Psychosocial Work Factors and Workers Passion of Private Universities in Rivers State, Nigeria

By

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Abstract

This study utilized a cross-sectional survey to investigate the correlation between psychosocial work factors and employee work passion within private universities in Nigeria. The accessible population comprised 172 academic staff members from private universities in Rivers State. The study is a census study. A structured questionnaire was administered, with responses rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), with Smart PLS 4.0 employed for testing the bivariate hypotheses. The findings reveal a correlation between the dimensions of psychosocial factors and workers passion. The study concludes that psychosocial factors relates with workers passion of private universities in Rivers State. The study recommends improving job demands and work life balance to promote workers passion in the private universities.

Key words: Psychosocial Work Factors. Job demands, Work life balance, Employee Work Passion, Harmonious Passion, Obsessive Passion.

Alonge, B. O. D., & Akhigbe, E. A. (2024). Psychosocial Work Factors and Workers Passion of Private Universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. *West African Journal of Interdisciplinary Research. 2*(2), 42-55. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.11367172

Introduction

Workers' passion is an essential element in the modern workplace, contributing significantly to organizational performance, innovation, and worker welfare. Understanding the relevance of workers' passion is vital for fostering a dynamic and sustainable work environment. Research has shown that passionate employees are intrinsically motivated to excel within their positions, leading to greater levels of engagement and commitment to organizational goals (Vallerand et al., 2003). This intrinsic motivation fuels their dedication and investment in their work tasks, resulting in increased productivity and efficiency (Vallerand et al., 2010; Kuvaas, & Dysvik, 2009). Moreover, workers' passion is intimately related to job satisfaction and employee retention. Passionate workers obtain a feeling of fulfillment and satisfaction from their work, which translates into lower turnover rates and higher levels of loyalty to the organization (Houlfort, et al., 2015; Vallerand et al., 2010) andas a result, organizations from reduced recruitment and training costs associated with employee turnover, as well as a more stable and committed workforce (Vallerand et al., 2003).

Passionate employees also have a vital part indriving innovation and creativity within organizations. Their enthusiasm and commitment inspire creativity among team members and foster a culture of innovation (Vallerand et al., 2010; Lavigne et al, 2014). Passionate workers are more likely to seek innovative solutions, challenge the status quo, and contribute fresh ideas that can result in the creation of novel items, services, and processes, giving the organization a competitive edge (Vallerand et al., 2003, Pollack et al., (2020)). Furthermore, workers' passion contributes to the cultivation of a productive workplace culture determined by enthusiasm, collaboration, and mutual support. Passionate employees serve as role models and influencers within their teams, inspiring their colleagues to strive for excellence and embody the organization's values and mission (Cabrita, & Duarte, 2023;Vallerand et al., 2010). This positive culture fosters employee engagement and satisfaction, leading towards improved productivity levels and results for the organization (Vallerand et al., 2003).

In addition, workers' passion enhances customer satisfaction by enabling employees to deliver exceptional service and build strong relationships with clients and stakeholders. Their enthusiasm and commitment translate into positive interactions, which in turn, increase customer loyalty and retention (Vallerand et al., 2010; Lavigne et al, 2014). Ultimately, organizations that cultivate and harness workers' passion establish a motivating and encouraging workplace where staff members thrive, innovation flourishes, and business objectives are achieved. Workers' passion refers to a deep and enduring enthusiasm for one's work, characterized by high levels of intrinsic motivation, dedication, and engagement (Vallerand et al., 2003).

Passionate employees are inclined to experience job satisfaction, perform at high levels, and contribute positively to their organizations (Vallerand et al., 2010). However, the relationship between psychosocial work factors and workers' passion is complex and multifaceted. While supportive work environments can foster passion by providing autonomy, recognition, and meaningful work, excessive job demands and poor organizational support may undermine employees' passion and lead to burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli et al., 2009). Private universities perform a vital part in supporting academic excellence and workforce development. Within these institutions, the interaction between psychosocial work factors and workers' passion is a critical area of study. Psychosocial work factors encompass various elements of the workplace that affect workers' mental and social health. These factors include job demands, job control, social support, organizational culture, and work-life balance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Karasek, 1979).

In private university settings, where academic and administrative staff face unique challenges such as high workloads, role ambiguity, and pressure to meet academic standards, understanding the interplay of these psychosocial factors is crucial for encouraging the health of employees and organisational effectiveness. Psychosocial work factors play a decisive role in the functioning and well-being of employees within private universities. These factors encompass various facets of the workplace that affect workers' psychological and social welfare. Understanding the importance of psychosocial work factors is essential for promoting a constructive and encouraging work atmosphere that promotes worker fulfilment, performance, and overall organizational success. The study of psychosocial work factors and workers' passion in private universities in Rivers State represents a significant area of research with practical consequences for organizational management as well as worker welfare. By exploring the interplay between these variables, researchers and practitioners can aid in advancement ofevidence-based strategies to foster a positive work environment conducive to employee passion and organizational success.

Statement of the Problem

Private universities in Rivers State, Nigeria, encounter a range of challenges regarding the dynamics between psychosocial work factors and workers' passion. Despite their crucial role in the educational sphere, these institutions grapple with issues that affect employee well-being, organizational efficiency, and overall performance. Some employees may develop an obsessive passion for their work, becoming overly absorbed and experiencing negative emotions such as guilt or anxiety when not working. While passion for work can be positive, employees may struggle to keep a healthy work-life balance with other aspects of their life, leading to neglect of personal relationships and burnout (Sulistiawan, et al.,2022). Employees may also exhibit workaholic tendencies, driven by an uncontrollable need to work excessively, which can negatively impact their psychological and physical well-being, and also their relationships outside of work.

A prominent issue revolves around the prevalence of high job demands among academic and administrative staff (Claes, et al., 2023). The nature of work in private universities often entails heavy workloads, tight deadlines, and academic pressures, contributing to fatigue, anxiety, and reduced job satisfaction among employees (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Managing job demands effectively poses a significant challenge, impacting employee morale, productivity, and organizational performance. Moreover, the insufficient provision of job control and decision latitude (Ingvaldsen et al., 2014) presents a barrier to employee empowerment and engagement within private universities. Limited opportunities for autonomy and making decisions impede workers' feeling of autonomy and investment in their work, leading to decreased drive, contentment in one's work, and dedication to the organisation (Karasek, 1979). Addressing this imbalance is fundamental to fostering a happy workplace and cultivating a culture of empowerment and autonomy. Additionally, the absence of robust social support networks within private universities poses a significant challenge to employee well-being and organizational cohesion. Inadequate assistance from superiors and coworkers exacerbates feelings of isolation, stress, and job dissatisfaction among employees (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Cultivating a supportive work culture that values collaboration, teamwork, and mutual respect is crucial for enhancing employee morale, resilience, and overall organizational effectiveness.

Furthermore, organizational culture plays an essential role in shaping psychosocial work factors within private universities in Rivers State. A toxic or unhealthy organizational culture characterized by micromanagement, lack of transparency, and poor communication undermines employee morale, trust, and job satisfaction (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Addressing issues related to organizational culture is essential for creating an environment in the workplace that is supportive and encourages staff passion, commitment, and well-being. Understanding and addressing these challenges necessitate a comprehensive examination of the intricate interplay between job demands, work life balance, control, social support, organizational culture and work passion within the unique context of private higher education institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives are to examine the:

1. impact of job demands on harmonious passion.
2. impact of job demands on obsessive passion.
3. influence of work-life balance on harmonious passion.
4. relationship between work-life balance and obsessive passion.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the level of job demands and the degree of harmonious passion among employees in private universities in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between the level of job demands and the intensity of obsessive passion among employees in private universities in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant relationship between work-life balance and the level of harmonious passion among employees in private universities in Rivers State.
4. There is no significant relationship between work-life balance and the intensity of obsessive passion among employees in private universities in Rivers State.

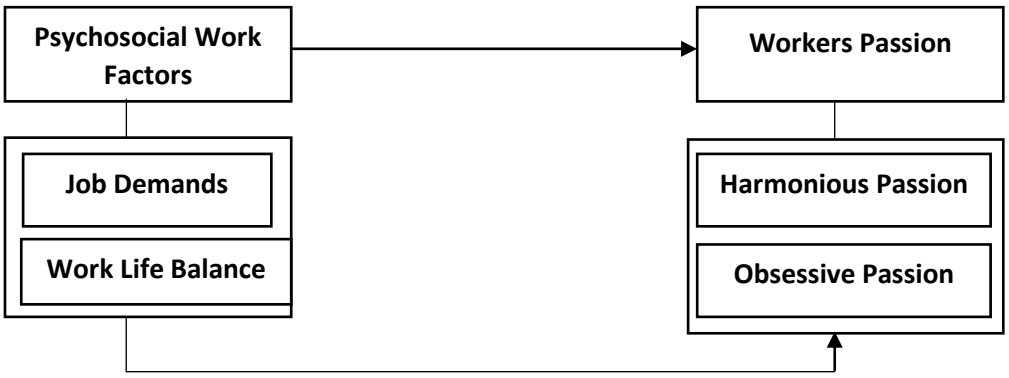


Fig 1: Conceptual framework of psychosocial work factors in private universities in Rivers State.

Source: Conceptualized by the researchers.

Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model

Based on the work of Bakker and Demerouti (2007), the study uses the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model. According to the JD-R Model, there are two different processes via which job demands and resources affect worker welfare and job results: the motivating process and the health impairment process. In this model, workplace assets are those elements of a work that help workers in achieving workplace targets, reduce workloads, and promote individual development. Job demands, on the other hand, are those features of a profession that require constant mental or physical effort and have an impact on one's health and well-being. Within the framework of private universities in Rivers State, high job demands such as heavy workloads, time pressure, and academic pressures may lead to stress

and burnout among employees, ultimately impacting their well-being and passion for work. Conversely, resources for the workplace like independence, peer assistance, and growth opportunities can enhance employees' motivation, engagement, and passion for their work. Understanding the JD-R Model is relevant as it provides a framework for examining how specific psychosocial work factors influence workers' passion and well-being within the unique context of private universities in Rivers State.

Psychosocial Work Factors

Psychosocial work factors are those aspects of the workplace that have an impact on workers' mental and physical health. These elements consist of work-life balance, social assistance, organisational culture, job expectations, and job control (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Karasek, 1979). The physical, mental, social, and organisational characteristics of a job that necessitate prolonged effort and have a correlation with emotional and physical expenses are referred to as job demands (Claes, et al., 2023). If ignored, high job demands, such as hectic schedules or time constraints, can cause fatigue and stress. Contrarily, job control describes the extent to which workers are independent and have decision-making power over their duties. Increased job control is linked to improved mental health and workplace fulfilment (Bakker et al., 2004).

Social support at work is essential for mitigating the harmful impacts of job demands and stress. Coworkers and supervisors who are supportive can offer emotional, practical, and informational support, which helps employees feel like they belong and are a team. The values, customs, and beliefs that mould the workplace and affect employee conduct are all included in the concept of organisational culture. Radu (2023) suggests that fostering a positive organisational culture that prioritises worker wellness, work-life balance, and transparent communication can lead to an increase in staff happiness and participation. Work-life balance pertains to the capacity of workers to efficiently handle the obligations of both their personal and professional lives. Balancing work and personal commitments is essential to avoiding burnout and maintaining overall wellbeing. Psychosocial work factors are critical for fostering a wholesome and supportive work environment, enhancing employee satisfaction and performance, and reducing turnover and absenteeism (Bonaiuto, et al., 2022).

Job demands

A job's demands are all the different parts of it that need to be done consistently—physically, mentally, or emotionally—and they come with mental and physiological consequences. The nature of the task itself, the organisational setting, or outside variables may give rise to these expectations. According to Bakker & Demerouti (2017) and Karasek (1979), common instances of workplace demands include heavy workloads, time constraints, unclear roles, divergent needs, and exposure to emotional or physical risks. However, addressing job demands is necessary for improving worker health and productivity. By providing adequate resources, support, and workload management strategies, private universities can lessen the detrimental effects of work pressures and establish a conducive workplace where workers can thrive (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017;Adriaenssens et al, 2015).Thus, this results in increased level of employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention, ultimately enhancing the quality of education and organizational success within private universities.

Work Life Balance

According to Kolchurin (2023), work-life balance is the state of equilibrium people strive for between their obligations as professionals and their interests outside of work. Private university employees often face demanding workloads, long hours, and academic pressures,

which can encroach upon their personal time and lead to reduced job fulfilment and fatigue (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Therefore, fostering Work-life balance is crucial for sustaining staff involvement and well-being (Gowtham. 2024.. Private colleges can help with work-life balance by emphasising barriers between personal and professional lives, enabling flexible work schedules, and fostering time management skills and wellness initiatives. Private universities can improve employee morale, retention, and organisational performance by placing a high priority on work-life balance. Reaching a balanced state between job and personal life is vital for maintaining physical, mental, and emotional well-being while effectively managing professional and personal responsibilities (Allen et al., 2014; Bataineh, 2019). It helps reduce stress, prevent burnout, and improve overall health. Individuals with balance experience increased job satisfaction, productivity, and engagement (Haar et al., 2014; Allen et al., 2014), bringing more energy and creativity to their work. Balancing work and personal life also foster stronger relationships with family and friends, improving general level of life and mental health.

Work Passion

Work passion refers to the intense and enduring enthusiasm individuals experience toward their work activities (Vallerand et al., 2003). It's distinguished by a deep sense of enjoyment, fulfillment, and commitment to one's work. Work passion is a multidimensional construct comprising two main dimensions: harmonious passion and obsessive passion.A freely selected preference for job activities that people find personally fulfilling and pleasurable is reflected in harmonious passion (Vallerand et al., 2003). Harmonious passionate people let their work become a part of who they are without taking over. They feel in charge of and have autonomy over their work, which enhances their general well-being and sense of fulfilment in life. Conversely, compulsive and uncontrolled drive to work on projects that people believe are essential to their identity characterise obsessive passion (Vallerand et al., 2003). In contrast to inward fulfilment that drives harmonious passion, obsessive passion is a result of outside forces or circumstances. When unable to perform their job duties, people with obsessive passions may feel guilty, anxious, or conflicted. This can have detrimental effects like fatigue and work-family conflict.

Harmonious Passion

Harmonious passion, per Vallerand et al. (2003), involves an internal drive, enjoyment, and autonomy in pursuing activities aligned with personal values and interests. Cultivating a balanced approach to passion enables individuals to derive fulfillment without compromising their well-being and overall quality of life. Individuals with harmonious passion experience a strong feeling of contentment and happiness from engaging in their chosen activity (Vallerand et al., 2003). They typically encounter fewer conflicts with other areas of their lives and their passions, such as work, relationships, and personal well-being (Mageau et al., 2009). This balanced approach to passion often leads to greater perseverance, well-being, and overall success in achieving goals. Harmonious passion is associated with intrinsic motivation, positive emotions, and a flexible engagement style (Vallerand et al., 2003). It fosters a sense of flow, where individuals become fully absorbed and immersed in their activities, leading to optimal performance and personal growth (Vallerand, 2015). Harmonious passion contributes to a fulfilling and enriching life, where individuals are driven by their own intrinsic desires and values rather than external pressures or demands (Mageau et al., 2009).

Obsessive Passion

According to Valland et al. (2003), obsessive passion is a kind of enthusiasm marked by an overwhelming need and a desire to pursue a goal or task. This type of passion is typically associated with a rigid engagement style, where individuals feel compelled to pursue their passion regardless of its impact on other aspects of their lives, such as work, relationships, and well-being (Mageau et al., 2009). Obsessive passion, as described by Vallerand et al. (2003), is characterized by an excessive focus on external rewards rather than intrinsic enjoyment, leading to negative outcomes like burnout and conflicts in relationships. This unhealthy attachment to a specific activity or goal, driven by external pressures, can hinder well-being. While it may temporarily enhance performance in that domain, individuals with obsessive passion often struggle with maintaining focus and experiencing flow during activities, and are prone to rumination when unable to engage in their chosen pursuit (Mageau et al., 2005; Ratelle et al., 2004; Vallerand et al., 2003, 2008; Wang et al., 2008).

Empirical Review

Ogolo (2023) explored the link between psychosocial job traits and employee engagement in power distribution firms in South-South, Nigeria. They surveyed 1,562 employees using questionnaires and analyzed the data with Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient to test relationships between psychosocial factors (like job demand, reward, work characteristics, and work-family conflict) and employee engagement (affective and cognitive). They found positive links between job demand, reward, and work characteristics with engagement, while work-family conflict showed negative associations. Additionally, leadership style moderated this relationship, as revealed by Partial Correlation analysis.

Manuel & Essien (2020) investigated job stress among lecturers in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, focusing on work conditions, self-concept, and gender as contributing factors. They surveyed 397 lecturers from three institutions using the Correlates of Job Stress Questionnaire (CJSQ) and Job Stress Inventory (JSI). Results showed a significant relationship between work conditions and job stress ($p=0.006<0.05$), indicating their substantial influence. However, self-concept did not demonstrate a significant relationship with job stress ($p=0.221>0.05$). Although female lecturers displayed slightly higher stress levels, the gender difference was not statistically significant ($p=0.161>0.05$).

Akhigbe & Issa (2021) investigated the relationship between psychosocial work factors (PWF), employee health, and performance in public hospitals in Rivers State. They surveyed 97 employees using questionnaires and analyzed the data with the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The findings demonstrated a strong correlation between PWF (more precisely, work-family conflict, job demand, and leadership quality) and worker performance and well-being. Work-family conflict exhibited a particularly strong correlation with employee performance.

Akhigbe. & Eketu, (2021) investigated the relationship between psychosocial job characteristics and withdrawal symptoms in medical professionals working in South-South teaching hospitals in Nigeria. They surveyed 327 medical doctors using questionnaires and analyzed data from 288 completed surveys. Employing the Pearson product moment correlation, the researchdiscovered an adverse connection between leadership quality and absenteeism/tardiness. Conversely, job demand showed a positive and significant correlation with both withdrawal behaviors.

Methodology

This study used a quasi-experimental approach with a cross-sectional survey to investigate the association between employee psychosocial job variables andwork passion among private universities in Nigeria. The accessible population consisted of 172 academics staff-of the private universities in Rivers State. A structure questionnaire was used. A 4-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 4 denoting "strongly agree," was used to score each item. Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used for data analysis. Smart PLS 4.0 was used for analyses to test the bivariate hypotheses.

Psychosocial work factors (PWF), Job demands (JOD), Work-life balance (WLB), Workers' passion (WOP), Harmonious passion (HAP) and Obsessive passion (OBP).

Table 1: Reliability Test

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
HAP	0.777	0.791
JOD	0.785	0.792
OBP	0.775	0.784
WLB	0.771	0.771

For every one of the constructs, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability and Composite reliability scores were higher than 0.7. Our structures are hence trustworthy.

Table 2: Validity Test

	AVE	HAP	JOD	OBP	WLB
HAP	0.518	**0.720**			
JOD	0.530	0.490	**0.728**		
OBP	0.511	0.280	0.475	**0.715**	
WLB	0.508	0.318	0.493	0.390	**0.713**

Convergent validity is present when the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct is more than 0.5. Each construct is unique from the others, as shown by the diagonal values (bold) exceeding the AVEs. As a result, the model supported discriminant validity for each and every construct.

Analysis and Discussion

A total of 172 copies of the questionnaire were sent to the participants; 146 of those copies were returned and used in this study. PLS-SEM was used to test the hypotheses and determine the link between psychosocial work factors and workers' passion. A questionnaire has been designed with regard to 20 observed variables. These twenty observable variables are thematically associated with four Latent variables (Job demands, Work-life balance, and Harmonious passion and Obsessive passion). The various elements of the latent variables are represented by the indicators. The Path Diagram in Figure 2 provides a diagrammatic description of the relationship between the variables.

Psychosocial work factors (PWF), Job demands (JOD), Work-life balance (WLB), Workers' passion (WOP), Harmonious passion (HAP) and Obsessive passion (OBP).

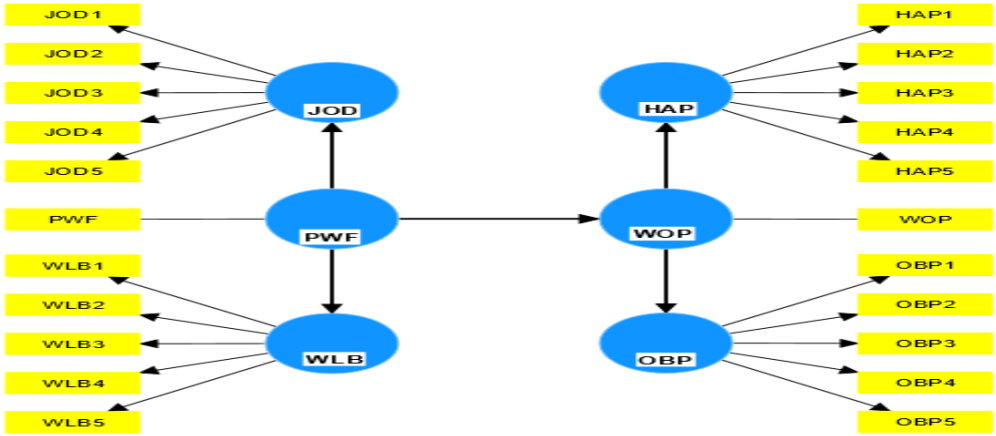


Figure 2: Research Model

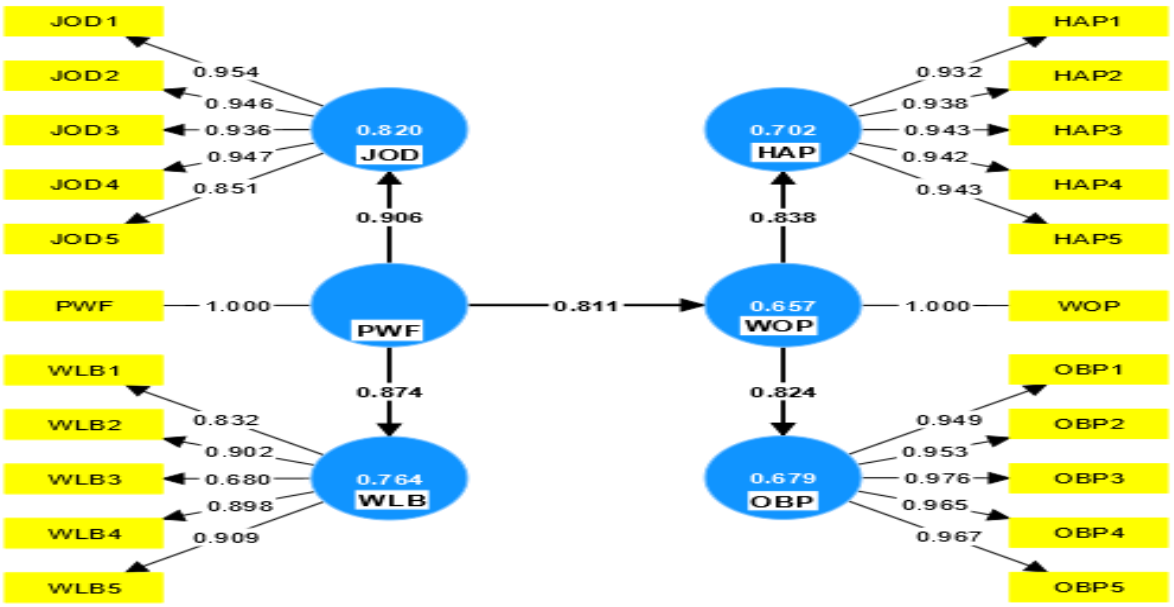


Figure 3: Output for Outer Loadings of Indicators

Figure 3 shows that all the response items for the constructs satisfied the threshold condition of 70%.

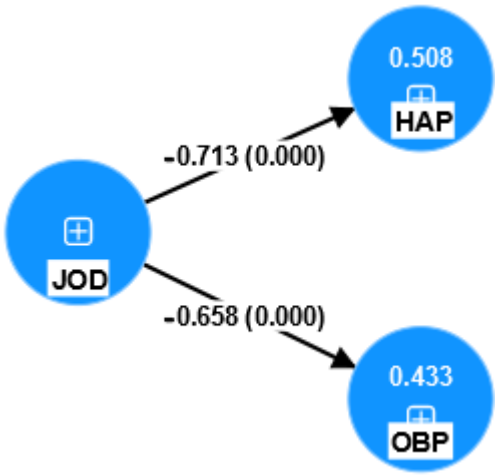


Figure 4: Hypotheses 1 and 2

There are significant and negative routes between, according to the path relationship analysis shown in Figure 4. Job demands and Harmonious passion (where, β = -0.713; p = 0.000; and R^2= 0.508), and Job demands and Obsessive passion (where, β = -0.658; p = 0.000; and R^2= 0.433). The alternative hypotheses were thus accepted while the null hypotheses 1 and 2 were rejected.

The inquiry for hypothesis one's outcome revealed a strong correlation between the level of job demands and the degree of harmonious passion among employees in private universities in Rivers State. Furthermore, a substantial and negative correlation was identified between the two variables. The negative relationsip implies that as one variable increases, the other reduces.Therefore, as job demands among employees increases, their harmonious passion reduces, and vice versa. The null hypothesis is rejected. The coeficient of determination (R^2) was 0.508. Which implies that job demands accounts for 50.8% change in harmonious passion. This confirms the work of Akhigbe and Eketu, (2021) whose work indicated that job demand has a positive and significant correlation with both withdrawal behaviors, implying that the workers were not obsessed with their job.

The result of the analysis for hypothesis two indicated that there is a significant and negative relationship between the level of job demands and the intensity of obsessive passion among employees in private universities in Rivers State. The negative relationsip implies that as one variable increases, the other reduces. Therefore, as job demands among employees increases, their obsessive passion reduces, and vice versa. The coeficient of determination (R^2) was 0.433. Which implies that job demands accounts for 43.3% change in obsessive passion. The null hypothesis be rejected and the alternate hypothesisis accepted. This confirms the report of Manuel and Essien (2020) showed a significant relationship between work conditions and job stress, with employees having little enthusiasm toward their work activities.

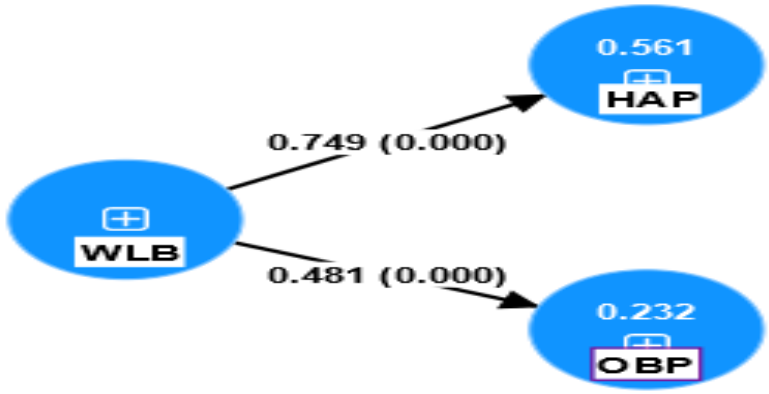


Figure 5: Hypotheses 3 and 4

Figure 5's path correlational analysis shows that there are substantial and positive paths between Work-life balance annd Harmonious passion (where, β = 0.749; p = 0.000; and R^2= 0.561), and Work-life balance and Obsessive passion (where, β = 0.481; p = 0.000; and R^2= 0.232). The alternative hypotheses were thus accepted, but the null hypotheses 3 and 4 were rejected.

The study for hypothesis three's outcome showed that there is a strong correlation between work-life balance and the level of harmonious passion among employees in private universities in Rivers State. The coeficient of determination (R^2) was 0.561. Which implies that work-life balance accounts for 56.1% change in harmonious passion. The null hypothesis was rejected. This result supports the report of Ogolo (2023) who found neative link between

work-family conflict and passion in form of engagement leading to satisfaction and integration of activities.

The study for hypothesis four's outcome showed that there is a strong correlation between work-life balance and the intensity of obsessive passion among employees in private universities in Rivers State. We find that there is moderate positive bond between work-life balance and obsessive passion. The coeficient of determination (R^2) was 0.232. Which implies that work-life balance accounts for 23.2% change in obsessive passion. It is concluded, based on the decision rule, that the null hypothesis be rejected. This supports the work of Akhigbe and Issa (2021) who noted that work-family conflict exhibited a particularly strong correlation with employee performance engaging in organizational activities or goals.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has shed light on the intricate relationship between psychosocial work factors and workers' passion among employees in private universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. Through the exploration of specific objectives, several key findings have emerged. Firstly, the impact of job demands on both harmonious and obsessive passion among employees has been examined. It was revealed that job demands significantly influence the development of both types of passion among university staff. This underscores the importance of managing job demands effectively to foster a positive work environment conducive to the cultivation of healthy passion. Secondly, the influence of work-life balance on harmonious passion was assessed. The findings indicate that a satisfactory work-life balance plays a crucial role in promoting harmonious passion among employees in private universities. Furthermore, the relationship between work-life balance and obsessive passion was explored. The results suggest that an imbalance in work-life dynamics may contribute to the development of obsessive passion among university staff. Therefore, efforts to promote work-life balance should be prioritized to mitigate the potential negative effects on employees' passion and overall job satisfaction. This study underscores the significance of addressing psychosocial work factors, particularly job demands and work-life balance, in cultivating positive passion among employees in private universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. By understanding and addressing these factors, businesses can establish a setting that encourages employees' well-being, engagement, and sustained passion for their work, ultimately contributing to organizational success and employee satisfaction. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The management of the private universities should mitigate excessive job demands as such will help enhance the employee’s harmonious passion.
2. The management of the institution should provide training and implement flexible work arrangements to help employees cope with workload pressures effectively as such could help impact the obsessive passion.
3. Offer flexible scheduling options, such as telecommuting or compressed workweeks, to accommodate employees' personal responsibilities in order to enhance the workers passion.
4. The management of the private universities should encourage social support networks among colleagues to help individuals navigate work-related stressors in order to enhance their passion.

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