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(IJHSS) **Examining the Role of Employee Mental Well-Being in Enhancing
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Examining the Role of Employee Mental Well-Being in Enhancing Work Engagement and Task Performance among Health Employees in the Public Sector: The Case of Chibombo District

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Abstract

Purpose: The study examined the role of employee mental well-being in enhancing work engagement and task performance among public sector healthcare workers in Zambia. Drawing on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, the study proposed that employee mental well-being promotes work engagement, which subsequently enhances task performance. It further assessed whether mental well-being and work engagement significantly predict employee task performance.

Methodology: A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was employed using a sample of 120 healthcare workers from Chibombo District selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9), and the Individual Work Performance Scale. The instruments demonstrated satisfactory reliability ($\alpha = .92, .90$, and $.88$, respectively). Data was analyzed using SPSS Version 27 through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analyses.

Findings: The findings revealed significant positive relationships between employee mental well-being and work engagement ($r = .893, p < .01$), mental well-being and task performance ($r = .842, p < .01$), and work engagement and task performance ($r = .882, p < .01$). Regression analysis further showed that employee mental well-being ($\beta = .270, p < .05$) and work engagement ($\beta = .641, p < .001$) significantly predicted task performance, jointly explaining 79.2% of its variance ($R^2 = .792$). Work engagement emerged as the strongest predictor of employee task performance.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: The study extends the application of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory within the Zambian public healthcare context by demonstrating that employee mental well-being is a key psychological resource that enhances work engagement and task performance. The findings provide empirical evidence to inform organizational policies aimed at strengthening employee well-being, psychosocial support, and work engagement programmes to improve employee productivity, service delivery, and organizational effectiveness in Zambia's public health sector.

Keywords: *Employee mental well-being; Work engagement; Task performance; Public health sector, Zambia*

1. Introduction

Employee task performance is a fundamental determinant of organizational effectiveness because it influences service quality, productivity, innovation, customer satisfaction, and the achievement of organizational objectives (Bashir, 2015; Tran et al., 2020). Task performance refers to the extent to which employees effectively perform activities that contribute directly to an organization's technical core and operational goals (Koopmans et al., 2014). Because organizations increasingly depend on employee performance to achieve strategic objectives, understanding the factors that influence task performance has become a major concern among researchers and human resource practitioners worldwide. Previous studies have identified numerous antecedents of task performance, including organizational culture (Deal, 2016), leadership (Gani, 2006), competence (Berman, 2015), work environment (Ggombe, 2017), psychological empowerment (Jennifer Cudjoe, 2023), employee motivation (Siahanna, 2017), work engagement (Rich, 2010), and employee mental well-being (Koopmans et al., 2014). This is particularly important within public health institutions, whose primary responsibility is to provide quality healthcare services and improve population health outcomes (Mukwena, 2020). The effectiveness of healthcare delivery depends largely on the performance of healthcare workers who operate under demanding conditions characterized by heavy workloads, staff shortages, emotional labor, and increasing service demands (Chamisa et al., 2020). Despite their critical role, public health institutions in many developing countries, including Zambia, continue to experience resource constraints, bureaucratic management structures, limited employee participation in decision-making, and inadequate organizational support systems, all of which have the potential to negatively influence employee well-being, engagement, and ultimately task performance (Jin & McDonald, 2016; Agyemang & Ofei, 2013; Zimba & Chikopela, 2022). Within such demanding work environments, employees' psychological resources become increasingly important in sustaining high levels of performance. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory provides an appropriate framework for understanding these relationships. The theory proposes that excessive job demands deplete employees' physical and psychological resources, leading to stress, burnout, and reduced performance, whereas adequate job resources promote employee mental well-being, enhance work engagement, and improve task performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2023). Employees with better mental well-being are more capable of coping with work-related pressures, remain psychologically resilient, and are more likely to become energetic, dedicated, and absorbed in their work, resulting in improved task performance.

Although employee mental well-being, work engagement, and task performance have individually received considerable attention in organizational research, evidence regarding their interrelationships remains largely derived from private sector organizations and developed economies where organizational structures, resources, and working conditions differ substantially from those of public sector institutions in developing countries (Chamisa et al., 2020; Ziapour & Kianipour, 2015). Furthermore, while employee engagement has been associated with improved

organizational outcomes, global evidence indicates that only 13% of employees are actively engaged at work, with low engagement contributing to absenteeism, poor service delivery, reduced commitment, and lower organizational performance (Crabtree, 2013; Muduli et al., 2023). Consequently, understanding the psychological mechanisms that contribute to employee performance has become increasingly important for public sector organizations. While previous studies have examined employee mental well-being, work engagement, and task performance separately, limited empirical evidence has investigated how employee mental well-being and work engagement jointly influence task performance among public healthcare workers in Zambia. Moreover, the applicability of employee performance models developed predominantly in North America and Western Europe remains insufficiently established within African public health settings. Consequently, little is known about the extent to which employee mental well-being and work engagement contribute to explaining variations in task performance among healthcare workers in Zambia.

This study seeks to address these empirical and contextual gaps by examining the relationships between employee mental well-being, work engagement, and task performance among public health sector employees in Zambia. Using a quantitative cross-sectional research design and drawing upon the Job Demands–Resources Theory, the study investigates whether employee mental well-being and work engagement significantly predict task performance. By focusing on these psychological resources within Zambia's public healthcare sector, the study contributes to the growing literature on employee performance while providing evidence that may inform organizational policies and human resource interventions aimed at improving employee well-being, engagement, and healthcare service delivery.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Theoretical Foundations

The Job demand resource (JD-R) theory therefore provides the theoretical foundation for achieving the objectives of this study. The JD-R Theory proposes two interrelated processes. The first is the health impairment process, which explains that excessive job demands without sufficient job resources increase employee stress, emotional exhaustion and burnout, thereby reducing employee well-being and performance. The second is the motivational process, which posits that adequate job resources promote employee motivation, psychological well-being and work engagement, resulting in improved task performance and organizational effectiveness (Bakker & Demerouti, 2023). The theory is particularly relevant to the Ministry of Health because healthcare employees often work under demanding conditions that are characterized by heavy workloads, long working hours, staff shortages and emotionally demanding situations. Without these adequate organizational resources, these conditions may negatively affect employees' mental well-being, reduce their engagement and ultimately impair their task performance

2.2. Conceptualizing Task Performance

Task performance is a notion that has captured the interest of work and organizational psychologists as a concept that they try to understand and analyze (Meijerink et al., 2021). According to Koopman et al. (2019), employee performance refers to the extent to which employees complete their work roles effectively. Employee performance is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct involving contextual and task performance (Sinvula et al., 2022). Contextual performance deals with activities that contribute to organizational effectiveness in ways that shape the organizational, social, and psychological context and serves as the catalyst for task activities and processes (Myburgh, 2013). Task performance deals with the effectiveness with which job incumbents perform activities that contribute to the organization's technical core (Sinvula et al., 2022).

2.3. Conceptualizing Work Engagement

Work engagement is conceptualized as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by Vigor, dedication, and absorption, all of which are essential in achieving task performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). These three components are inter-related: Vigor refers to having a lot of energy and resilience at work, being persistent and making high efforts even when under stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Dedication has to do with pride in the job, interest in one's work, enthusiasm and belief that the work is meaningful and valuable (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). Absorption refers to the state of total immersion in one's work where time flies by so quickly that employees find it hard to pull themselves away from work (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Studies have indicated that highly engaged employees increase their voluntary efforts and commitment, and therefore can be more innovative and creative, and consequently can enhance performance (Saks, 2006).

2.4. Conceptualizing Employee Mental Well-being.

Mental well-being is a complex and multifaceted construct and extremely difficult to conceptualize and measure (Rahmani et al., 2018). The WHO (2022) defines employee mental well-being as 'a positive mental state in which individuals realize their abilities, cope with normal life stressors and contribute to organizational tasks. Well-being encompasses an individual's physical, psychological, emotional, and social functioning (Dodge et al., 2012).

2.6. Relationship Between Employee Mental Well-being and Work Engagements.

A health mind contributes to positive thinking, emotional stability, and reduced mental distress (Tennant et al., 2007). Improved mental well-being helps maintain mental balance and psychological resilience among employees making them focused and engaged with work activities (Simbeza et al., 2023). A study by Chipanta et al. (2022) found that individuals with higher well-being reported greater life satisfaction and lower anxiety, indicating that well-being is closely associated with emotional health and general happiness hence the ability to effectively face various

kinds of work stresses and able to remain engaged. In Lu et al. (2022) a positive correlation was found between employee mental well-being and work engagement ($r = .235$; $p < .001$). Based on the above argument, it can therefore be hypothesized that employee mental well-being positively influences work engagement.

2.7. Relationship Between Employee Mental Well-being And Task Performance.

Favorable work environment together with an employee wellness program greatly influences employees' levels of job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment to the workplace (Foster, 2021). Mentally health employees with positive affective states can improve cognitive flexibility and find more solutions to problems in work tasks (Lu et al., 2022). Organizations that have invested in well-being programs have reported increased levels of productivity and performance since healthy mental and physical states act as motivating factors for workers (World Economic Forum, 2019).

Koopmans et al (2014) observed that employees with higher levels of mental well-being performed their task significantly higher compared to others. In Lu et al. (2022) employee mental health correlated positively with job performance ($r = .292$; $p < .001$). It can therefore be hypothesized that employee mental well-being positively influences employee task performance.

Relationship Between Work Engagement and Task Performance.

Engaged employees invest significant efforts in their work activities, develop resilience, enthusiasm, and deep involvement in their work (Mone et al., 2011). According to Tensay (2020) engaged employees are more energetic, dedicated, and focused, which leads to them performing their core job duties better, taking initiative, and seeking to improve their performance through behaviors like job crafting and seeking feedback. In Lu et al. (2022) a positive correlation was found between work engagement and job performance ($r = .524$; $p < .001$). Based on this argument, it can therefore be hypothesized that work engagement positively influences task performance.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design.

A quantitative research design was employed in this study, aligning with the primary objective of investigating the relationship between employee mental well-being, work engagement and task performance among public sector employees. This design was deemed appropriate as it facilitates the collection of data at a single point in time, allowing for efficient examination of association between multiple psychological constructs without manipulating any variables.

3.2. Sampling Technique.

A probability sampling technique specifically simple random sampling was utilized. This approach was chosen because every employee had a chance of been selected, enabling the researcher to achieve a high response rate of 100% (120 out of 120 questionnaires distributed).

3.3. Research Instruments.

The study employed established and validated instruments to measure the key variables. Employee mental well-being was assessed using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental well-being scale which utilizes a five-point Likert scale with all items demonstrating good internal consistency of .92. Work engagement was measured using the 9-item short form of the Utrecht work engagement scale on a five-point Likert scale. The scale comprises of three subscales Vigor, dedication and absorption ranging from 1(never) to 5(always). In Kim and Kwon (2017), the absorption subscale had a Cronbach alpha of 0.917, the dedication and absorption subscales had reliability values of 0.900 and 0.908 respectively. Task performance was measured using the individual work performance scale developed by Koopmans et al. (2014), which includes five items with all items demonstrating good internal consistency of .88.

3.4. Data Gathering Procedure.

Ethical clearance was obtained from Mulungushi university school of business research ethics committee prior to data collection. Permission to collect data from health facilities in Chibombo district was secured by sending a letter of request to the district health director and the human resource department to allow the administration of research instruments. Informed consent was obtained from the participants, outlining the purpose of the study, their rights and assurance of confidentiality.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed with SPSS version 27. Internal consistency was determined for all the measurement scales and descriptive statistics were calculated for all the study variables. Correlational analysis was performed to assess the degree to which the latent variables in the study are linearly related (Maxwell & Moores, 2007). In interpreting correlational outputs, (Cohen, 1988) guidelines were used. Significance values were set at $p \leq 0.05$ with r values between 0.10 and 0.29 indicating small correlations; between 0.30 and 0.49 indicating medium correlation and between 0.50 and 1 denoting large correlation. Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine if the two independent variables hold predictive value for work engagement.

4.Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

In this study mean score interpretation was based on the following criteria: where 1-1.80 reflects very low mean score, 1.81- 2.60 reflects low mean score, 2.61-3.40 reflects moderate mean score, 3.41-4.20 reflects high mean score, and 4.21 -5 reflects very high mean score. Table 2 below gives a summary of descriptive statistics. Results in table 1 have shown that there was a moderate attitude among respondents towards mental well-being with a mean score of 3.363. Work engagement and task performance had high mean scores of 3.430 and 3.525 respectively.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Employee mental-wellbeing	3.363	1.237	3
Work engagement	3.430	1.218	2
Task performance	3.525	1.276	1

4.2. Reliability Analysis

To assess the internal consistency of the measuring instruments used in this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed. The results indicated that generally, the reliability of the three scales was satisfactory. They all met the benchmark reliability standard of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ (Darmayantiet al, 2020). Employee mental well-being had a Cronbach's value of 0.92, work engagement had a value of 0.90 and task performance had a value of 0.88 as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Reliability results

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach
Employee mental well-being	14	.92
Work engagement	9	.90
Task performance	5	.88

4.3. Correlation Analysis Results

Pearson correlations between the three constructs were calculated. All hypothesized relationships were significant. A statistically significant relationship was found between employee mental wellbeing and work engagement ($r = .893$; $p < 0.01$), indicating that employee mental well-being is associated with work engagement amongst employees. This suggests that employees with good psychological well-being tends to engage more with their work and have greater confidence in carrying out their duties. Correlational results also show that a statistically positive relationship exist between work engagement and task performance ($r = .882$; $p < 0.01$). Implying that work engagement has a positive association with task performance. This suggests that employees who are absorbed and dedicated to their work exhibit higher task performance. Furthermore, a positive significant relationship between mental well-being and task performance was found ($r = .842$; $p < 0.01$), indicating that employees with good mental health are more likely to execute their duties more effectively. This suggests an employee's psychological state plays a role in promoting task performance amongst employees.

Table 3 Correlation coefficients for employee mental well-being, work engagement and task performance.

Scale	1	2	3
Employee well-being	1		
Work engagement	.893**	1	
Task performance	.842**	.882**	1

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

4.4. Multiple Regression analysis Results

The regression analysis results are summarized in the model summary as shown in table 4. The obtained R value of 0.890 reflects a high correlation between the predictors and the dependent variable, task performance. Meanwhile, the R^2 value indicates that 79.2% of the variance in task performance can be explained by the model. This finding implies that employee mental well-being and work engagement collectively contribute substantially to the variation in task performance.

Table 4. Model Summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.890 ^a	.792	.789	2.25469

a. Predictors: (Constant), WE, EMW

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests the hypothesis that multiple R in the population equals 0 and reports how well the regression equation fits the data. Results in table 5 indicate that the regression model is statistically significant ($F(223.268; p < 0.001)$), meaning that the model predicts task performance significantly better than using the mean alone.

Table 5. Analysis of Variance.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	2270.017	2	1135.009	223.268	.000 ^b
Residual	594.783	117	5.084		
Total	2864.800	119			

a. Dependent Variable: TP

b. Predictors: (Constant), WE, EMW

The final step involves determining the individual contribution of each predictor to task performance. The results in the coefficient table indicate that employee mental well-being does make a statistically significant contribution to predicting task performance ($\beta = 0.270$, $t = 2.876$; $p < 0.05$). Work engagement was also significant in its predictive relationship with ($\beta = 0.641$, $t = 6.832$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 6 Coefficients.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-1.234	.922		-1.339	.183
1 EMW	.123	.043	.270	2.876	.005
WE	.462	.068	.641	6.832	.000

a. Dependent Variable: TP

5. Discussions

This study aimed to examine the role of employee mental well-being in enhancing work engagement and task performance among public sector employees in the central province of Zambia (chibombo district hospital), using a quantitative design. The second objective was to determine whether employee mental well-being and work engagement could predict task performance. The demographic profile indicates that 52.9% of the respondents were male, while 47.1% were female. Most participants were aged between 20 and 29 years (36.1%), followed by those aged 30 to 39 years (27.7%), 40 to 49 years (25.2%), and 50 years and above (10.9%). In terms of academic level, respondents that had bachelor's degree made up the largest group at 44.9%, followed closely by those who had diploma (19.5%), masters degree (16.9%), doctorate (9.3%), and those with other forms of education (9.3%).

Reliability analysis results demonstrated high levels of internal consistency ($\alpha \geq 0.70$) for the four measuring instruments, in line with Dullas (2018), and Darmayanti et al. (2020) reliability standards. Employee mental well-being recorded an acceptable Cronbach's alpha value of 0.92; work engagement scale had a value of 0.90; and task performance had strong internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.88.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to examine the relationships among the three key variables in the study. The first hypothesis posited a relationship between employee mental well-being and task performance. The hypothesis was confirmed. The findings revealed a positive relationship between the two variables, indicating that an employee's psychological state is associated with higher levels of task performance among employees. This result aligns with previous studies, such as world Health Organization (2020), which found a significant correlation between employee mental well-being and task performance ($r = 0.842$, $p < 0.01$). The second hypothesis, which proposed a relationship between employee mental well-being and work engagement, was also confirmed. A strong positive, statistically significant relationship was found between the two variables. This suggests that the more employees are mentally okay, the more determined they would be in engaging with their work.

This finding is consistent with prior research, including Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) in which an employee's mental well-being increases the work engagement. The third hypothesis, which proposed a positive relationship between work engagement and task performance, was also confirmed. A strong, positive, statistically significant relationship was found between these two variables, indicating that an engaged employee is more likely to execute their duties effectively. Similar results were found by (Rich et al., 2010).

6. Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

The study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among the variables, as data were collected at a single point in time. Future longitudinal studies are recommended to provide stronger causal inferences and examine how the relationships among the variables evolve over time. Secondly, the study did not account for possible maturational effects that may influence the variables under investigation. Future research should consider tracking participants over an extended period to gain deeper insights into these changes. Additionally, the relatively small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings and restricts the application of advanced statistical techniques such as Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Future studies should therefore employ larger samples and more robust research designs to enhance the reliability, validity, and generalizability of the findings.

7. Conclusion

Results in this study have provided insights into the relationships between the three variables. Mental well-being is significantly correlated with engagement and task performance. Results further revealed that engagement is also significantly correlated with task performance. Researchers in this study found that work engagement was the most predictive of task performance. Understanding how these three variables interrelate is crucial for the management of the science community and policy makers, as it provides a framework for designing effective human resource interventions and policies.

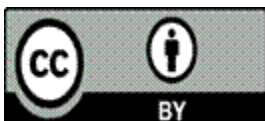
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