well-being, social support, and work-life balance. Themes were then interpreted and synthesized to uncover insights into the factors influencing employee wellness and its impact on institutional performance. Drawing upon relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, the analysis aimed to provide a holistic understanding of the interconnections between employee wellness and institutional effectiveness in higher education institutions (Nowell, 2017).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. Participants were provided with informed consent forms outlining the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of their participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured, with identifiers removed from transcripts and data storage secured. The study adhered to ethical guidelines concerning respect for participants' rights, beneficence, and integrity in research conduct (American Psychological Association, 2020).

### **Limitations**

The study's limitations included the potential for participant bias, as perceptions of wellness and institutional effectiveness may vary depending on individual experiences and roles within the institutions. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the study limits generalizability to other contexts beyond the specific institutions and developing country settings examined.

## **RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

### **Social support within the institution significantly enhances job satisfaction.**

The study reveals a significant positive correlation between faculty and staff members' perceptions of social support within the institution and their overall job satisfaction. Participants consistently expressed that higher levels of social support from colleagues and supervisors enhance their satisfaction with their roles. This support enables them to feel valued and recognized, leading to increased engagement in institutional activities and a stronger commitment to organizational goals.

### **Work-Life Balance and Employee Retention**

The research highlights the impact of improved work-life balance policies and practices on employee retention rates among faculty and staff. Participants emphasized that institutions that offer flexible work arrangements and supportive initiatives for work-life balance have lower turnover rates. They attributed this to the ability to maintain a healthier balance between professional responsibilities and personal life commitments, thereby fostering greater job satisfaction and loyalty among employees.

### **Wellness Programs and Employee Morale**

Institutions that have established wellness programs are known to exhibit higher levels of employee morale and engagement. The study underscores the importance of these programs, which encompass initiatives such as physical health support, psychological services, and stress management resources. The institution's support and care for participants contributed to a positive work environment, motivating them to perform at their best. These findings underscore the qualitative insights gathered from in-depth interviews, observations, and focus group discussions with faculty and staff members. They provide valuable perspectives on how perceived social support, work-life balance initiatives, and wellness programs contribute to enhancing job satisfaction, retention rates, and overall morale within higher education institutions. The research identifies common barriers to implementing effective wellness initiatives within higher education institutions in developing countries. These barriers include limited financial resources, inadequate leadership support, and cultural resistance to change among faculty and staff.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The findings of the study were discussed under the following themes: social support within the institution significantly enhances job satisfaction, effective work-life balance policies positively impact employee retention, comprehensive wellness programs boost employee morale and engagement, and multiple barriers hinder effective wellness program implementation.

### **Theme: Social support within the institution significantly enhances job satisfaction.**

Findings in this study revealed that higher levels of social support from colleagues and supervisors correlate with increased job satisfaction, engagement in institutional activities, and commitment to organizational goals. This was evidenced by some participants, who highlighted the importance of feeling valued and recognized by peers and supervisors. Research consistently demonstrates that perceived social support significantly influences job satisfaction among employees (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Employees who perceive higher levels of support from colleagues and supervisors tend to feel valued and recognized within their roles. This recognition fosters a sense of belonging and encourages active engagement in institutional activities (Eisenberger, 1990). Moreover, when individuals feel supported by their peers and supervisors, they are more likely to demonstrate commitment to organizational goals (Sias & Cahill, 1998). This correlation underscores the importance of cultivating a supportive work environment that promotes positive interpersonal relationships and mutual respect.

**Theme: Effective work-life balance policies positively impact employee retention**

Findings in this study indicated that institutions with flexible work arrangements and supportive initiatives for work-life balance report lower turnover rates and higher job satisfaction and loyalty among employees. Participants echoed that employees appreciated the ability to balance professional responsibilities with personal commitments, leading to greater job satisfaction and retention. Effective work-life balance policies play a pivotal role in enhancing employee retention rates within higher education institutions (Allen, 2013). Institutions that offer flexible work arrangements and support initiatives for maintaining a healthy work-life balance have lower turnover rates.

Employees appreciate the ability to manage their professional responsibilities alongside personal commitments, which contributes to higher job satisfaction and increased loyalty to the institution (Kelly & Kalev, 2006). This finding aligns with global trends emphasizing the importance of accommodating diverse employee needs to foster a sustainable workforce (Berg, 2003). Furthermore, these researchers established that flexible work arrangements and support for work-life balance are crucial for retaining employees. Institutions that prioritize these aspects see reduced turnover rates and higher job satisfaction, aligning with global trends emphasizing employee well-being.

**Theme: Comprehensive wellness programs boost employee morale and engagement**

Participants indicated that institutions with well-established wellness programs reported higher levels of employee morale. These programs include physical health support, psychological services, and stress management resources. With these programs, participants felt supported and cared for by the institution, contributing to a positive work environment and heightened motivation. The findings in this study align with the findings by Mattke (2013), who established that wellness programs encompassing physical health, psychological support, and stress management resources are instrumental in boosting employee morale and engagement.

These programs demonstrate organizational commitment to employee well-being, which in turn cultivates a positive work environment. Employees who have access to comprehensive wellness initiatives report feeling supported and cared for, leading to heightened motivation and improved job performance (Chapman, 2005). This positive impact underscores the role of proactive organizational strategies in promoting employee welfare and organizational success.

**Theme: Multiple barriers hinder effective wellness program implementation**

Findings in this study indicated that the key barriers to effective wellness program implementation include limited financial resources, inadequate leadership support, and cultural resistance to change. Participants identified these challenges as significant obstacles to the successful implementation of wellness initiatives. Despite the benefits associated with wellness programs, the study identifies several barriers to their effective implementation within higher education institutions in developing countries. These findings support findings by Jimmieson (2014), who also established that limited financial resources often constrain the scope and reach of wellness initiatives, making it challenging to provide comprehensive support to all employees.

Inadequate leadership support and cultural resistance to change among faculty and staff further hinder the adoption of wellness practices (Smith & Hughes, 2016). Overcoming these barriers requires strategic planning, resource allocation, and fostering a supportive organizational culture that prioritizes employee well-being (Hoert, 2018).

### **Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

Based on the findings in this study, institutions should integrate comprehensive wellness programs into their policies and practices, supported by evidence-based strategies tailored to address specific wellness challenges. To improve leadership support, there should be a strong commitment to wellness initiatives. Institutions should foster a culture that prioritizes employee well-being, ensuring that leaders at all levels support and promote wellness programs.

The study's findings suggest allocating adequate financial and human resources to support wellness initiatives, while addressing the constraints that limit their scope and effectiveness. Furthermore, we should involve faculty and staff in the development and implementation of wellness programs to overcome cultural resistance to change, ensuring their buy-in and support. The study also recommends that institutions should advocate for evidence-based strategies that address specific wellness challenges within diverse organizational contexts. Furthermore, effective policy recommendations, which include enhancing leadership support, allocating adequate resources, and fostering a culture that prioritizes employee well-being, should be considered in institutions of higher learning.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this qualitative study employed in-depth interviews, observations, and focus group discussions to explore employee wellness and its implications for institutional effectiveness in higher education settings. By elucidating the interrelationships between wellness and organizational outcomes, the study aims to inform evidence-based strategies and interventions for promoting a culture of wellness within developing country contexts. Policymakers, administrators, and practitioners in higher education institutions aim to use the findings to gain valuable insights into enhancing the holistic well-being of faculty and staff members, which in turn fosters a conducive working environment and improves the quality of education delivery. The findings underscore the importance of addressing social support, work-life balance, and wellness initiatives to enhance job satisfaction, retention rates, and overall morale within higher education institutions. By recognizing these factors and addressing associated barriers, institutions can foster a conducive work environment that supports the holistic well-being of faculty and staff, thereby promoting organizational effectiveness and sustainability.



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