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MODERATING ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED JOB INSECURITY AND MENTAL WELL-BEING AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between job insecurity and mental well-being and how social support moderates the relationship. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and a total of 200 academic staff were drawn through stratified random sampling techniques from King David Federal University, Uburu. The participants age ranged from 22 to 70 years with a mean age of 37 .86 years and SD = 7 .92 years. The instruments for data collection include: Job insecurity scale, mental well-being scale and social support inventory. Hayes PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 1) was used as statistical tools for data analysis and test of hypotheses. Results showed that job insecurity was statistically and significant negative relationship with mental well-being ($r = -0.04, p < 0 .001$), and social support had a statistical and significant positive relationship with mental well-being ($r = 0 .07, p < 0 .001$). Results also revealed an interactive effect on the role of job insecurity and social support on mental well-being was also significant ($\beta=0.41, P<0.001$). The study concluded that social support serves as an important personal resource that can buffer the adverse mental and psychological effects of job insecurity and mental health of academic staff, indicating higher social support are better equipped to maintain their mental well-being despite uncertain employment conditions. The study recommends that an integration of social support into staff development welfare as this could buffer the negative effect of job insecurity and enhance psychological resilience and mental well-being of employees.

Keywords: *Job insecurity, mental well-being. social support, academic staff.*

Introduction

Many academic staffs at university are facing problems or challenges related to employment situation, working conditions, challenging duty as lecturer and stressful conditions that might encourage job insecurity and low employee's mental well-being (Nicholls et al., 2022; Tanimoto et al., 2025). The academics are confronted with various duties such as teaching, researching, community development and services, administrative work and other academic duties (e.g., Pautz et al., 2020; Tanimoto et al., 2025). Despite these numerous duties, the academics are still facing job insecurity, (Castellacci et al., 2021; Segerbäck, 2023; Bazzoli et al., 2022; Klug et al., 2024). lack of social support (Kinuthia et al., 2024; Setiawan, 2023), and psychological and mental well-being (Miron et al., 2022; Nicholls et al., 2022; Tanimoto et al., 2023; Tanimoto et al., 2025). Job insecurity among lecturers in Nigeria is a significant issue stemming from various factors, including inadequate funding, poor working conditions, and a lack of clear career progression (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Onyishi et al., 2021;). This job

insecurity can lead to stress, burnout, negatively mental well-being, low core self-evaluations and decreased productivity among the academics' staff. (Adebayo et al., Ede et al.,2020; 2011; Onyishi et al., 2021). Based on previous research mentioned above, it found that job insecurity, core self-evaluations is a significant predictor for mental well-being. Then, this study would examine the moderating role of core self-evaluations in the relationship between job insecurity and mental well-being among academic staff of king David federal University.

Job insecurity can be defined as the individual worker's perception of not being able to keep his or her job, or the loss of important characteristic of the job in the face of a threatening situation (Obrad, 2020; Ugwu et al.,2021). Job insecurity the perceived threat of losing one's job or valued job features is consistently linked to poor mental well-being among academic staff, especially in underfunded and unstable environments like many Nigerian universities (Ede et al.,2020; Onyishi et al., 2021). This insecurity is caused not only by the loss of the job itself, but also by the possibility of the event occurring, which is an even greater stressor than the loss itself (Gómez-Domínguez et al., 2023). However, there are several variables that modulate reactions to job insecurity, such as economic vulnerability, psychological vulnerability and the characteristics presented by the threat (Segeberäck, 2023; Bazzoli et al.,2022; Klug et al., 2024). Reports such as the one by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Menéndez-Espina et al.,2019; Baydur et al., 2025) highlight the implications that this insecurity can cause in individuals. Fear of job loss affects the worker's psychological wellbeing and health (Dreison et al.,2018). It negatively influences work engagement (Obrad, 2020), performance (Castellacci et al., 2021) and creativity (Obrad, 2020). All of this ultimately affects the productivity of companies (Ugwu et al.,2021) and society as a whole in the form of higher levels of general dissatisfaction, as well as increased health and social costs (Gómez-Domínguez et al., 2023).

Although job insecurity has always been an important psychosocial risk factor in developed societies, technological, economic and political changes have increased its perception in recent times (Ugwu et al.,2021).

The teaching profession has several specific characteristics such as, the prevailing diversity in the classroom, constant changes to the curriculum, and the lack of social recognition for their work, which all lead to a vulnerability in the prevalence of job insecurity and the consequences of itself (Ojedokun, et al., 2014; Olayemi et al., 2019; Triantoro, 2014). Moreover, the effects of perceived job insecurity would be accentuated in developing country economies with their precarious survivability in the highly competitive global economy. Employees with job insecurity would have lower core self-evaluations, emotional exhaustion, lower life satisfaction and lower mental well-being in the workplace (e. g., Adebayo et al.,2021; Ede et al.,2020; Ojedokun et al., 2014; Ugwu et al.,2021). This researcher pursued to examine the moderating role of core-self-evaluation in the relationship between job insecurity and mental well-being in Nigerian Academic Staff (King David Federal University, Uburu) a system with extreme precarious in job insecurity from economic uncertainties and predominant academic instability and high unemployment.

Mental well-being is a state of emotional and mental satisfaction from work, and overall life satisfaction (Obrenovic et al. 2020). Mental well-being is associated with both affect and psychological performance (e.g., Obrenovic et al., 2020) and satisfying interpersonal relationships (Ugwu et al.,2021 Adebayo et al., (2011). Mental well-being refers to a state of psychological and emotional health, including low anxiety, depression, positive mood, life satisfaction, emotional stability and resilience (Tennant et al., 2007). Employees who experience mental well-being live happier lives and have higher longevity (Ibrahim et al.,

2021). Alternatively, poor mental well-being of academic staff reveals increased in work stress (Olayemi et al., 2019) and decline in physical and psychological health (Obrenovic et al., 2020). In this research, the researcher hypothesized core self-evaluation (CSE) as an intrapersonal factor influencing the mental well-being of academic staff or individuals in university settings. Core self-evaluation is a stable dispositional attribute, including a basic assessment of worthiness of oneself (Yoo et al., 2019), and provides a framework through which individuals make subjective cognitive appraisal (Ugwu et al., 2021). Scholars have identified various psychological variables that increase the level of mental well-being such as autonomy, purpose, self-acceptance, self-regulation, personal growth, and core-self-evaluation (Ryff, 1989; Saleem et al., 2022). Among these core-self-evaluations is one such factor that has been known as a well-established factor that promotes mental well-being. (Ardenghiet al., 2022)

Social support is one of the interesting variables implicated in this study. Social support refers to the perception of having available social systems when needed (Nurul et al., 2022), has consistently been highlighted as a protective factor to mental health-related and psychological health outcomes (Belvis et al., 2022). This has been confirmed within the Western and non-western population in terms of insecure employment, suggesting that part-time workers with high perceived social support reported good psychological and mental health (Mellor et al., 2020). When people sense a high amount of social support, they feel reassured, which helps to reduce their daily stress (Watson et al., 2021). Social support has been classified using different typologies. Gu et al. (2016) groups social support into objective and subjective support. Others have classified it into perceived instrumental social support, which involves support when dealing with practical issues such as medical emergencies or loans to pay bills. There is also emotional social support, which relates to having people turn to when one is going through an emotional turmoil or even when one feels lonely (Setiawan, 2023). Within the workplace, social support can also be divided into three categories: perceived peer, perceived supervisor, and perceived organizational support. Employees' perception of the organization's concern for their well-being is known as perceived organizational support. The degree to which workers give the sense that their managers value their commitments and are concerned about their well-being is known as perceived supervisor support. The extent to which employees believe their co-workers are prepared to lend a hand at work to complete tasks is known as perceived peer support (Garcia et al., 2022).

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, academic institutions in Nigerian have experienced important challenges, including lack of promotion, irregular funding, delayed salaries, policy shifts, and institutional restructuring. These problems have intensified perceptions of job insecurity among academic staffs by reducing their mental well-being. Despite rising interest in the protective role of social support, there remains a lack of empirical studies in the Nigerian universities context, specifically within the academic sector, that explore how social support moderate the relationship between job insecurity and mental well-being. Understanding this moderating role is crucial, as academic staff are central to knowledge production and national development, and their psychological resilience is essential for institutional performance.

Previous research confers the relationship between social support and mental well-being among academic staff (Ede et al., 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Olayemi et al., 2019) and also support the critical role of job insecurity (Adebayo et al., 2011; Ede et al., 2020; Ojedokun et

al., 2014; Onyishi et al., 2021). However, there is inadequate research on the combined effect of job insecurity and social support on mental well-being among academic staff. Finally, there is currently a paucity of understanding about how job insecurity and social supports act as factors affect Nigerian academic staff mental well-being. Previous research on job insecurity and mental well-being focused on gig economy or part-time workers in Western countries rather than Nigerian population (Ugwu et al. 2022; Matilla-Santander et al., 2021). There is inconsistent literature that claims social support may increase the stress level of universities academic staff due to the possibility of isolation and a smaller social network with similar social economic status (Belvis et al., 2022; Watson et al., 2021) As a result, more research is required to clarify how social support moderate the relationship between job insecurity and mental well-being among academic staffs. Therefor the need for further study arises.

Research Questions

The study sought to address the following research question:

1. To what extent would job insecurity positively and significantly associated with the mental well-being among academic staff. of king David Federal University, Uburu?
2. To what extend would social support positively and significantly associated with the mental well-being of academic staff. of king David Federal University, Uburu ?
3. Social support moderates the relationship between job insecurity and mental well-being among academic staff of king David federal University?

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Determine the extent of job insecurity would associated with mental well-being among academic staff of king David Federal University, Uburu?
2. Investigate how social support would associated with mental well-being among academic staff of king David Federal University, Uburu?
3. Explore how Social support would moderate the relationship between job insecurity and mental well-being among academic staff of king David federal University.

Review of literature

The following theories are reviewed to guide that study: Job demands-resources (Demerouti et al., 2001), Conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and Self-determination theory (Deci et al., 2000

Job demands-resources (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job demands-resources (JD-R) model proposed that every job has demands such as workload, role ambiguity and job insecurity that require sustained effort and are linked with psychological or physical costs. Each job also offers resources such as autonomy, social support, personal traits like CSE) that help in achieving work goals, reducing demands, or stimulating growth and development. These two dimensions job demands and resources integrate to impact outcomes like burnout, engagement, and mental well-being. Job insecurity is a psychological demand/stressor that interfere with mental well-being of employees in an organization. Job Insecurity as a job demand is a psychosocial job demand that threatens a person's sense of stability and future employment. In university, increasing contract work, funding uncertainties, and administrative restructuring intensify job insecurity. The JD-R model stated that job insecurity depletes mental resources, elevates stress, deteriorates psychological well-being of employees. Mental well-being encompasses both the absence of negative mental health such as stress, anxiety and the presence of positive psychological functioning like satisfaction and flourishing

Conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Conservation of resources theory proposed that individuals strive to obtain, retain, and protect resources and that psychological stress occurs when there is a threat of resource loss, actual loss, or lack of expected gain such resources includes: personal (e.g., self-esteem, optimism, Condition-based (e.g., job security, tenure), Object-based (e.g., salary, equipment) and Energy resources (e.g., time, attention). This theory can be applied in to investigate job insecurity and mental well-being of employees. Job insecurity represents a perceived or actual threat to resources such as income, professional identity, job status and future career opportunities. In academic employees such as academic staff, especially contract lecturers and newly employed academic staff threat are common Also, COR theory suggested that individuals perceive job insecurity as they anticipate fear of job and future resource loss which can trigger stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion which can drain cognitive and emotional energy which are common among employees especially academic staff. When academic staff or employees feel they lack sufficient resources to cope with their academia and insecure job conditions that impaired positive affect, sense of purpose, psychological functioning and resource depletion that may lead to burnout, depression, or reduced life satisfaction that impact negative mental well-being among employees.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci et al., 2000). Self-determination theory (SDT) is a psychological theory of motivation and well-being which posits that mental well-being is enhanced when three basic psychological needs are satisfied: (1). Autonomy which means the need to feel in control of one's own behaviour and decisions. (2). Competence which implies the need to feel effective and capable in one's environment. (3). Relatedness means the need to feel connected to and supported by others. SDT stated that when these needs are met, employees or individuals experience higher intrinsic motivation, personal growth, achievement and mental well-being. When these needs are thwarted, employees or individuals are more likely to experience stress, burnout, anxiety, and psychological distress. The theory stated that job insecurity threatens autonomy and competence among academic staff, decline mental well-being and high SS contributes to a stronger internal sense of competence and autonomy which implies that employees with high SS are more likely to reserve well-being even when external conditions such as job security are unstable.

Theoretical Framework

Transactional Model of Stress (Lazarus et al., 1984)

Transactional model of stress hypothesizes that stress as a dynamic interaction (transaction) between the individuals and the environment. This theory highlights two main processes which includes: Primary appraisal which mean the evaluation of whether a situation is threatening, harmful, or challenging to employees in an organizational setting. Secondary appraisal implies the evaluation of one's resources and ability to cope with the stressor in the workplace in order to improve psychological and mental well-being of employees in an organization.

The transactional model of stress was used in this study because it explains that job insecurity is appraised differently depending on the employee's personality traits and shape the way the stressor is perceived and how the employee's copes. Theory stated that high CSE enables positive appraisals and effective coping, thereby enhances psychological and mental well-being, while low CSE may exacerbate psychological distress in the face of job insecurity and reduce mental well-being of academic staff in the university settings.

Empirical review

Sirola (2024) carried out job insecurity and well-being: Integrating life history and transactional stress theories. A preregistered, multisource, five-wave longitudinal study conducted at the height of the COVID-19 crisis in India and found that social support for these predictions. The researcher integrates this perspective with transactional stress theory to propose that job insecurity has a disproportionately negative effect on employees from poorer back- grounds, leading to lower engagement and higher emotional exhaustion among such employees, while those from wealthier. Bodengraven, (2021) investigates the moderating role that one's social support can have on the relation between job insecurity and subjective well-being. The 2004 data from the European social survey is used to conduct the analysis. Multilevel linear regression model was applied and results reviewed that three moderating support influences. Firstly, result indicated buffering effect for parents.

Secondly, the result reviewed buffering effect for the partner's contract (no-work, part-time, full-time). Lastly, result showed a reversed buffering effect on occupational skill level of the partner. The findings indicated that reversed buffering effect enhances the negative effects of job insecurity on mental well-being. The study concludes that social support has a buffering effect on the relation between job insecurity and mental well-being and pleads for further investigation of the reversed buffering effect. Nurul et al. (2022) in their research on job insecurity, perceived social support and psychological well- being among precarious workers in Malaysia. A total of 150 participants were sampled through snowball and convenient sampling method. Three instruments were used for data collection which includes WHO-5 Well- being Index Scale (WHO5), Job Insecurity Scale (JIS), and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MPSS). The results indicated a negative correlation between job insecurity and psychological well-being. Results also revealed a positive relationship between perceived social support, and psychological well-being. This means that precarious employees who are insecure about their jobs are more likely to have poorer mental and psychological well-being which might result to low productive in the organization, whereas precarious workers who have greater social support from family, friends, and significant others are more likely to be psychologically and mentally healthy. The findings of the study can assist individuals, psychologist, non- government, government, or practitioner, policymakers in strengthening policies that will assist precarious workers mental and psychological wellbeing in their organization.

Sulaiman et al. (2020) explored social support as a mediator in the relationship between job insecurity and psychological well-being among employees in public and private sectors. A total of 1188 respondents from both public and private sectors consisting of 571 males and 617 females participated in the study. Three instruments were used for data collection which includes Job Insecurity Scale, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and Psychological Well-being Scale. Results indicated a significant and negative correlation between job insecurity and psychological well-being and a significant and negative correlation between job insecurity and social support. Result also, showed a positive and significant correlation between social support and psychological well-being. Regression analysis on the other hand, found that social support significantly mediated the relationship of job insecurity on psychological well-being. The study highlighted the significance of social support in buffering the effect of job insecurity which in turn has impact on mental health and psychological well-being of workers.

AL-Doghan et al. (2023) explored the impact of individual and organizational factors on employee's psychological wellbeing: the moderating role of social support. Data were collected from staff of tourism and hospitality ministry of Saudi Arabia through purposive sampling techniques and Hayes macro process analyses was used to test the stated hypotheses. Result indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between employees' psychological wellbeing and various factors, including

supervisor behavior, organizational climate, work-life balance, organizational identification, and job security. Results also, revealed statistically and significant moderating impact of social support on the association between supervisor behavior and employees' psychological well-being, as well as work-life balance and employees' psychological well-being.

Amin et al. (2025) examined the mediating and moderating role of social support on the relationship between psychological well-being and burdensomeness among elderly with chronic illness: community nursing perspective. The study adopted a cross-sectional design. A total of 311 participants with age ranged 60 and older were sampled through purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using social support scale, psychological well-being and burdensomeness scale. The results revealed that perceived burdensomeness has a strong negative effect on psychological well-being ($r = -0.70$). Social support significantly mediates this relationship, with higher social support associated with lower burdensomeness ($\beta = -0.65$) and improved psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.32$). Strengthening social support networks can mitigate feelings of burdensomeness and promote mental health, ultimately enhancing the quality of life for older adults facing chronic health challenges. The researcher recommended a strong social support and low burdensomeness since it tend to increase or promote psychological and mental well-being of the older adults facing chronic health challenges.

Lu J et al. (2023). Moderating effects of perceived social support on self-efficacy and psychological well-being of Chinese nurses. A cross-sectional study was employed using a multistage random sampling technique in selecting five regions of Liaoning, China. A total of 1,010 nurses were sampled through questionnaires which includes: Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale, General Self-Efficacy Scale, and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed. Results indicated association between self-efficacy and depression differed between the low perceived social support and high PSS. Similarly, the association between self-efficacy and anxiety differed between the low PSS and high PSS. The study concludes that Chinese nurses experienced high levels of anxiety and depression. Also, PSS moderates the relationship between self-efficacy and psychological well-being. The study recommended interventions targeting self-efficacy and PSS should be implemented to improve the psychological well-being of nurses.

Mensah (2021) carryout research on job stress and mental well-being among working men and women in Europe: The mediating role of social support. It is a cross sectional study. A total of 14,603 men and 15,486 women from 35 countries in Europe was sampled using three instruments to elicit information from the participants. Hayes process macro 4 modelling technique was used as a statistical tool to test the stated hypotheses. The results indicated that job stress had a direct negative effect on mental well-being among workers ($\beta = -0.24$, $p < 0.05$). However, there were significant gender differences in the relationship ($\beta = -0.40$, $p < 0.05$), with women having higher effect size than men (men: $\beta = -3.90$, $p < 0.05$ vs. women: $\beta = -4.29$, $p < 0.05$). Results also, showed indirect effect on social support mediated the relationship of job stress on mental well-being ($\beta = -0.02$). furthermore, the mediating effect of social support did not differ among men and women. This study concluded that job stress has a negative impact on mental well-being among working adults, and social support mediates this relationship. Also, yhe results highlight the significant of support from colleagues and supervisors at the work place, which may help reduce job stress, and improve psychological and mental well-being of workers.

Kinuthia et al. (2024) investigated the moderating effect of social support on the relationship between occupational stress interventions and performance of academic staff in a subset of

public Kenyan universities. A cross-sectional, descriptive, and explanatory design was adopted in this research. A total of 3277 academic staff members were drawn from Egerton, Kenyatta, and Maseno universities through purposive sampling techniques. The two-step Zendek et al. (2000) method for testing moderation was used in the study. Results indicated that Social support mitigate the connection between academic staff performance and occupational stress. The study recommended that more productive staff members, public institutions should look for ways to assist at the organizational and supervisory levels. Managers should also provide social support training to the supervisors. The Job-Demand-Control- Support (JDCS) model supports the moderating influence of social support on the connection between OSI and staff performance

A moderator is a variable that modifies the relationship of affiliation between the dependent and the independent variables (Kinuthia et al. (2024)). The current study hypothesized that the association between academic staff performance and occupational stress interventions is moderated by social support. Social integration, social ties, and major group relationships are examples of social support. It is a collection of interpersonal and social behaviors that are thought to decrease, stabilize, or increase constructive coping. Benefits to mental health, including feelings of admiration, care, attention, and delight, have been associated with social support (Setiawan, 2023)

Baydur et al. (2025) examined the relationship between job insecurity and health-related quality of life among medical representatives, exploring the moderating effect of social support at work. The study Cross-sectional data from 391 Turkish medical representatives during the pandemic were analyzed using correlation, logistic regression, and moderation analysis with SPSS for Windows and Hayes' Process Macro. Results indicated a moderately significant correlation between health-related quality of life and quantitative job insecurity, qualitatively job insecurity and social support in the workplace ($r = -0.40$, $r = -0.50$, $r = 0.40$), respectively. The moderating effect analysis has revealed that receiving social support in the workplace alleviates and reduces the negative impact of job insecurity on the health-related quality of life of employees. Social support in the workplace received by employees mitigates and reduces the negative impact of job insecurity on their health-related quality of life. Conclusion: Social support in the workplace plays an important role in buffering the negative consequences of job insecurity. According to this research, it is important to improve social support in the workplace to prevent negative health-related quality of life outcomes among medical representatives experiencing job insecurity.

Ugwu et al. (2021) investigated job insecurity and psychological well-being: The moderating roles of self-perceived employability and core self-evaluations. A total of 259 casual employees of commercial banks in Southeast, Nigeria were sampled. Four instruments were used for data collection. Regression analysis was used to test the stated hypotheses. Results showed higher job insecurity to predict lower psychological well-being with lower self-perceived employability. Core self-evaluations did not influence the relationship between job insecurity and psychological well-being among the casual bank employees. Self-employability may have a less well recognized personal asset of employees with job tenure uncertainty

Research Hypothesis

1. Job insecurity would positively and significantly predict mental well-being of academic staff of King David Federal University, Uburu
2. Core self-evaluation would positively and significantly predict mental well-being of academic staff of King David Federal University, Uburu

3. Core self-evaluation would positively and significantly moderate the relationship between job insecurity and mental well-being of academic staff of King David Federal University, Uburu

Method

Participants

A total of 200 academic staff comprised 103 males and 97 females from King David Federal University, Uburu, Ebonyi State in Southeast, Nigeria. The participants were selected using purposive sampling technique due to the peculiarity of the study involving academic staff employees. The participants age ranged from 24 to 70 years with a mean age of 37 .86 years and SD = 7 .92years, and their marital status ranged from Single, Married and Divorced / Widowed:

The participants rank includes: Assistant lecturer 36, Lecturer II: 49, Lecturer I: 40, Senior Lecturer: 34 and Associate Professor / Professor: 25. The participants employment status includes; Permanent Staff, Contract Staff / Visiting lecturers. The participants qualification includes; B. Sc, M.Sc. and PhD. The majority of the participants were master degree (M.Sc). Most of the participants speak English language

Instruments

Flourishing Psychological well-being Scale (Diener et al., 2009)

The researcher used the 8-item Flourishing Scale (Diener et al., 2009) to assess for psychological well-being. The items are scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, to 7 = strongly agree. High scores indicate better psychological well-being. Example items include: “I lead a purposeful and meaningful life”; and “I am optimistic about my future”. In the present study, we observed a Cronbach’s α of 0 .78 for scores from the psychological well-being measure. The scale had been validated and used among Nigerian populations, including university students, academic staff, and other adult populations. Studies (Adegoke et al., 2020; Adekeye, et al., 2021; Awosoga et al.,2022) found good internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.80) and construct validity in the Nigerian setting.

Job insecurity (JSI: Probst, 2003).

The researcher assessed job insecurity with the 9-item Job Security Index (JSI: Probst, 2003). Sample items include: my job is ‘up in the air’, ‘uncertain’, ‘insecure’. Respondents score the items on a 3-point scale (no = 0, undecided = 1, and yes = 2) in terms of the extent to which these adjectives or phrases describe the future of their job. Responses were scored in such a way that high scores reflected high perception of job insecurity. In the present study, scores from the scale yielded a Cronbach’s α of 0.88. The scale had been used among Nigerian populations, including university students, academic staff, and other adult populations (Adebayo et al., 2011; Ojedokun et al., 2014; Oludayo, 2015; Ugwu et al., 2021) adopted for Nigerian sample.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS: Zimet, et al., 1988)

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet et al., 1988) is a self-report scale of perceived social support. The scale consists of 12 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale that ranging from 1 (“very strongly disagree”) to 7 (“very strongly agree”). The scale is interpreted by computing a total score of the 12 items, with higher scores indicative of greater amounts of perceived social support (Zimet et al., 1988). Additionally, the three subscales measure three distinct sources of perceived support (e.g., family members (items 3, 4, 8, and 11), friends (items 6, 7, 9, and 12), and significant others (items 1, 2, 5, and 10). Studies of the psychometric properties of the MSPSS support excellent internal consistency

for the Significant Other subscale ($\alpha = .91$), and good internal consistency for the Family ($\alpha = .87$) and Friends ($\alpha = .85$) subscales, as well as the Total scale ($\alpha = .88$). Test-retest reliability of the MSPSS ranges from acceptable to good for each of the three subscales and total scale score (Zimet et al., 1988). Further, the MSPSS appears to be validated for use in a variety of diverse cultural and ethnic groups (Canty- Mitchell & Zimet, 2000; Dambi et al., 2018). The scale had been used among Nigerian populations, including university students, academic staff, and other adult populations (Ede et al., 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Olayemi et al., 2019; Ugwu et al., 2021) In the present study, the have Cronbach's α reliability coefficient for scores from the SS was 0 .77

Procedure

The Ethical Committee of the King David Federal University, Uburu approved the study (KDFUU//EC//2025//15). The Deans of Faculties of the University granted permission to conduct the study with their academic staffs. Participants individually consented to the study. The researcher informed them of the study goals and their voluntary participation and withdrawer, anonymity and confidentiality of their response. The researcher and his trained research assistants distributed 200 copies of the questionnaire to the participants in their various faculties and their various offices in their respective department. The distribution of the questionnaire is through stratified random sampling techniques where participants are sampled within each stratum and then followed deep and pick luck system, where participants who pick "Yes" will be given the questionnaire to fill while participants who pick: No" will not be given the questionnaire. 210 copies of the distributed questionnaire, 200 copies of the questionnaire were correctly filled, while 10 copies were discarded as a result of incorrect filling of the questionnaire. 200 copies were used for data analysis. The collection of the questionnaire lasted for 2 - 4 weeks.

Design/Statistics

A cross sectional survey design was used. To test the stated hypotheses of the study and moderation effects of core self-evaluation in the relationship between job insecurity and mental well-being, the researcher employed linear regression with model 1 of Process macro (Hayes, 2018) using SPSS version 25.

Results

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis (N = 200)

Variables	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Gender	1.34 (.47)	-					
2.Age	36.76 (6.8)	0.03	-				
3.Marital Status	1.68 (.80)	0.01	0.07***	-			
4.Social support	32.33 (6.37)	-0.10**	-0.13***	0.28***	-		
5.Job Insecurity	19.61 (3.83)	-0.14**	-0.05**	0.12***	-0.59***	-	
6.Mental well-being	4.75 (1.50)	-0.37	-0.32***	-0.16***	0.07***	-0.04***	-

Gender: 1 = males, 2 = females.

p < 0.01, *p < 0.001

Table 1. Indicated the job insecurity had a statistical and significant negative relationship with mental well-being ($r = -0.04$, $p < 0 .001$), and social support had a statistical and significant positive relationship with mental well-being ($r = 0 .07$, $p < 0 .001$).

Table 2. Hayes regression analysis to determine the moderating role of social support in the relationship between job insecurity and mental well-being.

Variables	F	P	R	R ²	b	se	t	p-value
Job insecurity	70.686	0.001	0.816	0.665	-0.02	0.20	-3.23	0
.001								
SS					0.40	0.04	11.18	0.
000								
J×SS					0.41	0.02	0.30	0.
001								
Gender					0.27	0.04	6.08	0
.000								
Age					0.29	0.03	-4.25	0
.000								
Marital Status					-0.03.	0 .31		-0.33
0.74								

Note SS = Social support; JI X SS = interaction term of job insecurity and social support; Gender coded as (0 = Male, 1 = Female).

Based on Table 2, to control the influencing variables on the criterion variable, marital status, age, and gender variable were checked first. The results reveal that age and gender were significant predictors of mental well-being in explaining the criterion variable ($P < 0.05$), while marital status was not a significant predictor of mental well-being. To determine the moderating role of in the relationship between job insecurity and psychological well-being, we first investigated the role of job insecurity and social support on mental well-being. The results of the Hayes micro process analysis found that job insecurity negatively predicted

mental well-being, $b = -0.30$, $t(184) = 0.20$, $p = 0.001$. Social support positively predicts mental well-being $b = 0.56$, $t(184) = 0.03$, $p < 0.000$.

The interactive effect of the role of job insecurity and social support on mental well-being was also significant ($\beta=0.41.21$, $P<0.001$). The recognition coefficient ($R^2 = 0.67$; $F=70.69$) was significant at a level less than 0.001, indicating the significance of the role of the moderator variable, and social support explains 56.7% of the variance in relationship mental well-being. The significant interactions mentioned illustrated that the association between job insecurity and mental well-being varies by level of social support, and the degree of association between job insecurity and mental well-being depends on the degree of social support. Interactions between job insecurity, social support, and mental well-being.

Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between job insecurity and mental well-being and how social support buffered this relationship. From the current literature reviewed on job insecurity, social support, and mental well-being have not been well explored in the Nigerian workplace, especially in university setting. It is crucial to understand job insecurity, social support and mental well-being among academic staff as this will help inform the university management practice on the basic challenges of the university system. Hence, this study calls for study and highly vital. Three hypotheses were stated and tested in this study.

The first hypothesis which stated that job insecurity would positively and significantly predict mental well-being of academic staff of king David Federal University, Uburu was rejected. The results indicated that job insecurity negative and significantly predict mental well-being among academic staff. This implies that job insecurity fosters negative mental well-being in the academia. Therefore, as job insecurity decrease, mental well-being increases *verse vasa*. This finding is consistent with previous studies by (Adebayo et al., 2011; Bazzoli et al., 2022; Klug et al., 2024; Ojedokun et al., 2014; Oludayo et al., 2015; Segerbäck, 2023), The researcher found that job insecurity was associated with decrease mental well-being. Thus, job insecurity helps institutions to make policy decisions such as ensuring fair promotion practices, improving tenure systems, can help enhance academic staff to be productive and committed to their work enable can easily cope with pressures and challenges related to their work environment, helping them find more meaningful experiences, and in the process increasing their well-being at work, enhancing contract transparency and providing better workforce planning and development within higher education that will enhance better mental well-being among academic staff (Ugwu et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2020)

The second hypothesis which states that social support would positively and significantly predict mental well-being of academic staff of king David Federal University, Uburu was supported. The findings revealed that social support predicted mental well-being of academic staffs at workplace ($r = 0.03$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that as academic staffs' social support increases their mental well-being also increase *verse vasa*. This finding conformed to precious studies by (Amin et al., 2025). The findings revealed that when a worker has a positive perception or appraise themselves positively, this is likely to influence their experience in the organization or institution, especially with respect to their mental well-being.

The third hypothesis which states that social support moderates the relationship between job insecurity and mental well-being of academic staff of king David Federal University, Uburu. was accepted. Similar to previous studies (e.g., Amin et al., 2025; Ugwu et al., 2014). This

finding may be explained by the fact that job insecurity would reduce employee mental well-being. Additionally, in line with prior studies (e. g., Ugwu et al.,2021), we found SS to buffer the negative relationship between job insecurity and mental well-being. Xia et al. (2021). found that high SS moderated the effect of job insecurity on psychological distress, buffering its harmful effects. Sora et al. (2013) revealed that high SS peoples experienced less emotional exhaustion and better mental well-being even under chronic job insecurity. Ugwu et al. (2014) found that high SS reduced the negative effect of job insecurity on job satisfaction and organizational commitment in an organization. In summary, SS buffers the negative psychological and mental effect of job insecurity by enabling employee to view problems or issues more positively, sustain emotionally stable, and maintain belief in their ability and control that will lead him/her to better mental well-being.

Implications of the Study

The results from this research have theoretical, practical, and policy-related implications.

1. Organizations or Institutions can enhance staff resilience to job-related stress by applying initiatives that develop dimensions of SS (e.g., friend family and significant others and SS training skills).
2. Psychological and mental health support plans should be personalized to consider individual differences in SS. Those with low SS may require more intensive interventions during times of job insecurity.
3. The University administrators and policymakers should consider these findings when designing welfare policies, ensuring they target both structural job security and individual level psychological support mechanisms.
4. The Universities offering education, management, or psychology programs may incorporate topics related to social support, personality and workplace well-being into their curriculum to prepare future educators and leaders with psychological tools for career sustainability.

Limitations

Despite the study contributions, the present study has some shortcomings worth highlighting. Our sample size confined to one institution and lack generalizability. Secondly, it is cross-sectional design study which can only indicate association but don't establish causality as in experimental studies. Thirdly, our study is sole reliance on self-reported data which would inflate the magnitude of the effects with from common method bias. Fourthly, the study did not examine moderators like personality traits or Cor self-evaluation, social support. Nevertheless, data collected using surveys are susceptible to unknown social desirability effects which could distort the study findings in unknown ways.

Suggestions for further study

Based on the findings and implications of the study, the following suggestions are made

1. Future studies should employ mix-methods (triangulation) of data collection for more dependable results
2. Further studies should look into structured programs that will enhancing dimensions of social support (family, friends and significate others) among academic staffs
3. The universities should introduce psychological and mental health, provide counseling services, and teach coping mechanisms, especially for staff experiencing job insecurity.
4. Comparative studies across different regions or types of institutions (Federal, State, Private) may provide broader insights into contextual influences

Conclusion

This study investigated the moderating role of social support (SS) in the relationship between job insecurity and mental well-being among academic staff in Nigerian universities (Kings David Federal University, Uburu Ebonyi State of Nigeria). The findings revealed that job insecurity has a significant negative association on the mental well-being of academic staff, manifesting in increased psychological distress, anxiety, and reduced overall emotional health. However, employees with high levels of SS were found to be more resilient in the face of job insecurity. Also, the study concludes that SS serves as a vital personal resource that can buffer the adverse psychological effects of job insecurity. Academic staff with higher SS is better equipped to maintain their mental well-being despite uncertain employment conditions. Conversely, those with lower SS are more vulnerable to the psychological strain caused by perceived job threats. These findings underscore the need for higher education institutions and policymakers to pay closer attention to individual psychological strengths in managing job insecurity and promoting staff well-being. Enhancing SS among academic staff could serve as a sustainable strategy for improving psychological resilience, job satisfaction, and productivity in the Nigerian university system. The researcher found job insecurity decrease psychological well-being with SS buffered this adverse impact of job insecurity on mental well-being. Employers may need to know their employees

Recommendation

1. The study recommended that social support should be integrated into staff development welfare programs to enhance effectiveness of job performance and increased mental well-being.
2. The study recommends the promote of psychological resilience through mentoring and counseling that will encourage job performance.
3. The study recommended that the university should provide supporting systems that will foster social support, reduced job insecurity and improving t mental well-being of academic staffs,

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