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**Subjective Well-Being of Academic Staff in a South African University:  
The Role of Work-Life Balance, Job Demands and Job Resources**

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Industrial Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been previously submitted for any degree or examination in any other university.

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to examine how academic staffs in a selected public university evaluate the overall quality of their lives. In recognition of the changes in the higher education sector and its potentially detrimental impact on work, health and well-being of academics, this research investigated how academics evaluate their well-being in respect to work-life balance, job demands and job resources. A qualitative analysis was selected as the suitable research design. This research surveyed the narratives of ten academic staff members from different departments using semi-structured in-depth interviews. In line with the theoretical framework of this study, an interpretive phenomenology research design was used. A thematic analysis revealed a range of issues related to wellbeing. These were then grouped into four central themes namely, negotiating a healthy life, interplay of job demand and subjective-wellbeing, available resources and personal resources.

The subjective well-being among academic staff's was found to be rooted in the work environment as well as in other essential life environments such as the family, networks, community, and, more broadly, the society to which they belong. This study further revealed that there is relationship between environmental influences, individual competencies and feeling of agency that cannot be separated in the discourse of subjective wellbeing. Participants placed stronger emphasis on the coherent sense of the self in shaping their life satisfaction. It was found that there was normative pressure amongst academics to be the architect of their wellbeing, the situation in which demanded the availability of sturdy psychological resources. As such, well-being appears rooted in their ability to construct a consistent dialogical self, leading to a satisfactory sense of wellbeing.

Keywords: Subjective wellbeing, Job demand, Job resource, interpretative phenomenology, self-determination, dual process model, thematic analysis.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction and Background to the Study

The role of academics in increasing knowledge, skills, innovation and research to promote economic growth and development cannot be underestimated. It ensures the quality of education in higher institutions in both research and education, which ultimately benefits society (de Lourdes Machado, Soares, Brites, Ferreira, & Gouveia, 2011). However, a number of researchers from across the globe have highlighted the incessant and disquieting increase in level of occupational stress experienced by staff in higher educational institutions. The academic environment has become increasingly more stressful and psychologically demanding on account of operational changes in tertiary institutions (Dreyer, Dreyer, & Rankin, 2010a). African universities in particular seem to be confronted with the dilemma of expanded enrollment, under more pressure to sustain top-quality research as they strive to find their footing on the global higher education stage while at the same time being financially constrained on account of paucity of state funding (Ali, 2011; Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009).

South Africa cannot claim uniqueness when in fact much of what is happening locally has its roots in what is taking place globally. The higher education institutions in South Africa have also undergone major changes in the past decade. Some of these changes are small and gradual internal changes while others have been on a large-scale and initiated from without that is, by the actions of government and donors. These changes have led to a dramatic change in the size and shape of higher education, the nature of student distribution, the organisation of

university management and governance and perceptions of the nature and function of higher education (Jansen, 2004). All of these changes have further translated into heavy workloads for academic staff, time and resource constraints, long working hours, poor pay, poor institutional communication, role ambiguity and overload, lack of recognition, competition for value, funding constraints in the light of declining subsidies, increased pressure to publish, providing support for students and keeping up with technological advances (Jansen, 2004). It appears that the job demands of academics have escalated, whilst the levels of support and other resources are declining thereby leading to diminished levels of job satisfaction, well-being and morale. The literature is clear that the effects of high job demands and low resources negatively impacts academic well-being with specific reference to stress and resultant burnout and ill-health (N Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008).

This in turn has a significant bearing on work-life balance, confirming previous research which suggests that coping patterns adopted by academics to meet work demands may have an impact on their work-life balance (Glavin & Schieman, 2012; G. Kinman & Jones, 2008) Extant literature reveals that blurring of boundaries between work and non-work interface can have adverse effect on family functioning and personal wellbeing (Glavin & Schieman, 2012; G. Kinman & Jones, 2008). The question then arises: how do academics across genders maintain a life that is positive and rewarding and which enables them to grow, develop and flourish as individuals over time, given the impact of job demands and dwindling job resources? This study endeavours to answer this question by exploring how academics make sense of their life experiences. It is necessary to explore how academics evaluate the overall quality of their lives given that they seem to spend a great deal of their time working. The study of subjective well-being of academics is therefore imperative in the South African context.

## **1.2 Problem Statement and Rationale**

The environment in which academics in South Africa currently function demands more of them than previously. In order to cope with the changes, academics are required to make paradigm shifts, adopt new styles and practices, and approach their endeavours in innovative ways to be effective (N Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008). The impact of these changes on academics is declining mental and physical health and deterioration in quality of teaching and research performance, which threatens serious repercussions for education and, in the process, making academic careers less attractive (Altbach et al., 2009). There is therefore a need to identify means of retaining and increasing the quality of life of academic staff, as they are a valuable commodity. It is also necessary to increase the body of knowledge on their subjective well-being to enable effective and efficient intervention by policy makers. There is little information about the subjective well-being of academic staff in South Africa's higher education institutions, and the few available studies are based on the quantitative paradigm. Most of what is known about academic stress and health and its impact on well-being in relation to work-life balance, job demands and job resources comes from studies conducted mostly in the western world (Bell, Rajendran, & Theiler, 2012; Kinman, Wray, & Strange, 2011; Margareta, van der Lippe, den Dulk, & Anneke, 2011; Vakalahi & Starks, 2016). Hence, this research seeks to investigate how academic perceive their well-being in respect to work-life balance, job demands and job resources.

### **1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The general aim of this study is to explore the subjective perception of well-being amongst academic staff in the context of work-life balance and job-demand resource (JD-R). In particular:

- To investigate how the experience of work-life balance influences the subjective well-being of academic staff.
- To investigate how the experience of job-demand influences the subjective well-being of academic staff.
- To investigate how job resources influence the subjective well-being of academic staff.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The key research questions proposed in this study are:

- How does the experience of work-life balance influence the subjective well-being of academic staff?
- How does the experience of job demand influence the subjective well-being of academic staff?
- How does job resource influence the subjective well-being of academic staff?

## **1.5 Chapter Synopsis**

**Chapter 1** provides an overview of the research problem and its background, as well as the context in which the research took place. The aims and outcomes of the study as well as the rationale for conducting the study are explained.

**In chapter 2**, a review of previous and current literature with regard to subjective well-being is discussed with respect to work-life balance and job demands-resources. Each construct is unpacked and contextualised while highlighting the strength and limitation of past research. The job demands-resources and homeostasis theory are then discussed to provide the theoretical framework upon which well-being can be explained and understood.

**In chapter 3**, a description of the qualitative research methods used in the collection of data is provided. This includes the research design, population sampling, data collection procedure, research instruments, and also the data analysis. Also issues surrounding the reliability and validity of the study are discussed.

**Chapter 4** provides both the presentation and the discussion of the results. Themes that emerged from the data are discussed and unpacked, providing a link to the results and contents of the literature.

**Chapter 5** finally provides a summary of the study, taking into consideration the study's aims, research questions and the findings. A conclusion is thereafter made, providing insights into recommendations for future research in this area.

### **1.6 Chapter Summary**

Chapter one has made a case for the exploration of the subjective well-being among academic staff. This was done by providing an introduction and background to the study. A problem statement was formulated, illustrating the importance of conducting such a study. The research aims, objectives and research questions were also formulated. The chapter also provided an outline of the dissertation, giving a brief explanation of the purpose of each chapter.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter consists of three sections, firstly a clarification of concepts, secondly a review of literature on subjective wellbeing particularly in the academic work space, and finally a review of the two main theoretical frameworks used in this study, i.e. Dual process model and Self determination theory. The study captures varied contentions supported by empirical research findings in journals, books, conference proceedings and other relevant academic sources. The review reveals the meaning of subject well-being (SWB), work-life balance or conflicts, the nexus between work-life balance and subjective well-being, job demand and subjective well-being and the role of job resources on subject well-being respectively.

#### **2.2 Literature Review**

##### **2.2.1 Higher Education in South Africa**

In the past few decades, South African higher education has undergone significant changes, including massification, increasing internationalisation, growing emphasis on the applicability, of academic work, corporatisation, managerialism and neo-conservatism, which have reshaped academic work and workplaces. The nationwide restructuring of higher education led to merger of some universities. Almost without exception these trends have run counter to the core purpose and liberal traditions of universities. Universities in South Africa are still reeling from this complicated and contentious transformation, leaving academic staff feeling more powerless than before. The workload of academic staff has increased significantly in recent years, both in terms



of scope and complexity. Increasingly they face pressure to be productive, tackling large classes of underprepared students with dwindling resources. Academic influence has been effectively destroyed and freedom of expression seems to be non-existent. Academic productivity and output are measured by performance management systems borrowed from the private sector backed by promotion and financial incentives. Preoccupation with national and international rankings reinforces a culture of quantitative measurement. State funding has decreased substantially, forcing institutions to generate funds through alternative routes, creating a new class of managers and adding to the bureaucratic requirements and constraints in accessing funds. Different mechanisms have been adopted by universities to address the intensification of work; an example is the utilization of workload models. The purpose of which is to attain fair, transparent, safe, healthy and equitable workloads for academics. The effectiveness of this model is being questioned as it has been argued that this model could potentially ensure equality and a balance between teaching, research and community service while the negative perceptions were that workload models are used to control and monitor staff and were not able to effect change (Boyd & Management, 2014). Another obvious mechanism adopted by most universities is educational technology which is being argued as a means to reduce socially necessary labour time. However, more and more recent studies show that online teaching in fact requires more time and has a number of other consequences for academic staff (Kenny, Fluck, & Management, 2017). Thus, the complexity of academic functions imposes significant demands on academics. While it is believed that this pressure has a negative influence on academics' well-being, it is also believed that these challenges lead to greater efficiency in the academic field. While this debate continues, there is no doubt that an increase in job demand has not been coupled with an

increase in job resources which might have affected individuals' psychological experiences of their work and consequently their distress or eustress (Ntshoe, Higgs, Higgs, & Wolhuter, 2008).

### **2.2.2 Unearthing Subjective Well-Being (SWB)**

Research findings on the academic sector in South Africa find that the sector is hamstrung by a mix of challenges due to the transformation agenda, resulting in rising levels of work-related stress, fatigue, illness and tougher working conditions. The well-being of academic staff is crucial because they are key to the development of a well functioning university, knowledge production and quality service delivery (Mushemeza, 2016).

The term SWB has been centred on the conception of a good life, based on the understanding that each person has the right to judge whether a good life is being lived (Diener, 2000). Such awareness is subjective, and only the individual can narrate what event or circumstance makes him or her feel good. Under the influence of the positive psychology movement, investigations into what constitutes a good life have moved from the notion of mere absence of illness to positive and optimal functioning and as desirable states of the human condition (Veenhoven, 2009). Contemporary psychological debate remains largely unresolved on how to define and measure subjective well-being, considering its multifacetedness and complexity. Underlying this contemporary debate are two main intellectual traditions: the hedonic and the eudaimonic traditions. The hedonic view is based upon the idea that well-being consists of experiences of happiness or pleasure through the satisfaction of preferences (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The hedonic stance is clearly informed by the philosophical utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and classical philosophers like Aristippus of Cyrene and Epicurus. It is commonly assumed that it consists of

three components (Diener, 2009): positive feelings, the absence of negative feelings and overall satisfaction with life. The first two components are often referred to as affective components while the third component, satisfaction with life involves conscious evaluative judgement about the quality of life (De Vos, Schwanen, Van Acker, & Witlox, 2013). Even though there seems to be a general consensus amongst hedonic psychologists about well-being indicators and pathways of SWB, there remain other philosophical arguments. For instance while life satisfaction is conceptualised to be embedded within the hedonic tradition, it is really flawed whether this should be the situation, considering that life satisfaction is simply congruence between the present and ideal circumstance, both of which are an indication of the individual's own evaluation of life. In this way, life satisfaction can be considered as an autonomous, subjective assessment of the present status of one's life, which can be either hedonically or eudaimonically situated (Boniwell, 2013).

For eudaimonic thinkers such as Aristotle, well-being is more than preference satisfaction. As indicated by his *Nicomachean ethics*, well-being cannot be based on the feeling of pleasure but on qualities such as excellence, virtue and self-realisation (Aristotle, 1980). Modern eudaimonic understanding of well-being is rooted in Aristotle's thinking and emphasises purpose and meaning of life, personal growth and thriving – the realisation of the best in oneself (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Singer, 2008). In this regard, well-being amount to existing in a manner that mirror a person's 'daimon' or authentic self which becomes achievable by recognizing individual potential qualities and limitation and developing a personal sense of purpose and meaning (Waterman et al., 2010). On the other hand, Ryff and Singer (2008) conceive of eudaimonic wellbeing in a broader, trait-like manner, suggestive of being fully functioning despite the existential challenges of life. Eudaimonic pursuits may yield the benefit of a more enduring

sense of subjective well-being and enduring positive outcomes accompanied by a sense of meaning, subjective vitality, higher quality relationships and better physical health indicators, especially with respect to symptoms related to stress (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). Thus eudaimonia incorporates affective components but is predominantly cognitively driven. In summary, while hedonia refers to more present-moment experiences of pleasure and happiness, eudaimonia is more future-oriented with a focus on achieving meaning and personal growth. Whilst both traditions have different perspective of happiness with different outcomes, they share affective and cognitive components (Huta & Waterman, 2014).

The Eudaimonic approach to well-being has been criticised for being overly dependent on internal resources, potentials, and individual characteristics, personal efforts and achievements. Secondly, the subfield of eudaimonia research does not have a unitary theory to encompass its numerous offshoots. However it is envisaged that a unitary theory might be problematic given the multiplicity of the field and the loss of information that would result from a single theory of eudaimonic well-being (Heintzelman, 2018; Kashdan, Biswas-Diener, & King, 2008). Thirdly, critics of the eudaimonic theory of well-being argue that the distinction between the hedonic and eudaimonic tradition supports the idea that the two conceptualisations of well-being exist on a moral hierarchy, with eudaimonic well-being claiming the superior position. This hierarchy is problematic if well-being is to be considered a subjective human experience (Waterman, 2007). However, it appears that further research is necessary to address the intertwined nuances of affect and cognition in order to better understand its core at a deeper level.

The discussion with respect to the composition of SWB is ongoing, however there exists general consensus that both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being offer significant theoretical and pragmatic perspectives. Findings from various studies indicate that SWB is best conceptualized as a multidimensional constructs that incorporates aspects of both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. Consequently, prominent researchers in the well-being domain have recommended that an ideal conceptualisation of SWB should incorporate these two points of view (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002)

Just as there have been philosophical arguments on the two traditions, there is a continuing debate about how to adequately measure SWB. However, industrial psychologists have acknowledged that no single measure can capture the entirety of the construct and have since focused on assessing each of the components separately; even though the components might be distinct, they sometimes overlap (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). This has also led to the debate about capturing the essence of SWB using the domain specific approach. Seligman (2011) noted that the domain-specific approach was more appropriate, even though some researchers discriminate between life-domain satisfaction and overall life satisfaction. Nevertheless, domain satisfaction cannot be studied in isolation, as life satisfaction often requires that people integrate their satisfaction with specific facets of life into a global judgement of overall life satisfaction. Domain satisfactions relevant to salient life tasks are more strongly related to global life satisfaction than less relevant domain satisfactions. The domain of work is considered important for well-being, considering that an average adult spends as much as a quarter to a third of his or her life at work. Equally important is the family domain which could include family life, leisure, social relationships and community. Satisfaction within a life domain is the result of basic psychological needs in the domain. However, evaluating the domain-

specific dimensions of quality of life as opposed to overall SWB further questions the direction of causality – whether satisfaction in various areas of life generates an overall satisfaction, or whether a general high satisfaction with life generates satisfaction in various domains (Ramia, 2011). For instance, in the work domain, common research finding is that job satisfaction is correlated with life satisfaction. Diener and Tay (2012) argue that job satisfaction is a key indicator of workers' well-being and therefore can also influence life satisfaction. Despite the number of studies that correlate life satisfaction to job satisfaction, (Bowling, Eschleman, & Wang, 2010) conclude, in their meta-analysis of the job satisfaction and life satisfaction relationship, that the causal nature of the relationship between the two has not been clearly established. Mishra, Nielsen Smyth and Newman (2014) found mixed evidence of causality between job satisfaction facets and life satisfaction. Likewise, it was found that employee satisfaction amongst university academics, albeit partially, may not serve as an indicator of life satisfaction (Mafini, 2014). However, researchers found that job satisfaction and life satisfaction are reciprocally, positively and prospectively linked, but that the link may be spurious due to the important role played by a third variable (Unanue, Gómez, Cortez, Oyanedel, & Mendiburo-Seguel, 2017) that could range from personality, social support and basic psychological needs (Unanue et al., 2017). A critique of the life-domain approach is that aspects of a person's life cannot be used as conclusive evidence of life satisfaction. One can be satisfied with one's job, but still feel generally dissatisfied. Hence, the study of well-being in this study is rooted in the eudaimonic tradition often in terms of life satisfaction, as one measure, but complements it with objective measures, like psychological health and vitality. Hence this study accepts the use of SWB as an operational definition of well-being but endorses a eudaimonic view of what fosters SWB in work and non-work domains.

### **2.2.3 Conceptualising Work-Life Balance**

The issue of work-life balance (WLB) is a frequent and divergent issue discussed by management scientists, organisational psychologists and sociologists with no universal definition and measure or theoretical framework. The focus initially was on the conflict between work and family. This notion of conflict is based on the idea that workplace and family demands are incompatible. Conflict thus occurs when strains of time, role and behaviour patterns in one role make it difficult to meet the requirements of another role. It was further argued that to view work life and family life as constituting two separate and non-overlapping worlds was a fairy tale (Kater, 2005). Subsequently, the idea of work-family balance emerged in order to shift focus from the negative impact of work on the family and to further accommodate the subjective perceptions accompanying individual WLB. An equal balance between work and family with respect to amount of time, involvement, and satisfaction was advocated (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003). This approach was later found to be problematic and unrealistic as it did not take into consideration individual preference. Also, it was argued that the use of the term family did not accommodate single, child-free individuals and important non-family activities such as leisure and community involvement. Hence, this research adopts the definition of WLB by Hanglberger, 2011, as a term that mirrors the overall sense of harmony between work and other life activities such as social life, health and other family issues, and ensuring a balance is attained between them in such a way that one does not negatively affect the other (Hanglberger, 2010).

However, literature reveals a gamut of work-life balance definitions. Clark (2008) for instance explicates WLB as contentment with workplace and home activities with least incidence of role conflicts. Greenhouse et al., (2003) conceptualises the term as the volume of time

invested and the amount of contentment derived from work and family responsibilities. Greenhaus & Allen (2011) focused on the fulfilment of role salience between multiple roles, and defined WLB as the extent to which an individual's effectiveness and satisfaction in work and family roles were compatible with the individuals' life role priorities at a given time. Carlson (2007) on the other hand defines WLB as the achievement of role-related anticipations negotiated between an individual and other related cohorts both in the workplace and family settings.

A common understanding from the above definition is that balance is not in the equal distribution of time and resources but in the distribution based on personal preferences. References in this paper to work-life balance describe a relationship that may not be perfectly distributed in an equal split, but rather in a distribution that is comfortable for the participant while taking cognisance of broader aspects of their life. In order to further unravel the discourse of WLB, other terminologies like work-home interaction (Mostert & Oldfield, 2009), work-life integration (Clark, 2000), work-family balance (Greenhaus et al., 2003), work-life alignment (Parkes & Langford, 2008), and work-family interface (Heraty et al., 2008) have emerged to offer a more pragmatic conceptualisations of the work-family interface. More recently, there has been an emphasis on a more holistic approach to achieving harmony between work and non-work roles called work-life integration. It is a framework that explores the impact of the community on work and life. It suggests that a healthy system of flexible and permeable boundaries can better facilitate and encourage work-life and community-life domains (S. C. Potgieter & A. Barnard, 2010).



However, the term ‘integration’ remains contentious. While creating the image of a more positive organisational system, the term nevertheless implies that the spheres of work and life must be merged, leading to fears of a contamination or the domination of personal life by the demands of paid employment (Mshololo, 2011). This proposition is embedded in the boundary theory, which focuses on the ways in which people create, maintain, or change boundaries in order to simplify and classify the world around them (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). This theory asserts that the more separately an individual can exercise control over work and non-work roles, the less the conflict experienced; however, the more these roles are integrated, the easier the transitions between roles (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Clark, 2000).

This approach highlights that the individual is not passive in his reaction to environmental conditions but active in the construction of boundaries in the negotiated interaction with others (Ashforth et al., 2000; Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2009). Integration is often facilitated by the mechanisms of flexibility and permeability. Flexibility refers to the malleability of the boundary between two or more role-domains – its ability to expand or contract to accommodate the demands of one domain or another – while permeability is the extent to which a boundary allows psychological or behavioural aspects of one role or domain to enter another (Ashforth et al., 2000). However, segmentation and integration of work and non-work roles can result into positive outcomes contingent on three main factor which are, preference for integration or segmentation, attributes that are unique to the individual and his environment such as their role identification and salience and contextual factors such as the work environment or working conditions that are concordant with employee preferences (Ashforth et al., 2000; Desrochers & Sargent, 2004).

In the context of this study, the academic environment allows for boundary permeability and flexibility which are co-antecedents to boundary strength, which then is a determining factor for work-life integration/segmentation. Organisations are responsible for ensuring healthy workplace practices to ensure balance between work and non-work roles. This refers to the macro level to WLB. Human resource management strategies, such as flexible work programmes, provision of childcare facilities, flexible leave arrangements and support in the area of training and development are implemented to ensure that employees are able to find a balance between work and non-work routines (Parvin and Kabir, 2011). However, considering the various conceptualisations of WLB, organisations tend to differ in their strategies, based on the concept of WLB that they prefer.

Issues around gender, class and ethnic differences are also proposed in the literature as playing a major role in WLB. In South Africa, as in other parts of the world, the scope of the idea of work-life balance has been influenced by the role of women in the workplace and their growing difficulties in meeting work- and non-work demands as societal expectations of women as being primarily responsible for domestic duties still persist (S. C. Potgieter & A. Barnard, 2010). Most of the research on WLB is still embedded in the gender paradigm.

WLB plays an important role in shaping individual well-being, employee productivity, organisational performance and a functioning society. While competing demand often lead to conflict and negative outcomes. Literature reveals that conflicts between work and family activities lead to lower satisfaction in family life and work (Colichi, Bocchi, Lima, & Popim, 2017), stress, depression, poor quality of work, reduced productivity, turnover and absenteeism (Seligman, 2011). There is consensus among researchers that a sense of harmony in life and

psychological well-being is an indicator of balance between work life demands (Kluczyk, 2013; Seligman, 2012).

## **2.2.4 Job Demand and Job Resource**

### **2.2.4.1 Job demand**

Bakker et al. (2011) defined job demands as the physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of a job that necessitate sustained physical and/or psychological effort. They are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs. According to Lee and Ashford (1996) job demands are seen to include role ambiguity, work pressure and workload. Hakanen et al. (2006) state that job demands may become stressors in situations which require high effort to sustain an expected performance level, consequently eliciting negative responses, including burnout (Hakanen et al., 2006). According to Leiter (1993), the relationship between job demands and job resources is based on the fact that an overly demanding work environment is typically accompanied by insufficient resources.

Academic discipline is encumbered with many forms of physical, social, psychological demands. Physical demands include lecturing, supervising, marking, administrative duties and community engagement, creating an unworkable pace of work due to inadequate time. Outcomes include fatigue, work anxiety, frustration and decreased job satisfaction. Secondly, social demand refers to stress arising from working relationships with colleagues. Lastly, psychological demands, arise from constant interaction with students which necessitates governing and regulating emotions, increasing stress levels and potentially leading to exhaustion (Buchs, 2014). A study on the impact of work-related stress on the well-being of academics supports the belief

that their direct relationship with large number of students, staff and administrators exposes them to burnout (Panatik et al., 2012).

#### **2.2.4.2 Job Resources**

Job resources refer to the physical, social and organisational aspects of a job. First, they reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs. Secondly they play an important role in the achievement of work goals; and thirdly they are thought to stimulate personal growth, learning and development (Bakker et al, 2011). Job resources buffer the effects of job demands, mitigate the effect of adverse working conditions and lessen energy depletion caused by stressful working conditions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

### **2.3 Empirical Review of Literature**

#### **2.3.1 Literature on Work-life Balance and Subjective Well-being**

The need to discover how work-life balance sustains subjective well-being has being examined by gender scholars, sociologist, psychologists, business managers and human resource professionals over the years (Shahid et al., 2016). A proper work-life balance enhances an individual's quality of life, improves self-esteem which, in turn, bolsters an work satisfaction and capabilities (Ramos, Francis, & Philipp, 2015). Literature review on work-to-family conflict argue that employees' management of work and family roles has major implications for well-being, job performance and family life (Gareis, Barnett, Ertel, & Berkman, 2009). Studies on work-life balance for academics are attracting more attention than before on account of the reforms in the higher education institutions. For academics, this has meant increased

administrative tasks, teaching and research, student supervision all of which has a debilitating effect on their work-life balance (O’Laughlin and Bischoff, 2005). Academic staffs in a Malaysian Public Higher Education Institution reported that they often felt obliged to devote more time to their work , as a result had limited time to spend for their own life and family (K. M. Noor, 2011). A study on job stress, well-being, work-life balance and work-life conflict among Australian academics found that job demands and pressure did not increase negative feelings or decrease well-being, but it did predict improved work-life balance and lower work-life conflict In the same study, feelings of anxiety and being internally threatened by work were negatively linked with academics’ work-life balance than were time and pressure demands (Bell, Rajendran, & Theiler, 2012).

A British study of academics suggests that perceived conflict between the work and non-work domains was the main predictor of strain, psychological distress and job dissatisfaction (G. Kinman & Jones, 2008). A few academics in a Czech university study reported that they experienced work-family conflicts, which were found to extensively predict burnout even though they had strong community, high role clarity social support and good quality leadership. Similarly, researchers in Australia revealed that academics experienced less balance between their work and personal lives, less well-being, more conflict between their personal and work lives whenever they were overwhelmed with work demands. They reported agitation, tension and nerve-racking feelings which further threaten their well-being (Bell et al., 2012).

Such studies of institutions of higher learning in South Africa are sparse, making no reference to the relationship between work-life balance and subjective well-being; and most of the studies on WLB focused on women. A South African study conducted by Barkhuizen &

Rothmann (2008) only investigated occupational stress and work-life balance, reporting that lack of work-life balance and excessive workload were important factors leading to ill-health among academics (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008). A study conducted on the WLB of female academics in South Africa confirmed that balance of life and work impacts on individual's career, mental health, stress levels and life satisfaction (Segal, 2014).

Nevertheless, it can be concluded that an inept work-life balance would negatively influence employee's subjective well-being. Gropel and Kuhl (2009) found that balance between work and personal roles of employees stimulated them to feel better about themselves generally – the perception of being able to attend to both work-life and social life positively affected their well-being. In contrast, the fear of insufficient time to strike a balance between work and social life resulted in frustration, thus affecting their well-being negatively (Chen, Tsui & Zhong, 2008).

Academics are encumbered with extensive tasks, including teaching and research, and the attainment of a balance is a challenge to the realisation of healthy well-being. Regrettably, the structure and content of academic jobs has been reported as crucial factors plaguing their well-being. For instance, research reports that taking too much time on academic work could cause problems, including sleeping disorders, family conflict especially with one's spouse, loss of vigour and declining work motivation (K. M. Noor, 2011).

While extant research leaves room for more investigation on the presumed connection between work-life balance and well-being, there is an existing assumption that improving work-life balance lead not only to increased productivity but to greater sense of well-being (Oludeyi & Olajide, 2016; Shahid, Amdan, Alwi, Syazreena, & Hassan, 2016).

### **2.3.2 Overview of Literature on Job Demand and Subjective Well-Being**

Job demand has been conceptualised as the physical, psychological and social features of a job that necessitates continuous physical and mental efforts with accompanied psychological costs. Pressing job demands of academics staff include work overload, time constraints, mental overload, lack of promotional opportunities, insufficient recognition, inadequate salaries, changing job roles, insufficient management, a lack of participation in management, inadequate job resources and funding, job insecurity, inequality in systems and a lack of regular feedback (Bezuidenhout & Cilliers, 2010). Job demands of academics have been proved to be a strong predictor of the exhaustion, stress and burnout (Bakker, Demerouti, & Sanz-Vergel, 2014; Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007). This is supported by the proposition that employees who have high job demands with a lack of resources are likely to develop burnout and experience a reduction of engagement (Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010). Several studies on job demand and subjective well-being have been reported in the literature. A comparative study of Kinman and Jones (2008) among UK academics reveals that job demands result in a higher psychological distress for UK academics than other groups of professionals. The study further shows that while academics are not only susceptible to psychological problems, they are also less satisfied with their jobs with a high propensity to quit (Kinman & Jones, 2008).

However, job demands may not have a direct impact upon employees' well-being, but instead it increases their work-life conflict and negatively impacts their well-being. (Hamilton Skurak, 2015). A study in Finland found that high workload was positively associated with work burnout, and increased burnout, in turn, was related to depressive symptoms, reduced work

engagement and life satisfaction (Upadyaya, Vartiainen, & Salmela-Aro, 2016). Likewise a study at a Czech university found that negative emotion emanating from stress and burnout were associated high quantitative demands (Kateřina Záborská et al., 2014).

A study conducted in South African higher education institutions found that job demands were prevalent among academics without proper job resources. This has posed a challenge for efficient talent management of academic staff, with particular reference to attracting millennials whilst at the same time retaining a talented and competent academic workforce (Nicolene Barkhuizen, Roodt, & Schutte, 2014). Similarly, a study in North-West University (South Africa) found that academics reported high levels of occupational stress relating to pay and benefits; overloads due to unrealistic time constraints and deadlines, which contributed significantly to physical and psychological ill health (N Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008).

### **2.3.3 Overview of Literature on Job resources and Subjective Well-being**

Job resources are well known as a source for generating positive feelings on account of the beneficial impact they have as a predictor of motivation and learning outcomes that are beneficial to workers' general well-being (Schaufeli & Taris, 2013). Bakker and Demerouti, (2007) define job resources as physical, psychological and social features of the organisation that are considered important in realising work goals, reducing the high demands of the job and inspiring growth and development. Studies have shown that autonomy, organisational support, learning opportunities, feedback from superiors in the organisation and effective social support have a positive impact on the well-being of academics and moderated symptoms associated with work burnout (Karatepe, 2011; Khan, Yusoff, & Khan, 2014). In a study conducted amongst the academic faculty in a Czech university, feeling of competence was associated with work



environment variables which could be related to involvement in decision making, autonomy, collegiality and reduced pressure to produce (Kateřina Zábrodská et al., 2014). Job demands and a lack of resources were also known to increase the levels of burnout, while the availability of resources increased the levels of engagement (Coetzer & Rothmann, 2007)

In the same vein, academics reported that limited resources were the main barrier to carrying out their task efficiently and they also felt frazzled and demoralised by the unrealistic goals set by university management without the necessary resources or funding. Zabrodská et al (2014) in their study found that the well-being of academic faculty members was hampered by major job resource deficits in fields of autonomy, involvement in decision making and strong social support. In addition, a South African study by Roodt et al., (2014) established that the present condition of the academic working environment in higher education institutions was characterised by huge job demands with relatively few resources to meet these extensive job demands. Obviously, academic well-being is bound to be greatly affected by increased job demands and absence of job resources (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli, 2009). Job resources not only assist the employees in handling extensive job demands, but are probably associated with self-starting behaviour (Botha & Mostert, 2014). These findings also support the notion that the provision of job resources creates intrinsic motivation for individuals to apply their strengths and by so doing experience authenticity, vitality and well-being (Botha & Mostert, 2014).

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.4.1 The Dual Process Model**

This study employed the use of the Dual Process model, which is an extension of the job-demand theory as a theoretical framework, for the reason that this model permits the inclusion and incorporation of all of the constructs under examination in the present study. The Job Demand-Resources model presumes that in every profession there are risk factors and facilitating factors that are classified under job demands and job resources (Bakker, et al., 2007).

The dual process model propound that job demand initiates a process that explain and predict well-being at work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) called the health impairment process, which is also known as the reduced energy process or strain process. It represents the imbalance between low job resources and high job demands that may result to occupational stress and in turn, to negative health and unwanted organisational outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2014). Job demands are the main initiators of the health impairment process. Whilst it is believed that a certain level of demand is advantageous, excessive challenge may turn into a stressor and consequently lead to burnout (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). The beneficial demand is referred to as challenging demand, assumed to possess the ability to enhance skill, personal growth, and future gain while the other type of demand is referred to as hindrance demand which could hamper personal growth and learning. Resources make it possible for the employee to compensate for the hindrance job demands and reduce negative effects like fatigue and disengagement. Both demands are positively related to burnout; however studies have repeatedly shown that prolonged exposure to hindrance demands combined with low levels of job resources results in negative health consequences (Bakker et al., 2005).

The second process posits that job resources possess potential to propel well-being through the second process called the motivational process. This process is divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Resources oftentimes satisfy uncomplicated human needs, such as the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, individual development through intrinsic motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Secondly, job resources as extrinsic motivators may enable individuals to achieve their work goals and thus perform better (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014).

In order to explore how various job demands relate to well-being, several indicators of well-being, both positive and negative, have been examined. Most studies that focused on negative indicators of well-being at work, usually emotional exhaustion and psychological distress, found a positive relationship between the stressors and the negative indicators, meaning that the experience of demand was likely to lead to increased emotional exhaustion and distress (Sonnentag & Frese, 2012). In essence, job demands are elements of the working situation that can potentially elicit strain reactions of a physiological and psychological nature. Resources, however, carry the potential to counter these negative effects. In sum, previous research with the JD-R model clearly indicates that job demands and resources interact and have a multiplicative impact on employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014).

More recently, the JD-R model has been criticised for its sole focus on the working conditions as predictors of burnout or lessening of engagement. This prompted the integration of personal resources which is defined as the psychological features or aspects of the self that are generally associated with resiliency and ability take charge of one's environment. It assumes that people who are high in optimism and self-efficacy believe that good things will happen to them,

and that they are capable of handling unforeseen events. Personal resources directly affect well-being by reducing burnout and increasing engagement. They moderate the relationship between job characteristics and well-being, buffer the likelihood of burnout from job demands and stimulate positive effects of job resources on engagement. Personal resources influence the perception of job characteristics and informs the way people understand and react to their environment (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). For instance, research on academic staff indicates that the main source of stress is the context of work. Strain from the content of work turned out to be surprisingly low, which may result directly from particularly rich personal resources of the surveyed professional group (Springer & Werner, 2018).

Though the JD-R model was initially centred around the effects of job conditions on well-being, researchers have further used the model to interpret how job resources and demands influence exposure to positive and negative work-family outcomes (Glavin & Schieman, 2012). Excessive work pressures represent demands that intensify the link between role blurring and work-to-family conflict, as individuals who experience excessive job demands are forced to engage in role blurring that favours work over the family. The positive association between role blurring and work-to-family conflict is often stronger for workers who report excessive work pressures (Glavin & Schieman, 2012).

The JD-R model suggests that job resources weaken the association between role blurring and work-to-family conflict, whereas job demands reinforce this association (Glavin & Schieman, 2012). It is thus established that the interactional effect between job demands and job resources and personal resources accounts for work-life balance and has positive consequences for employee well-being.

### **2.4.2 Self Determination Theory**

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a theory that embraces the eudaimonic conceptualisation of well-being. It is an organismic dialectical approach to both personal and occupational well-being. It begins with the assumption that people are active organisms with evolved tendencies toward growing, mastering ambient challenges, and integrating new experiences into a coherent sense of self. These natural developmental tendencies do not, however, operate automatically but interact within the context in which they reside. This context can either nurture or hinder the active nature of the organism; factors in the social environment can either support or disrupt psychological growth, the movement towards a coherent and unified personality and the sense of well-being, or it can catalyse lack of integration, defence, and fulfilment of need-substitutes (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Thus, it is the dialectic between the active organism and the social context that is the basis for SDT's predictions about behaviour, experience, and development.

According to self-determination theory, well-being is driven by the satisfaction of needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence. Autonomy embraces the need to organise behaviour and experiences, and to act in one's best interest. The need for relatedness includes not only the need to receive and give love and support, but also the feeling of belonging to a group or a community. The need for competence is satisfied when an individual feels able to control his or her actions and ensure that these will produce the desired results – connected to feelings of self-efficacy and personal fulfilment. These three basic psychological needs are universally necessary for optimal human functioning (Deci & Ryan, 2000) as they foster, rather than define, well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Social and working environments can satisfy or obstruct these needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and determine the level of intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This is closely tied to eudaimonic conceptualisations of well-being as being necessary for human

thriving (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This connection was taken a step further recently with the introduction of a formalised model of eudaimonia based on self-determination theory (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). This model categorises eudaimonic living into four central motivational concepts:

1. Pursuing intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, goals and values;
2. Behaving in an autonomous and volitional, rather than controlled, manner;
3. Being mindful and acting with awareness; and
4. Behaving in need satisfying ways (Ryan et al., 2008).

There has also been research linking the self-determination theory with the JD-R model, which explains that job resources satisfy the basic psychological needs, while job demands thwart them. Job demands reduce basic needs satisfaction and in turn decrease well-being (Van den Broeck, De Cuyper, De Witte, & Vansteenkiste, 2010). As such, the JD-R model is known as a model that explains the social context of the workplace, within a self-determination theory perspective.

### **2.4.3 Theoretical Relevance to the Present Study**

In examining how academic staffs narrate their lived experience, this study adopted the Dual Process Model and the self-determination theory to investigate how work-life balance and job-demand experiences promote or threaten overall well-being. These approaches look beyond classifications and examine the intricacies and overlap between constructs and expound on how socio-cultural and organisational factors impact on the well-being of academic staff, based on the notion that academic work creates conflict and tension in work- and non-work-related roles.

However, the way in which academics cope with this tension is examined with reference to effective functioning in domains of work and family, with the outcomes of job and family satisfaction creating a sense of inner fulfilment and well-being.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has critically reviewed literature on the issues of wellbeing amongst academic staffs. It was demonstrated that higher education is increasingly becoming notorious for its tough working conditions (that is high job demand and low job resources) and academic staffs are faced with difficulty in managing these challenges. It was understood that this prevalent challenge further shape behaviour, experiences and influences how academics pursue happiness. The present study therefore aimed to contribute to existing literature by providing an understanding of job demands and job resources and how it may impact on subjective well-being. Throughout the chapter, each of these constructs as well as their relationship with one another were defined and conceptualised. The Dual Process Model of Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) as well as the Self Determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002) were presented as the theoretical framework for the present study. These theories allowed for the incorporation of all the constructs of the present study while explaining how aspects of a job can foster positive emotions, which in turn can produce satisfied, committed and happy employees.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter addresses the methodology which entails bridging the gap between the research questions and implementing the research. This chapter will begin by outlining and providing explanations of the type of research design, the research setting and population, how data was collected and the instruments that were used during data collection. The data collection procedure and data analysis method further explains and describes how the data, after having been collected, is analysed and interpreted. The data collection procedure and data analysis methods will then be presented, followed by an account of the ethical considerations adhered to in this study.

#### **3.2 Research Questions**

The general aim of this study was to explore the subjective perception of the well-being among academic staff as influenced by work-life balance and job demand-resource, and:

- To investigate how the experience of work-life balance influences the subjective well-being of academic staff.
- To investigate how the experience of job-demand influences the subjective well-being of academic staff.



- To investigate how job-resource influences the subjective well-being of academic staff.

### **3.3 Research Design**

This research adopted the qualitative method of inquiry which seeks to explain phenomena by using evidence from the data and from the literature (Clarke & Braun, 2014). Qualitative research enables researchers to understand and reveal points of view as well as the meaning of people's lived experiences (Turner, 2010). This research sought to explore how academic staff conceptualise their own well-being as influenced by work-life balance and job demand-resource. The interpretative phenomenological approach was used because it explores personal experience and is concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event, as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement. In addition, it provides insight into how individuals perceive the situations they are facing and how they make sense of their personal and social world. The approach gives attention to detailed examination of the participant's lifeworld and attempts to explore personal experience and perception thereof, as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself (Smith & Osborn, 2015). In this study, the researcher was able to produce rich and detailed accounts of the subjective well-being of academic staff using a semi-structured, in-depth, one-on-one interview. The semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher and the participant to engage in a dialogue in real time. It also provided enough space and flexibility for original and unexpected issues to arise, which the researcher further investigated in more detail.

### **3.4 Population and Sampling Strategy**

The sampling technique used to select the participants for this study was that of non-probability purposive sampling. Purposive sampling empowers the scientist to incorporate particular factors

of interest, free of the need to ensure the statistical inclusivity required in order to ensure generalisability (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). The sample size is a small sample of 10 participants in this study. Participants were chosen based on the relevance of their experiences and knowledge to the study on the assumption that they would provide rich and valuable information. The knowledge and experience of participants was taken into account as well as their accessibility and readiness to participate, ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an fluent and introspective manner (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

### 3.4.1 Research Participants

This study was carried out at a university in South Africa with 10 participants from the academic staff of Howard College. Having obtained permission from the university, the researcher approached academics individually to seek their consent to participate in the study.

**Table 1: Participant Demographics**

<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age Bracket</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Race</b>
Geni	Female	46-50	None	Afrikaans
Ambassador	Male	35-40	2	African
Tembi	Male	40-45	None	African
Gumede	Female	40-45	2	African
MP Kabb	Female	40-45	3	African

Isqgiki	Female	40-45	2	African
Nokuphila	Female	30-35	3	African
Tigere	Male	40-45	2	African
Bindela	Male	35-40	3	African
Yusuf	Male	40-45	1	Indian

All the participants were permanent staff of the selected university from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

### **3.5 Data Collection and Procedure**

This study used semi-structured in-depth interviews as a data collection method in line with the interpretivist approach. In this method an interview schedule structures and directs the discussion of the participants around specific issues (Whitley, 2002). The semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher and the participant to engage in conversation on how work-life balance and job demand-resource influence their subjective well-being. It also gave ample space and flexibility for unique and unanticipated issues to emerge, which the researcher additionally researched in more detail. The flexibility of semi structured interview provided the opportunity for participants to freely discuss their perspectives. According to Rappaport 1990, semi structured interview allows participants to express their own representation of reality. This helps participants to acknowledge their sense of agency and control over their lives. The researcher therefore explores individuals' experiences and how they attribute meaning to aspects of their

everyday life. This method helps participants to expand on the taken-for-granted or perceived social norms. Only by exploring these taken-for-granted do we get a glimpse of complicated social reality (Barrett, Brown, Beecham, Otoo-Oyortey, & Naleie, 2011). All 10 participants availed themselves for the one-on-one interviews conducted in English, as all participants were comfortable conversing in the language. The planned time for each interview was 45 to 60 minutes; however the shortest interview lasted for 18 minutes and the longest about 45 minutes. No monetary or other incentives were used as a means to encourage participation.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Interviews were initiated, recorded, transcribed and examined through a set of systematic procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The analysis of the data was guided by the three main research questions:

1. How does the experience of work-life balance influence the subjective well-being of academic staff?
2. How does the experience of job demand influence the subjective well-being of academic staff?
3. How does job resource influence the subjective well-being of academic staffs?

These broad research questions were used as a framework for the interview process and were conducted and transcribed by the researcher. The interview transcripts were read and coded for themes in relation to the research questions and the theoretical framework. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the collected data. The process of data analysis in thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke, 2006 was used. The first step was familiarisation with the data, which enabled the researcher to actively engage with the depth and breadth of the content.

Secondly, generating initial codes involved identifying features of the data (semantic or latent content) that appeared interesting, or the most basic segment or element of the raw data or information that could be meaningfully assessed regarding the subject (Boyatzis, 1998: 63). The third step involved searching for a theme by sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts in the identified themes. The fourth process involved the reviewing and refinement of themes; each theme was analysed in terms of the broader social context of the subject under investigation and literature review was used to support the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The fifth process was defining and naming themes which involved a continuous analysis of each theme, generating clear definitions and names for each theme. The last process involves producing a concise and logical report with sufficient evidence of themes within the data.

According to Braun and Clark (2006), thematic analysis is an interpretive process, appropriate for interpretivist research; it provides a rich and insightful understanding of phenomena, offering a wide application across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches. This makes thematic analysis more appropriate for studies such as the present study.

### **3.7 Rigour of Qualitative Research**

Demonstrating rigour in the qualitative research is important in establishing the quality of the research. This research made use of the TACT (Trustworthiness, Auditability, Credibility and Transferability) framework to ensure rigour of this research. The researcher ensured reflexivity by ensuring that the findings were situated within the views of the participants. Also, the researcher used a logical process in analysing and organising data using thematic analysis in order to achieve trustworthiness. The researcher ensured that the methodology outlined was clearly followed. Furthermore, credibility was also established by careful describing the data and

verifying its source. The researcher ensured that the participants were accurately recorded. Finally the researcher provided all the necessary information regarding the context of the study (Daniel, 2018).

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

An ethical clearance with full approval was obtained from the university's ethics committee and permission was granted to proceed with the research (see Appendix A). Official authorisation for the study and for access to the sample was obtained from the Registrar of the university. Additionally, informed consent (Appendix B) and the declaration of consent (Appendix C) were obtained from all participants.

Prior to the interviews being scheduled, the participants were briefed verbally on the aims and objectives of the study and were fully informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage. At the outset of each interview, this was reiterated to the interviewee. Assurances of confidentiality were given verbally by the researcher and in the informed consent form (see Appendix 1). All participants were informed that pseudonyms would be used for the purposes of reporting and their names would not be used in any reports emanating from the study, in order to protect their identity. Permission was granted by the participants to audio-record the interviews; however the content of the recordings was not exposed to anyone except the researcher's academic supervisor. They were interviewed in their workplaces upon appointment. Finally, the outcomes of this study were reported back to the participants and to the management of the university so as to enable the organisation to be aware of and possibly act on the findings and proposed recommendations.

### **3.9 Position of the Researcher**

The interpretative phenomenology analysis (IPA) used in this research emphasised the active role of the researcher in the process of understanding the lifeworld or experience(s) of the participant. The researcher did not attempt to define or obtain facts or seek the truth but rather to understand the participants' own experience, the meaning they made of it and, then to consciously and systematically make sense of such meaning. IPA protagonists refer to the process of the researcher making sense of the participant's sense-making through understanding which arises through empathy and questioning as the double hermeneutic. In IPA, engaging with the double hermeneutic is regarded as central to knowledge making (Smith, 2010).

While making sense of sense-making, the researcher adopted an open, non-judgemental approach, while at the same time holding back past or prior assumptions or knowledge because as a student the researcher had a different understanding of what academia was all about. Despite having a vague understanding as a student of the context of the participants, I recognised that I was an outsider who had not experienced many of the life-circumstances of an academic. The researcher is a 28-year-old black psychology graduate, not married with no children. Therefore, in representing narrations of the academic staff, I needed to critically reflect on my own interpretations throughout the interviews. The researcher therefore was able to develop a curious stance in order to engage reflexively and mindfully on the role played in the creation of knowledge. In order to assist in this process, the researcher used the interpretative paradigm in terms of which reality is said to be socially constructed and this reality can be explored and constructed through human interactions, and meaningful actions. It is concerned with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals and assumes that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation; hence there is no objective knowledge which

is independent of thinking and human reasoning. It supports the use of multiple methods in collecting and analysing data; methods which yield insight and understanding of behaviour, explain actions from the participant's perspective and do not dominate the participants. Interpretivism illustrates a framework that intentionally creates and provides reflective and generative space for the researcher and the participant (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001).

### **3.10 Conclusion**

The study used a qualitative approach to explore the narratives of ten academic staffs in a South African University. It was critical that this study employs a qualitative paradigm because the majority of previous studies that explored subjective well-being within the South African context employed the quantitative approach. Purposive sampling was employed to identify the participant. Data collection was conducted through interviews with the participant using a semi-structured interview schedule. The interview schedule had open-ended questions which provided the opportunity for participants to freely discuss their perspectives. Privacy and confidentiality were ensured by interviews being conducted in private rooms with only the researcher and the participant were present. The use of recorders was done with full written consent from each participant.

Thematic analysis was used for coding and analysing the various themes that emerged from the narratives. All ethical guidelines were followed. The researcher adopted an open, non-judgemental approach in the process of understanding the experience(s) of the participant.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents an analysis and discussion of the findings of this study in relation to the relevant literature. The findings of this study are dynamic and multifaceted. The research focused on the role work-life balance and job demand-resource play in the well-being of academic staff. The first theme, negotiating a balance, explores how participants manoeuvre to fulfil multiple roles simultaneously for a sustained life balance.

The second theme, interplay of job demands and subjective well-being, investigates a range of job-demands, namely work overload, emotional exhaustion and lack of participation in management. This theme also examines how well-being is either achieved or impaired at work. The third theme, protective resources encountered, analyses the role of available resources and personal resources on well-being.

Finally, this chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

#### **4.2 Negotiating a healthy balance in life**

Similar to previous findings participants construct their relationship to work-life balance as something they are expected to personally manage (Toffoletti & Starr, 2016). They view themselves as individual agents responsible for managing a successful work-life balance.

Therefore, since the challenge of work and family life demands is inevitable thus all the participants have chosen to attain well-being by negotiating a healthy balance. This negotiation is manifest in their ability to actively manage boundaries, devote time with the goal of improving well-being in one or more domain. Participants mentioned that academia offers a flexible work arrangement that allows for a level of work-life balance. However, this flexibility increased connectedness with work and often permitted little separation between personal and professional responsibilities. According to Ashforth et al (2000), this is what is referred to as ‘boundary blurring’. The extent of the permeability between the boundaries is the extent to which spillover between work and non-work domains occurs. Therefore the issues that emerged from the participants’ narratives on how WLB impacted on their well-being centred mainly on their ability to maintain boundaries between their work and non-work domains. Literature on work-life balance abounds with examples of balance becoming a problem for academics, particularly due intensification of time demands. It was observed that the participants had a preference for more segmented domains despite their role integration. For the purposes of this study, the analysis was focused on the dynamics of work-life, interception of participants’ boundary management, expectation of multiple roles, and identities and strategies employed to create boundaries that match their preferences.

#### **4.2.1 Managing the boundaries**

Participants varied in the degree to which they preferred to segment or integrate their work-life domains and the degree to which they were able to segment or integrate their work-life. It was often argued that an individual’s preference becomes a determinant of life choices, in particular the choice between activities relating to work and non-work domains. Six participants expressed

their lack of willingness to have a flexible non-work boundary; however they were often not able to maintain that position given the intensification of work. Four participants preferred to integrate both domains. Participants shared their experiences:

**Yusuf:** *I do not take work home. Once I leave the office that is the end, I need time for my family. I really get frustrated anytime I have take work home.*

**Ambassador:** *Family life as well is affected because sometimes I say let me go home, you go home but you on your books again, you know, like this weekend I was at home but I had this thesis that I had to mark, you sit with family but you are thinking about taking two hours to hide yourself. If I had my way I won't work at home.*

**Geni:** *Intellectual work can't always be measured in terms of the day, you know but yea, and if work stuff is out of sync the quality of other things start to disintegrate so to be on your A-game you sometimes have to work extra hours, stay longer in the office; work at home if you have to, although I prefer not to work at home, because as it [is] I stay long hours in the office.*

**MP Kabb:** *I had to say no work on weekends unless am gonna lecture on Monday morning 7:30 and I need to kind of go over my notes and stuffs, fair enough or for example during marking so you see I compromise in some ways so if am marking during exams sometimes that a full weekend of marking soooo yea I think I manage that quite well, I suppose I sound contradictory.*

*Bindela: I already spend long hours in the office, because sometimes during the day you are distracted so I stay back to do some research work and so the little time that I have when I get home usually want to use that time to relax and spend quality time with my family, and attend to other things that need my attention*

These excerpts highlight the permeability of boundaries and the extent to which spillover between work and non-work domains can occur. Yusuf said he preferred a physical boundary that is he prefers not to take work home, although whenever he has to compromise it alters his psychological well-being. According to Olson-Buchanan and Boswell 2006, high levels of role integration were associated with more negative reactions to interruptions from one domain to another. MP Kabb similarly expressed her desire to work only during the week, which can be referred to as creating a temporal boundary. While creating a temporal boundary she mentioned that, ‘I had to say no work on weekends . . .’ in a deliberate effort to control her schedule as a behavioural tactic to help to control the flow of interruption between work and non-work domains. It is also reflects of the deployment of self-regulatory strategy. Thus, the capacity for self-regulation seems to be a central work competence for preserving employee boundary control in an academic work context characterised by increasing demands on permeable and flexible boundaries between work and personal life. When dealing with high level of job demand employees are required to exert self-regulatory resources by changing the way they would otherwise think, feel, or behave (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). Having the capacity for self-regulation is connected to developing an overall sense of well-being, referred to in literature as attention control (Baumeister & Vohs, 2003). Geni’s narrative also indicated her ability to

maintain a flexible schedule by adapting to the changing demands of work. She further pointed out that her preference for segmenting her work-life domain could be attributed to her experience of increased work pressure and an erosion of flexibility previously enjoyed. It was reported thus:

***Geni:** In last four to five years and what happens is that, increasingly that flexibility that came with academia started to be severely compromised so for example at one stage I would fit in for example I could have time for exercise which I believed allowed me to have a level of well-being and mental health and that helped me to cope with the demands of my job and in the last three to four years that time became increasingly less, the amount that I have to spend in the office, the amount of extra hours am expected to put in.*

Other participants shared similar sentiments regarding the segmentation of the domain of work from home; however they reported having intrusive work thoughts that interfered with the home domain. This is referred to as work-family internal conflict or internal interference, that is, psychological preoccupation with one role that interferes with the ability to fully engage in other role while in the other role (Carlson & Frone, 2003). This interference is aggravated by information and communication technologies which render it almost impossible to separate domains.

***Nokuphila:** Academics takes so much of one's time that you just sometimes want to leave everything in the office as much as possible, but even at that sometimes am at home thinking about my student's project going to Google scholar on my phone thinking about an article obsessing about it, going home sitting in bed googling; I can remember a time going to my mum and dad and I should have being present with them but I was so*

*obsessed with this one Masters student that [I] am working with there was like thinking about it going to Google scholar on my phone thinking about an article obsessing about it, going home sitting in bed googling cos nobody sees the conceptual work that we do outside of the hours of university; am thinking through theoretical dilemmas in the shower thinking through; my colleagues used to say she always had the best revelation in the shower.*

Four other participants did not mind integrating both domains. Integration is an inherent intertwining of the work and non-work domains. It emphasises the transactional and potent association between work and life demands. There is an acknowledgment of trade-offs in one's expenditure of attention and efforts to separate domains (Feigon et al., 2018; Michel & Clark, 2011). According to Morris and Madsen (2007) integrated individuals have greater opportunity for coherence, unity, fulfillment, happiness, maturity, health, and wellness (Morris & Madsen, 2007). Literature suggests that integration may help people balance work and family life, but only to a degree. If work and family domains become too integrated and the boundary becomes blurred or ambiguous, it can result in conflict, stress and work or life dissatisfaction (Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2005).

They reported as follows:

***Gumede:*** *Academia is quite tasking, it is very difficult to just not to work at home. Even if I don't have scripts to mark or things like that, I have my own research work to do and sometimes home is just the best place to work without distractions especially because sometimes one is so distracted in school from consulting with students.*

**Tembi:** *I need time to write articles, get published, to do these kind of things aside from marking and consultations, so yea academia is almost like a round-the-clock job, the pressure is there you know, academia is very much product oriented so yea, the essence is getting the work done; it doesn't matter where and but again we are not busy all year round so I still get time to do other things although not as much as I would have loved to.*

**Isqgiki:** *My kids are quite young so I have to manage my academic work and still attend some important functions for them and thing[s] like that. Its tough especially as a women but one just has to try; there's time when I think about my weekends I think about where I can take the kids where am able to work at the same time so there's a lot of time where I take them to my parents, even on Sunday after church am thinking let me go to Spar cos at least Spar has that place where they can play and at least I can work for about two hours, they can eat , play you know, I look for places where I can manage them while working, am always thinking of areas like that.*

Gumede's and Tembi's accounts capture the flexibility that academic work provides to alter work time and space. It also reveals the influence of traditional understanding that requirements of academic work include carrying out tasks outside of the institution. This understanding has created a contextual environment where work is ubiquitous. This situation can have unforeseen consequences on the well-being of workers, such as the inability to 'switch off'. Participant also recognised contexts in their lives which have shaped their identities.

Isqgiki's account highlights that gender remains a salient issue in the discourse of work-life balance. Women are known to often organise their schedules so as to accommodate the

demands of family. Gender ideology norms perpetuate women as the ideal parent that provides unlimited support at home and handles all childcare responsibilities in the expectation that she maintains this role regardless of the tensions of pursuing parenthood with a professional job. This pressure on women creates an everyday presence and involvement that is absent from dominant societal expectations of what constitutes ‘a good father’ (James, 2011). Even though researchers have argued more recently that socio-economic changes and daily practices of negotiation in the domestic sphere, have given birth to new forms of resistance to conventions of defining work and family in narrow ways, altering gender relations in the domestic sphere (Özbilgin, Beauregard, Tatli, & Bell, 2011), these changes are not substantial enough to suggest absolute equality for women and men in domains of work and domestic life. Similar sentiments were shared by another participant who, as a mother had an understanding of the importance of the multiple care-giving role women play:

**MP Kabb:** *The responsibilities are quite a lot as a mother, a wife, you know as an African woman is a daughter-in-law, am a sister to my siblings, am a lecturer, am a student and am a Christian and I have responsibilities in church as well and that just takes all of my time. It is expected that I am always there for the family al (sic) hold it all together, it can sometimes be overwhelming but one just tries to balance.*

Participants who were unmarried and had very limited family responsibility reported reduced pressure and were more able to manage the work non-work domain. One of them reported as follows:

**Geni:** *“I must say that my family responsibilities are quite limited compared to some of my colleagues so that I have been able to manage quite well. I really think you will find a*



*difference when you speak to a woman who've got children or more extended family that they have to try and accommodate.*

On the other hand another participant was apprehensive about the extent to which his career might be hindered by having a family. Further analysis of the narrative of Bindela captures the perspective that changes in life events may have an impact on people's evaluations of their subjective well-being. He indicated thus:

**Bindela:** *I think it would be hard, mind you if am married have to be living together with that person and kids then the demands increase, I might have to be sleeping late, and I would want to wake up early to do my job, am always worried about that, I don't know what would happen when that time comes*

Another issue that was noted from the narrative of one of the participants was that the degree to which individuals negotiate the work and non-work interface was not only influenced by the intensification of work and societal ideals but also by personal values that equate self-worth with hard work and career success, and the idea that equates commitment and productivity with long work hours. The participant emphasised his preference for his career which may serve to reduce dissonance in other aspects of life. Employees who embody the notion of the ideal worker (ie long hours, more promotion) tend to derive greater amounts of self-esteem and identity from their work. Pressures from embodying the value system of the ideal worker result in greater intrusions of work into life and, consequently, disruptions of work-life balance.

**Ambassador:** *I really like my work, my life revolves round my work because I spend a lot of time working; what has happen[ed] is I end up enjoying it so I don't go out I don't like*

*taking leave simply because I don't like to wake up in the morning and do nothing you know I always want to do something related to my work, obviously as you are working hard and there is money coming in so you see, yea am getting something, plus the more you work the more you get chances of being promoted*

He further stated:

***Ambassador:** In terms of the negative I feel like I don't have a life, I don't go out with friends, I don't have friends I have people that I say I hang out with once or twice I don't have a friend I can go to after work and we chill and talk, no and the family life as well is affected but thank God I have a partner who takes care of the home.*

This account was given by a male participant and it mirrors the traditional perceptions of men being the ideal worker. More recently there has been the advent of modern-day men in the workforce who desire to perform their work and family responsibilities, although they may waver between spending quality time and working more to provide better options for his family (Munn & Greer, 2015). These modern-day men do not always fit the ideal worker stereotype. However, the patriarchal nature of South African culture continues to perpetuate the ideal worker idea, even in dual income couples. Work-family literature continues to perpetuate the notion of the ideal worker by differentially including women and men in work-family discussions according to stereotypical views of traditional gender roles. More recently the narrative seems to be changing as men have been observed to be taking on more family responsibilities and thus may struggle with the work and family conflict, a struggle that is stereotypically reserved for women (Kaufman, 2013).

Two of the participant also said that they had taken on additional commitments outside their academic work and these activities had greatly enhanced their careers and financial positions, adding that the ability to take on additional commitments was due to the flexibility provided by their work as academics. This ties in with extant literature that there is a very fine line between how academics make use of flexibility to promote their own work-life balance and how flexibility could become hindrance to achieving a balance between work and life outside of work.

*Yusuf: I have a very good thing that I do by the side; I don't wanna say it but it helps people achieve a lighter side of their lives, it helps me to be more psychologically fit, although it only means less social outings.*

*Nokuphila: I run a practice which also demands my time and attention; having this practice has definitely helped me to live a more rewarding life but I have had to fit in a lot of things which can be very stressful.*

#### **4.3.2 Devoting time**

Further accounts revealed that participants' needs differed, and therefore the devotion of time was a subjective act since the notion of balance differed in terms of their needs and expectations in different life roles. Some participants emphasised the importance of family over work and others narrated that they ensured that neither work nor other roles were neglected. In particular participants reflected more on their ability to find a balance which took into account the domain they considered salient.

***Nokuphila:** I make out time for the things that are important in one's life; my family is important to me, they are so dear to my heart so I make time out for them amidst my tight schedule; once I can do that am satisfied.*

***Ambassador:** Family is life, they are my priority; when push comes to shove its family that would stand by you, no matter what so I don't joke with them you know, just the same way I don't joke with my work; basically my life is in circle, it's work and home, and am happy*

Participants stated that creating time to fulfil various roles made them happy and satisfied. This contradicts the perspective that work-life balance is objective and inflexible, in that balance is obtained when equal time and involvement are put into both the work and family roles and when equal satisfaction is derived from these roles (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003; S. C. Potgieter & A. Barnard, 2010). It however reinforces the idea that each individual encounters work-life balance in various ways and that the experience of balance is not rooted in the amount of time given to one specific area compared to another; but rather the value gained from each area to create counter-balance to create a fulfilling life (Poelmans, Kalliath, & Brough, 2008; Roberts, 2007). Balance is a subjective phenomenon which is inseparably connected to satisfaction and often a function of individual priorities or differences.

Participants articulated as follows:

***Bindela:** I think it's quite important that we give need (sic) attention and take some time out to attend to other aspects of life, family inclusive and also doing the things that make you happy; for example I love going to the gym, you know, it's important to do this things*

*because academic work can consume you, you can drown in it especially with the research outputs expected.*

**Gumede:** *I can't say I play much but I try to have time out of work therefore balancing life and work plays an important role in the life of an academic because really if as an academic you are only living for work you might end up being sickly. Normally do I create a space on this 24 hours I allocate a certain percentage to work and there is another time allocated to family and there is another time that is my me time when work is not supposed to get in even my kids and grandkids are not supposed to get in when I need to enjoy my me time I do not allow work or even my grandkids to interfere with my time so that's how I keep myself balanced and also going to church for me and singing it lifts my spirit up. I also try to make informed decision like I once had a home faraway in Mariannhill Pinetown. I sold my home there and bought a house outside here because I want to be closer to work; I don't want to be stuck in traffic in the morning, I don't want to work for petrol, so yea . . . so taking care of myself goes a long way in my life.*

The excerpt shows that participants often negotiate a balance by devoting time to things outside work such as family, spiritual activities and sport, striving to improve their work-life balance by either gaining greater control over the time they spend working. Gaining control is beneficial considering the job demands and their potential to consume and lead to ill health, as indicated in the narratives of Gumede and Bindela. Gumede further mentioned creating a 'me time' for herself which illustrates a mindset that refuses to be dominated by work. She also spoke of the importance of making informed decisions. Literature suggests that individuals with a locus of

control have a tendency to perform better and have a more effective coping strategies which lead to better psychological adjustment, health and psychological well-being (Grafteo & Silvestri, 2006; Stocks, April, & Lynton, 2012). Internal locus of control predicts positive affect and life satisfaction, helpful in managing stress that is attached to obtaining balance between work and family life. Life-satisfaction tends to be greater among those who are resilient and have ability to control their environment (Roddenberry & Renk, 2010). Drawing on the self-determination theory (SDT), devoting time to an under-satisfied and salient personal domain is proposed to be helpful in gratifying the basic psychological need of relatedness.

More excerpt reveal:

***Geni:** In terms of balance I have been increasingly concerned about the ability to manage all those different parts of my life, however am making a concerted effort this year to manage my time more carefully so that I can, that am sure that my mental health is prioritised.*

***Tembi:** So yea am trying to make deliberate effort, cos you know you need those times when you don't think about work, it would refresh me; just imagine going to a comedy show you would have fun , when you are there you don't think about work, just enjoying and laughing and then you can worry about work after that.*

Geni expressed concern about her inability to manage different parts of life, but articulated her decision to make concerted effort to manage her time carefully. Likewise Tembi also said that he was trying to make deliberate effort. Central to their narrative is the sense of creating a balance for a better psychological well-being. Ability to manage time simplifies work and in turn

enhances mental health. Time management involves planning and exercising conscious control of time spent on specific activities. It is also a self-regulatory skill that enhances well-being. According to Well 2012, devoting time to completely unplug from work and engage in leisure activities, taking personal time is crucial for eudaimonic well-being.

#### **4.2.3 Partner Support**

Two of the academic staff in this sample who had partners or spouses reported that their spouses were highly supportive of their work, which made it easier to them to maintain a healthy life. Most of the participants considered emotional support as the major contribution of their partners. The presence of supportive relationships can provide people with access to valuable resources such as empathy, assistance and advice that is helpful in navigating life challenges (Russo, Shteigman, & Carmeli, 2016). The JD-R model sees partner support as a resource which helps the effective management of life roles. A number of studies indicate that home support as well as partner support for men and women has a positive impact on their careers and well-being (Amin, Ghani, & Arshad, 2017; Pluut, Ilies, Curşeu, & Liu, 2018). Social support can help individuals expand their capacity for work-life balance, which in turn cultivates psychological availability for stimulating positive energy at work (Russo et al., 2016). Participants reported as follows:

***Geni:** The one thing that [I] am also fortunate about is that I have a partner who's got a very structured work and that is very enabling for me so I have a supportive partner who knows, have got a very successful female partner who manages her work well.*

***Nokuphila:** My husband is very understanding; he sometimes helps to babysit the kids, he is always listening to the problems faced at work and gives me advice when necessary.*

One of the participants who is divorced with children emphasised that her divorce had affected her career:

*Isqgiki: The reason I am a single mother is I went through a divorce last year and that obviously took its toll on everything that I am doing, particularly my PhD and all that kind of things, so it's being tough errm on many different levels and I don't have the luxury of completely falling apart, since I don't have that luxury of support I have to make sure I refocus on my work and be strong.*

She appears to be more vulnerable to the effects of work-to-family conflict. Life circumstances vary, and those under great pressure but with low levels of support experience negative spill-over effects from their home to their work. Studies have shown that social support is a protective resource against constant and severe stress (Mshololo, 2011).

#### **4.3 Interplay of job demands and subjective well-being**

Literature abounds with clear findings about the impact of job demands on academics, often seen as creating a negative work environment which invokes in turn negative employee reactions such as a job dissatisfaction, burnout, stress and negative feeling, with a direct influence on SWB which subsequently harms well-being and health (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Consistent with previous studies, most of the participant reported high job demands particularly in regard to workload, time constraints, inadequate funding, and emotional demands. Although, they described a satisfactory level of well-being, the conversations in the interviews were often dominated by discussions about stress, pressure, and frustration about their jobs.



### 4.3.1 Workload

Participants described their workload as substantial, consuming a large amount of their time. Drawing on the JD-R model, burnout develops when job demands are high and when job resources are limited because such negative working conditions lead to energy depletion which undermines employees' motivation (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). As seen in the excerpt below participants described their work as challenging, leading to feelings of frustration and tiredness. Participants attributed the increase in the perceived level of workload and time urgency to teaching and administrative tasks. They also reported frustration resulting from having too many things to do within the time available.

***Gumede:** Time, 24 hours sometimes is too short to do all the things that you are expected to do yea, one just gets tired.*

***Geni:** My workload exceeded the hours that was expected of me for example around teaching, the amount of students I had to supervise increased; the amount of time I had to spend reading drafts, managing the concerns of a number of students, the increased number of students means my administrative tasks increased.*

***Tembi:** I would start by saying the work we are doing here is very demanding more here in criminology because we are under-staffed so we have too many students at undergrad as well as post-grad so we are forced to take more work. I know that there are certain norms that we need to meet like 80 hours but we do more than that, in that sense the work is quite demanding and challenging but we are doing our best.*

***Yusuf:** The workload is too much; my manager's workload is also too much and so everyone's frustrated from top to bottom.*

In addition, academics attribute aspects of their heavy workload to the amount of administrative work they are required to undertake. They believe that administrative tasks are a major part of their workload and greatly interfere with the desired academic goals. It was expressed that research time was often compromised in favour of teaching and administrative duties. In the excerpt below, Yusuf expresses his frustration arising from a dissonance between what he referred to as their 'real work' and the performative work required by the university systems.

***Yusuf:** It gets very frustrating to be able to do everything and not being appreciated in that stupid model, KPA module administration is 5% at the maximum, it's crazy that model is really bad, am doing so much plus that this and that, and you are judged at the end of the day on 5% administration, but you are doing much more; unfortunately you end up not having enough time for the real work which carries more percentage.*

Further analysis of his narrative reveals frustration arising from dissatisfaction with the performance measure of the university. The decade-long radical transformation of South African higher education institutions has led to the introduction of the academic performance management. This model expects higher education institutions to face the economic and social realities by becoming accountable and more market and consumer orientated. However, this corporate tool is considered inappropriate for higher education, which is concerned with knowledge generation, not profit (Ngcamu, 2013). These policy demands lead not only to a change in scope, nature and intensity of academic work, but have also subjected academic work to performance management and quality assessment. Another challenge involves the perceived

nebulous criteria for what amount to an excellent and outstanding performance (Seyama & Smith, 2015). The narrative of Yusuf mirrors the misgivings about the model; he is concerned that the amount of time and effort spent on administrative tasks is not regarded as important in the performance index. This leads to a feeling of not being appreciated by the university. Researchers have found that the feeling of being appreciated has a significant outcome on the psychological well-being of workers.

Furthermore, most participants reported that their workload had prevented them from achieving their work and personal goals, such as completion of their PhDs, which they struggled to complete. This was identified as an important goal because the university has made completion of PhDs compulsory. Therefore, delay in completion of the PhD was seen as a threat to their well-being.

***Tigere:** Career development wise, I do feel frustrated because am stuck with whether I want to work hard and make sure that all the students are being successful versus myself being selfish thinking finishing my PhD and doing those other things in that way yes am frustrated personally.*

***Isqgiki:** I think the pressure that has been put on us to do PhD as well as work, errh that kind of pressure hasn't been fun; there is a heaviness and a pressure that goes with working and doing PhD which is on another level and obviously life challenges but that pressure – I mean I remember we used to get letters from the DVC saying you know, we'll be called in saying how far are you, be reprimanded somewhat, that kind of pressure is a little bit much I think.*

***Yusuf:** The PhD is a big frustration, and it affects a lot of things. You see the university would not take blame for being part of the reason why I can't finish my PhD, they'll be like ah you can't manage your time you know the blame is with you and its affects every other aspect, I know [I] am going back to the PhD thing but I know its a really important thing It affects everything in your life, your married life, your delaying of having more kids, your spending time with your family",*

Further analysis of the above excerpts draws on the Foucauldian notion of power relations and the ways in which discursive practices exercise power to produce subject positions and subjects who are then governed by management technologies. These excerpts mirror the discursive positioning practices in the academic sector as perpetuated or reinforced by governmentality. The regulatory practices of the university have spurred passive individuals to willingly comply with the regimes of power.

For example **Isqgiki** mentioned:

*It's not like I have choice in completing the PhD, it is a university requirement, I would actually mind leaving it by the way side. It is a goal but I don't seem to have a choice in the matter.*

She has therefore had to willingly accept this subject position imposed on by the university. Like Isqgiki, most of the participants have located themselves within this discourse and are working assiduously to obtain a PhD. However, pursuing a PhD is not only reinforced by the academic race to occupy a subject position through discursive practices but also through self-interest, and the industrialisation of the university. They reported that while they strain to attain this subject

position, the university has put in place technologies of audit and surveillance to supervise their progress. In the case of Isqgiki, she recounted getting letters from the deputy vice-chancellor (DVC) about the progress of her PhD and also being reprimanded. This is what Foucault referred to as the operation of governmentality – a regulation aimed at monitoring and controlling individuals so as to ensure that they are responsible and more governable subjects (Davies & Bansel, 2010), operating to secure the subject's viability and subjection. In this instance individuals become objects of power and have their behaviours and attitudes observed, classified, judged and recorded. The consequence of this is often the production of self-shame through the relation to oneself, as seen from **Yusuf's** narrative, which is worth repeating:

*The PhD is a big frustration, and it affects a lot of things. You see the university would not take blame for being part of the reason why I can't finish my PhD, they'll be like ah you can't manage your time you know the blame is with you and its affects every other aspect.*

Here, shame is the fear of not living up to what is recognised as the standard which relates strategically and directly to the production of negative affect such as frustration as in the case of Yusuf.

Conversely, for some of the participants attaining a PhD was a self-concordant or intrinsic goal, the failure to attain which because of workload-driven time constraints was also frustrating effect on participants. Some reported as follows:

***Geni:** One of my big goals for the last four years is to get my PhD; it's a massive stress, uhm and it's very hard to encourage your students to like get their research done when*

*you are not achieving the same thing in your own life but that has been impossible. Last year I made a decision in my head that I was going to make progress, I was burnt out by the end of last year.*

**Ambassador:** *So in terms of my own identity as an academic I often say to people, listen, [I] am not really an academician feel like am a really good teacher; I teach well and supervise well but my own intellectual development or my own reputation as a researcher or my name getting out there, which I think would be enhanced with a PhD but am struggling with it but I would keep pushing.*

Both participants implied that the goal of completing a PhD represented the principal value and interest to their career as a means to attain self-fulfillment. Literature reveals that persons who pursue goals for self-concordant reasons benefit substantially from attainment of such goals (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001). Thus, it is more likely that self-concordant goals, when attained, will fulfill psychological needs e.g. autonomy, competence, and relatedness and, as a result, enhanced well-being. Ambassador's persistence in making a sustained effort to achieve her goal is typical of someone pursuing a self-concordant goal.

Many of the participants did not report ill-health due to workload. One of the participants reported having aches and pains which she could not attribute to her experience of job demand. Extant literature in alignment with the JD-R model has historically emphasised the disease model of health, highlighting the effects of negative job demands on physiological health outcomes (Gauche, de Beer, & Brink, 2017). The result of these findings seems to contrast with the existing studies; but while this study does not jettison the seemingly compelling evidence of work stress effect on physiological functioning and SWB of academics, cognisance is given to

empirical nature of the majority of previous studies. In addition a number of studies have shown that academic work triggers stress, which negatively impacts physiological health thereby influencing subjective well-being. However most of those studies only seem to report a casual relationship between workload, stress and physiological well-being without regard to other causal factors (Kuykendall & Tay, 2015). More studies are required to expound the interaction of other variables that can influence health and SWB through the use of measures other than the simple self-report surveys.

It was reported as follows:

***KP Kabb:** Am not as young as you so I don't know if the physiological stuff has to do with getting older or whether it has to do with stress. I have aches and pains and some people attribute aches and pain to stress but it could be that am not just young anymore. I can't absolutely say it's because of stress.*

#### **4.3.2 Emotional Exhaustion**

Most participants, however, reported emotional exhaustion from intensified job demands resulting in stress, frustration and irritability which negatively affected their psychological well-being. One explanation for such is that energy is often depleted by excessive job demands and chronic shortfalls in important work-related resources, causing individuals to draw on their personal reserves to compensate, giving to rise to subjective feelings of distress, frustration, tiredness, being emotionally drained and stress as reported in the excerpts below. According to (Dreyer et al., 2010a), poor psychological health of academics can have an indirect impact on physiological well-being (Dreyer et al., 2010a)

**Yusuf:** *There are moments that I get frustrated and it affects my well-being in terms of . . . yea am stressed and I can't deal with so many things at the same time.*

**Nokuphila:** *Sometimes I just get irritable and don't want to consult with students especially when I see that I have a lot of work piled up.*

**MP Kabb:** *The stress is that you put in a lot of hours at work that actually can be very stressful, you get tired, physiological yea you get drained that's my point.*

Literature reveals that high job demands often lead to psychological strain and psychosomatic complaints (H. R. Winefield, Boyd, & Winefield, 2014). Results of a study of UK academics found that those who found their work more effortful tended to report poorer mental health, less job satisfaction and were less likely to wish to continue working for their institution (G. Kinman, 2016). Three participants in the present study reported that emotional exhaustion came not only from work not done but also from frequent interaction and continuous emotional involvement with students.

**Geni:** *Females tend to do more of a community orientated work like in the field not in their offices as often our doors are much more open to students and we'll dealing much more with emotional needs.*

**Nokuphila:** *I really take on emotional needs of students; for example I walk past a long line of students waiting to see people in the faculty and I could see that anxiety on*



*students' face my heart is like I actually have to look away and consciously have to say to myself you cannot take this on, if you take this on you would burn out.*

**Gumede:** *The other thing about me is that am a person who is very approachable; I do get into someone else's shoes, that's the reason I agreed to do this interview. I would have said I don't have time because really I don't have time so you know sometimes you just really want to assist students but that takes its toll on you because now students think you must always be available*

It is worth noting that all the above narrations were from female participants. Literature reveals that there is a gender dimension to aspect emotional exhaustion. It acknowledges that gender may play an important role in how emotions influence behaviours at work, including the discretionary aspects of the workplace (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Purvanova & Muros, 2010). The narratives emphasise that women's nurturing pre-disposition and concern for people manifest in the higher education sector through their tendency to undertake caring and pastoral roles. Nokuphila relayed her experience of emotional labour by feeling overburdened by the emotional needs of their students. She indicated that she had to consciously suppress her feeling in an attempt to conserve her emotional resources. By this she seems to consciously create an emotional distance between herself and her students so as to avoid burnout. This could in fact cause negative consequences, like division between self, true feelings and job-related stress. Furthermore, according to Maslach et al., 2014, this in turn brings about a negative attitudes towards students – known as depersonalisation – as an attempt to gain emotional distance from them as a way of coping with exhaustion

A similar sentiment was reported by one of the male participants:

*Yusuf: Maybe I am too nice, am being told that people take advantage of me and I know but its not like I want to change, I love to help people and that's the thing about being a lecturer. I feel like if you are a lecturer you are in the business of making sure that people are achieving their goals; I always tell my masters students that the point of being here is that you are passionate about other people and making sure that people's quality of lives is achieved and to that you have to be very empathetic; am teaching this. I can't say that listen I can't be empathetic to you but you must be empathetic to others, practice what you teach and so that's important but that frustrates me eventually because you get this and then you have to help all of them and then time is not enough and then you lose out on yourself.*

Yusuf considers himself as an altruistic person who really loves to assist his students. However, he is emotionally exhausted from attending to an exorbitant number of students and appears torn between attending to students' needs and focusing on his work. This seems to be producing an inner conflict and engendering feelings of emotional inauthenticity. He is therefore concerned about having a dysfunctional image of himself, having a diminished sense of personal accomplishment and losing the meaning of his job. This is premised on the JD-R process known as the de-energising process in which employees struggle to protect their primary performance goals amidst increased job demands that require extra mental effort. Mental and physical resources are thereby exhausted which could then lead to burnout, depersonalisation, reduced

personal accomplishment and eventually ill-being (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Maslach et al., 2001).

#### **4.3.3 Lack of participation in management**

A few participants expressed concern about their lack involvement in decisions made by the university management, and said that the top-down management approach and the university structure limited their participation in decision-making. They reported that they felt unappreciated and unheard. Their lack of participation in management robbed them of a sense of belonging, and negatively impacted on organisational productivity and organisational commitment. Workers are more likely to experience physical, emotional or psychological discomfort if they are unable to engage in their work roles (Steger, Littman-Ovadia, Miller, Menger, & Rothmann, 2013).

It was reported thus:

***Yusuf:** Everything is a top-to-bottom approach; you can complain and think you are heard but when you talk to the powers above they are like we don't know what you are talking about so yea in terms of resources I would like to get a place where we are heard as well a forum where we are actually heard, listened to not just heard even if its a negative feedback.*

***Ambassador:** Obviously there is no platform given to us to be like okay lets have a one on one where we can just talk; it's not about KPAs its not about what are achieving in our KPA am talking about just talking , like an open forum.*

**Geni:** *If they want us to feel collegial at the discipline level it needs to be felt at the school and faculty; for example we used to have an open senate, but it no longer exists, we just take orders and we are told to just do it.*

**Tembi:** *As the honours coordinator I was told, you would take a 100 honours students. I came back with what I thought was a pedagogical sound argument which surrounds methods around teaching of why that is problematic and unethical with the need of my students prioritised and then I get told by somebody that am being non-transformational; it's a decision that its being made by senate, closed, finished. I come back to say we have to take it, my colleagues start to resent me and I could feel it, and I actually went back to tell them, guys you actually realise [I] am the messenger here, don't shoot the messenger you know, ehbm; but that what happens – people just get to be frustrated at each other. What am saying to you is that it's difficult to have collegial support because what is happening systemically doesn't provide a supportive space for us to work in.*

Tembi's narrative highlights the disregard for the value of inclusivity in decision-making as an open, democratic and transparent process. Literature suggests that this lack of mutual governance within the university is part of the fallout of the organisational reform and transformation of the university (Chetty, 2015). This in turn negatively affects the morale of academic staff.

#### **4.3.4 Lack of funding**

Academics reported limited funds and having to endure a bureaucratic process in order to access the limited funds. Further, that it was difficult to pursue efficiency with the budget cuts.

*Tembi: The issue of funds, yea, our funds are limited, you need to have your own funds in your course centre which you don't actually access easily. We also get some funds but they are limited funds, sometimes when you have to go to conferences, they'll tell us yea we can fund you.*

*Tigere: Yea there is a lot of budget cuts which suck.*

This reveals the concern of a few participants about inadequate funding for participation in staff development. Although most academics realise that changes are necessary, it is difficult for them to accept the implications of the reduced funding of universities by the government. The lack of funding and time to participate in staff development activities are also identified as major causes for concern. In addition, academics feel that the quality of staff development programmes is low and that the programmes should be improved.

#### **4.4 Available Job Resources**

This theme exposed the interface between job resources and SWB. Participants cited the job resources available to them, prominent among which were office space, autonomy, and support from colleagues. Literature indicates that the availability of resources predicts more positive work experiences, higher levels of engagement, lower levels of exhaustion and burnout and cumulatively a higher level of SWB. While few of the participants felt satisfied with the resources at their disposal, most said that they lacked the resources needed to deal with the strain

generated by their job demands. They further said that they had to redesign their activities in proportion to the available resources so as to cope with the overwhelming job demands.

#### **4.4.1 Collegiality**

Collegiality in this research is understood to mean enjoying support and mentorship from interaction with colleagues and senior colleagues – having a sense of belongingness and camaraderie. Participants expressed this in terms of a collectivist ethic – to work together in a friendly and collaborative manner and to help other colleagues to develop in their academic work (Macfarlane, 2016). Studies have shown that social support from supervisors and co-workers can help academics cope with job stressors; and without sufficient support from co-workers and supervisors, academics would experience unnecessary pressures which may lead to stress and low productivity (Shahid et al., 2016). Two participants reported a positive experience as regards support from their colleagues:

***Tembi:** I would also say I had my support, when I first started the senior staff members do support. I was given a mentor to mentor me but he was not the only one mentoring me; even the senior staff members were mentoring me so you are able to go them to ask for anything if you are not sure of anything.*

***MP Kabb:** Am also at an advantaged position as a unit, like as a discipline we work so well together we support each other as much as we possibly can so that also assist; it takes a lot of stress away, work-related stress.*

In terms of behavioural collegiality, the majority reported lack of support and mentorship from faculty members. They reported a weak and stifled relationship amongst colleagues. In many

cases participants did not enjoy respect. While academics support this idea in principle, in practice they argue that increasing demands on their time as academics makes such an expectation, increasingly unrealistic.

**Geni:** *I have found ehmm morale extremely low in the discipline and I think people just keep to themselves. I don't have a sense there is any bond, actually its cross-gender and I don't feel like we come together and spend enough time in the collegial space.*

**Tigere:** *I have colleagues that I can call on, although to be frank I think academics are a lot closed off; I don't really feel like that I can talk to anyone, they are busy they have their own demands and hmm you know people can always say hey, here I am if you need to . . . but no easily go to people but you get the vibe and the vibe is not such that you feel like you can bother people with all your issues. Even with having a supervisor for my PhD I still feel very much on my own. Yes its great I have a supervisor, they do what they have to do but there is still a sense of very much on your own in terms of your own development.*

**Bindela:** *I think the mentorship side of things erhm could have been better but I think it's because people were also struggling like I said there is no senior people and for the sympathy was not really there.*

**Nokuphila:** *I think it's been tough because I think some people . . . I came to academia quite late in my life and there was no mentorship; I felt like I was thrown in the deep end*

*pretty much and the university is [in] a transition and there is a whole lot, the transformation agenda is very big, in social work in particular a whole lot of staff that were senior and very experienced have left; there is a whole lot of staff that are not at a senior level and we are trying to cope and manage everything on our own and I think the point am trying to make is its been tough in the sense that erhm for the lack of a better word, playing the game as never being taught very clearly and sometimes one makes a lot of mistakes along the way [that] could have been prevented had their being guidance, clear mentorship and guidance along the way.*

Tigere mentioned of the difficulties of realising the ideal of collegiality in the context of increased work pressure, high demands and pressure to perform. At a deeper level, lack of collegiality is sustained by the competitive and performative ethos which rewards individual accomplishment and research productivity to the exclusion of everything else. Collegiality and professional autonomy is being undermined by performativity (Graham, 2015). Geni also pointed to low morale negatively affecting the level of collegiality. Tigere, Bindela and Nokuphila also indicated that they had found the work culture quite isolating and individualised. They felt left alone to struggle to develop the needed skills. A plausible explanation is the changing demographics of academics due to the transformation agenda which has led to the exit of senior academics and an increase in the employment of young black academics. Hence the few available senior academics are stressed and under pressure due to their individual performative expectations, and so have no time to provide mentorship. In addition, issues of individual compatibility emerge, considering the diversity in terms of age, race and even nationality. Academics then resort to individual effort rather than teamwork on account of conflicting personalities and perspectives (Mafini, 2014).



#### 4.4.2 Autonomy

Participants recount that autonomy provides a meaningful job experience and that being able to have control and use their discretion in executing their duties is refreshing and liberating. Autonomy was also viewed as tool to help counter the effects of job stress. However, while some felt satisfied with the level of autonomy, others reported that the top-down approach of university management had reduced their sense of control over their work and it was now almost impossible to make decisions without external control from the university management. The findings of the study attest to autonomy being positively linked to life satisfaction of academics, stimulating the need to satisfy higher order needs for achievement and accomplishment (Ng'ethe, Namusonge, & Iravo, 2012).

It was reported:

**MP Kabb:** *Autonomy also helps, like in the modules that I teach I have a guideline that I work from and I can be flexible as much as I can populate the module with as much work that I deem relevant at the time so that [is] very liberating; it doesn't tie you down, it's refreshing; you don't have to do one and the same thing over and over again and you can always improve on what you've done previously.*

**Bindela:** *I believe that we get a lot of instruction from the top. We are told how things would happen and we have to find a way to implement it to suite what university wants.*

#### 4.4.3 Personal resources

It can be argued that job and personal resources are reciprocal, since individuals, through learning experiences, can form stronger positive evaluations about themselves and in turn they comprehend or create more resourceful work environments. Previous studies have shown that these personal resources also have positive effects on physical and emotional well-being (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007). The accumulation of personal resources can enhance SWB and physiological health.

Two participants reported their experience of meaning at work which is important to the relationship between job characteristics and well-being. Meaningful work underpins people's motivation and affects their well-being and job satisfaction.

*Yusuf: the things I do in the university make sense. It sound like am being arrogant, but my students come back so happy in their lives and they thank me personally . . . yea in that way am able to create change in people's lives. The university gives you that platform to go and teach students. If I didn't get positive feedback I would not stay at this university. I would have been gone.*

*Isqgiki: So I believe that I contribute to the successful outcome or I would like to believe that there are students who leave the university more critical of the world around them, more empathetic because of the course that I teach, because of my input as a passionate committed teacher and because of the content I get to teach, that is what drives me that if I can make some sort of contribution to social justice that my education can change one person into a more better and more empathic and efficient psychologist. So if I feel [I]*

*have contributed in some way to a better and more just world where people are kind to each other or create spaces where they can contribute to build a sense of community.*

Individuals experience psychological meaningfulness at work when they receive a return on investment of the self in a currency of physical, emotional, and/or cognitive rewards. As in the case of the Yusuf and Isqgiki, the positive feedback they receive from students and the feeling of making valuable contributions to society produces cognitive reward, which is an essential determinant of their well-being. It is widely believed that positive feedback affords teachers internal rewards and gives meaning to their work. In the case of Isqgiki, she believed that her success with students was because of her input as a passionate committed teacher and because of the content she taught, capturing the idea that the interplay between her sense of self as passionate committed teacher and the values and purpose of work led to meaningfulness at work. Meaningfulness at work has been found to be a predictor for performance, personal growth and work engagement (Olivier & Rothmann, 2007). Furthermore, psychological meaningfulness has been proved to decrease the intention to leave. This is corroborated in the narrative of Yusuf, who says he would have left the university but for the positive feedback he receives. Zhang and Vogel (2011) found that employees experience meaningfulness when they feel in control of their work tasks, or when their personal growth increases through the work they are doing. In this vein one of the participants reported:

*Nokuphila: So in terms of the work environment it important that am being motivated constantly, being challenged, doing the right kinds of things whereby you have space especially as an academic to do what you are passionate about in terms of research hmm*

*and given the time to manage your opportunities properly hmm given the opportunity to speak out and voice your opinions.*

Nokuphila said it was important that she was constantly motivated and challenged. This perception indicates a constancy and continuity in the state of ‘being’ which is often referred to as personal growth. Nokuphila’s motivation is intrinsic. According to Ryan and Deci (2009) intrinsic motivation refers to initiating an activity mainly because it is interesting and satisfying in itself i.e. doing an activity for its inherent satisfaction and personal growth. Growth is often a result of intrinsic motivation. A person who is focused on personal growth, which includes self-development in the area of research as in the case of Nokuphila gaining mastery by navigating challenges faced, and assimilation, is likely to cope with high job demand, low job resources and also experience greater competence, which is a basic psychological need that fosters well-being. She further made mention of ‘managing opportunities properly, given the opportunity to speak out and voice your opinions’ represents a notion self-efficacy and his desire to participate in decision-making. Employees who believe they are that they have opportunity for growth and are in control of their work environment often take ownership of their work. Subsequently, their autonomous motivation will increase which then leads to better well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Rothmann, 2013). Furthermore, literature reveals that meaningfulness at work is key to worker engagement. Work engagement is an individual’s involvement and passion for work (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002).

***Geni:** Despite the challenges at work, somehow [I] am still happy with my well-being , it just about how satisfied and happy I am with the quality of my life whether I feel like waking up in the morning, engaging with life whether that be my work, my hobbies.*

Engagement as described is considered a motivational state, reflecting a psychological state of mind-work engagement in which the participant is reflective, deliberate and applies a sense of reason to work and activities of daily living. The ability to reflectively engage in activities mirrors the basic psychological need of autonomy as illustrated by the SDT. It points to the free-will or motivated functioning of human beings, as they, pursue goals, make choices and express values (Sheldon, 2018). In the opinion of Ryan and Deci, 2001, a life style of reflective thinking and mindfulness would definitely produce a sense of meaning and a greater sense of purpose in life. Tiredness does occur with engaged employees, but it is not associated with negative emotions, but rather with an optimistic attitude about what they can accomplish (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

Finally, a few participants attributed their ability to cope with work stress and maintain mental health and psychological well-being to their spirituality and participation in religious activities, and by taking exercise. They reported that they derived inner strength and serenity from participating in religious activities. Below are four excerpts on this point:

***Gumede:*** Also going to church for me and singing lifts my spirit up.

***Yusuf:*** My religious affiliation also helps me so much, like my dad died and if it's not because of religion I would not be sane today.

***MP Kabb:*** I try to balance, try to get time off, exercise and do spiritual devotions. Otherwise I'll go insane from the work.

***Isqgiki:*** I go to God and He is everything and then obviously I feel he gives me the wisdom to know how to deal with whatever am dealing with.

It is observed from the excerpts of Yusuf and MP Kabb that their spiritual devotion and religion have been a barrier against mental illness from the challenges of work. Literature reveals ample evidence that religion and spirituality are strongly associated with mental health and psychological well-being (Hill & Pargament, 2008). Isqiki noted that she goes to God for wisdom. Here spirituality can be related to the concerns of the human spirit and the ways in which it can be developed to reach its fullest potential. Wink and Dillon (2003) found a positive association between spirituality and the personal growth aspects of well-being. It is believed that a tendency towards personal growth leads to highly spiritual individuals (Wink & Dillon, 2008).

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The perspective of this study was to integrate the effects of work-life balance, work conditions and organisational factors on SWB. Overall, the experience of well-being in the context of work-life and job demand-resource and was found to be rich, complex and personalised. In general, these themes represent multiple notions of well-being, which include integrated notions of hedonia and eudaimonia. It can be concluded that balance of life roles among participants in this study is at an acceptable level. In regard to subjective well-being, participants reported they were moderately exhausted by work demands and more than on average satisfied with their life in general. Academic staffs appraise the work conditions as threatening and, in turn, develop symptoms of stress, which include negative affect. However, personal resources appear to protect against the psychological and physiological cost of job demand, which is beneficial to well-being.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION, AND LIMITATION**

This chapter provides an overview of the main findings of this study and offers recommendations for policy, interventions and further research. It also discusses the limitations of the investigation.

#### **5.1 Overview of the study**

The aim of this study was to provide an account of subjective well-being amongst academic staff as influenced by work-life-balance and job demand-resource. Drawing from Self Determination Theory and Job Demand Theory, this study investigated three broad research questions:

1. How does the experience of work-life balance influence the subjective well-being of academic staff?
2. How does the experience of job demand influence the subjective well-being of academic staff?
3. How does job resource influence the subjective well-being of academic staff?

For the purposes of this study and the pertinent theoretical perspectives, a thematic analytical approach was selected as the most suitable method in analysing the collected data as it offered a manageable and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data. The central constructs embedded in the theoretical paradigms were examined throughout this research i.e. job demand-resource and work-life was used to examine the subjective well-being of participants. The conceptualisation and analysis of agency was informed by the interpretivist ontological position.

A clear finding among all the participants is that the intensification of work creates conflict and tension in work- and non-work-related roles. However, participants reported a satisfactory level of well-being despite the experience of high job demand, low job resources and difficulty with work-life balance. Therefore, the way in which academics cope with the tensions within the context of ambiguity was examined with reference to efficient functioning in both work and family domains.

## **5.2 Conclusions In Terms of the Specific Research Questions**

The current section will summarise the findings in terms of the research questions which guided the present study.

### **5.2.1 How does the experience of work-life balance influence the subjective well-being of academic staff?**

This is consistent with other studies finding that the work demands at academic workplaces influence stress in academics predominantly by rising work-family conflict (Mudrak et al., 2018)

The present study shows that work and non-work domain are intertwined and as such a person will experience work-life balance as a holistic valuation of the quality outcomes of multiple role interaction. Hence, participants view themselves as individual agents responsible for managing a successful work-life balance leading to the generation of alternative solutions to deal with the challenges they face in integrating their multiple roles.



### **i. Managing the boundaries**

Some of participants varied in the degree to which they preferred to segment or integrate their work-life domains and the degree to which they were able to segment or integrate their work-life. Some of the participants preferred to segment work and non-work domains by using self-regulatory skills such as creating a physical boundary, organising tasks and schedule control. However, despite the attempts to create physical boundaries, they still encountered unforeseen role obligation which generated negative emotion such as frustration. Also, the academic workspace is not necessarily a discrete physical location, a circumstance suggesting a need for understanding more complex work-life interactions. It was reported that academics found work-life balance crossover difficult to control due to increased work pressure and erosion of flexibility previously enjoyed.

The identity of participants was seen as salient influencers of their work-life balance. Participants who were females had multiple identities as mothers, wives and sisters. They were somewhat more invested in their nurturing roles. While some male participants' negotiation of the work and non-work interface was influenced by the traditional perceptions of men being the ideal worker, or the societal ideals and personal values that equate self-worth with hard work and career success, and the idea that equates commitment and productivity with long work hours. This confirms the findings on social identities and impression management which suggest that people manage their identities by adjusting to challenging circumstances in sustainable ways, drawing on their qualities of resilience and practicing effective processes of resilience (Meisenbach, 2010).

Participants also recognised that their individual context shaped the negotiation of work and non-work domain. For instance, some participants indicated that they had taken on additional commitments outside their academic work and these activities greatly enrich their careers and financial status. They reported being able to achieve a satisfactory level of work-life balance despite their involvement in multiple roles. This finding negates the traditional perspective regarding work-life balance in which involvement in multiple roles has a negative connotation. In this regard, work-life balance seems rather to be the result of acknowledging multiple roles in life and that satisfaction in all life roles contributes to the experience of balance (S. C. Potgieter & A. Barnard, 2010).

## **ii. Devoting time**

It was observed from the accounts provided by the participants that needs differ and therefore devoting time seems to be a subjective experience, since people differentiate their balance in terms of their needs and expectations in different life roles. This finding is contrary to the perspective which suggests that work-life balance is very objective and inflexible. Participants reported that creating time, having a ‘me time’ to fulfil various roles made them happy and satisfied. Central to the narrative of the participants is the sense of creating a balance for a better psychological well-being.

## **iii. Partner Support**

Some participants reported that their spouses were highly supportive of their work, which made it easier for them to maintain a healthy life. Most of the participants considered emotional support as the major contribution of their partners. One of the participants also reported her

husband helping to babysit. Participants who reported having no partner support appeared to be more vulnerable to the effects of work-to-family conflict. This confirms findings from previous studies that the existence and extent of support structures are instrumental in the experience of work-life balance and these include spouses, grandparents, parents, cousins and siblings (S. C. Potgieter & A. Barnard, 2010). Social support can help individuals expand their capacity for work-life balance, which in turn cultivates psychological availability for stimulating positive energy at work. (Russo et al., 2016)

### **5.2.2 How does the experience of job demand influence the subjective well-being of academic staff?**

This investigation into the interplay of job demand and subjective well-being provides evidence reveals various aspects of work-related pressure experiences by academic staffs. Participant reported that they found that their work has become increasingly stressful owing to heighten job demand. The common reported stressors are: the extent of workloads, emotional exhaustion, lack of funding as well as lack of participation in management. Whilst participants acknowledged these stressors do not inevitably lead to strains, they struggle with low interpersonal competence and reduced job satisfaction (Dobre, 2013). Literature reveals that the potential impact of reduced job satisfaction amongst the workforce has serious consequences for the well-being (G. Kinman & Jones, 2008). This study confirms the existence of a negative impact of WLB determined by high levels of job demand. However; negative impacts of job-demand on physiological or psychological health were not substantiated. This is not consistent with previous

findings in the context of academic workplaces which suggest that job demand has a negative physiological or psychological health

## **i      Workload**

Participants described their workload as substantial, consuming a large amount of their time. They attributed lack of time to increased teaching and administrative loads, which constituted the biggest barrier to doing research. Participants expressed frustration arising from dissonance between what was referred to as ‘real work’ and the type of performative work required by the university systems. They also reported frustration and stress arising from having too many things to do within the time available. The findings of this study confirms results from other studies that workload has been found as a burnout factor (F. Khan, R.M Yusoff & A. Khan, 2014). Most participants reported dissatisfaction with their inability to complete PhDs, which was not only a personal aspiration but a compulsory work goal. They reported that, as a compulsory requirement, it placed them under pressure which was further heightened by university surveillance. From the Foucauldian perspective, power was being exercised on them through discursive positioning which placed them in subject positions governed by management technologies. Conversely, for some of the participants completing a PhD was a self-concordant or intrinsic goal affording the experience of satisfying psychological needs of relatedness, competence as well as autonomy thereby enhancing well-being. Most of the participants reported no ill-health due to workload.

## **ii      Emotional Exhaustion**

Most of the participants reported emotional exhaustion from intensified job demands, resulting in stress, frustration, irritability which negatively affected their psychological well-being. Energy is often depleted by excessive job demands and chronic shortfalls in important work-related resources which compel individuals to draw on their personal reserves to compensate, giving to rise to subjective feelings of distress, frustration, tiredness, being emotionally drained and stress. Participants reported their experience of emotional strain and the strategies used to suppress their emotions. This appeared to create a dissonance in the self, producing an inner conflict and engendering feelings of emotional inauthenticity, exhausting mental and physical resources and possibly leading to burnout, depersonalisation, reduced personal accomplishment and eventually ill-being (Hakanen et al., 2006; Maslach et al., 2001).

## **iii      Lack of participation in management**

A few participants expressed their concern about their lack involvement in decisions made by the university management, saying that the top-down management approach and the university structures limited their participation in decision-making. Participants expressed a feeling of being denied a sense of belonging, which negatively impacted on organisational productivity and organisational commitment.

## **iv      Lack of funding**

Participant reported limited accessibility to funds and having to endure a bureaucratic process in order to access the limited funds leading potentially to increased stress level. This is confirmed by other studies that staff cuts and reduced funding contribute to the dramatic increase in

academics' levels of stress (A. H. Winefield et al., 2003). Similar results have been reported in a research conducted in United Kingdom, where short-term contracts, funding cuts have been linked to the high levels of psychological distress amongst UK academics (Kinman, 2006).

### **5.2.3 How does job resource influence the subjective well-being of academic staff?**

Finally, academics who participated in the study highlighted low job resources however they mentioned few resources that have been available to them namely; collegiality and autonomy. From the findings, it seemed evident that personal resources were a major resource to protect against the psychological and physiological cost of job demand, which is beneficial to well-being.

#### **i Collegiality**

A few participants narrated positive experiences of support from colleagues; however, most participants reported a lack of support and mentorship from the colleagues and senior colleagues. Many participants reported a lack of collegiality; whilst academics support this idea in principle, in practice they argue that increasing demands on their time make such an expectation, increasingly unrealistic. At a deeper level of analysis, lack of collegiality is sustained by the competitive and performative ethos which rewards individual achievement and research productivity above all else. The recurring argument is made that performativity undermines professional autonomy, or collegiality, that used to be the hallmark of academic life (Graham, 2015).

## **ii      Autonomy**

A participant recounted that autonomy provided a meaningful job experience from being able to exercise control and use discretion in executing duties, which was refreshing and liberating. Autonomy was also viewed as tool to help to counter the effect of job stress. Another participant felt dissatisfied with the level of autonomy which was restricted by the top-down approach of university management and had reduced sense of control over work; it was now almost impossible to make decision without external control from the university management. The heavy handedness of the university authorities in silencing voices of dissent was stifling academic freedom. This finding confirms the results which suggest that as long as the academics perceive their social environment as supportive and retain high influence over their work, they may be predominantly satisfied with the academic job regardless of the growing work demands (Mudrak et al., 2018).

## **iii      Personal Resources**

Participants reported that personal resources help to alleviate the effects of high job demand and low job resources, enhancing their experience of meaning at work. Equally important to the relationship between job characteristics and well-being is the meaning of work in one's life. Participants reported feeling satisfaction from the positive feedback received from students – this cognitive reward was an essential determinant of their well-being. Participants also reported that passion for their work kept them motivated, thereby leading to personal growth. In addition participants indicated that involvement in spiritual activities had been a protective factor.

### **5.3 Intervention and Recommendation**

The study underscores the notion that high job demands and fewer job resources lead towards higher levels of exhaustion. Depletion of job resources reduces employees' motivation and satisfaction which eventually induces withdrawal from the organisation (Bakker et al., 2005). Therefore, if the current scenario persists and remains unaddressed in the university sector, it could cause negative employee well-being issues with serious implications for the higher educational sector. There is a need to revise the traditional working arrangement of the university to meet the transformation agenda of the university. While individual-level variables (eg stress and resources) are more proximal to SWB and physiological functioning than organisation-level variables (eg job conditions), choosing an individual-directed intervention rather than an organisation-directed intervention to reduce negative work experiences such as stress could send a message to employees that they, rather than the organisation, are to blame for their negative experiences (Kuykendall & Tay, 2015). The university should strive to ensure openness and transparency in policy-making and their implementation, and policies must place priority on adequate quality of working life for academics. Interventions targeted at changing environmental factors, including reducing work pressure, restructuring work content and improving communication, are also considered to be important for subjective well-being (Bartholomew Eldredge et al., 2016).

### **5.4 Limitation and Recommendation for Future**

This research used a qualitative research design and thus lacks generalisability to other organisations. This research was also conducted amongst academics in few disciplines, which was not a representative sample of the academic staff population. The data was analysed using



thematic analysis, which has been largely viewed as a subjective process to a degree and thus the researcher, both in the analysis as well as during data collection, aimed to be reflexive and understand the perspectives of the participants. Due to the limited sample size, this study makes no claim for generalisability. As the study was restricted to a specific working environment and the participants differed in terms of age, race, marital status and years of work experience, its findings cannot necessarily be transferred to other work contexts. Therefore, the findings of this study are restricted in application to the participants studied. Due to time restraints, follow-up interviews were not carried out. Moreover, an important consideration is that whilst there are challenges to work-life balance and job-demand resources within the university, all disciplines do not encounter exactly the same problems. Future research that confirms or contradicts the findings of this study would be required to develop a more comprehensive understanding, using a representative sample. Future research should also examine more representatives from different racial groups, taking into consideration South African diversity. Further research could carefully devise a demographic profile reflecting a spread in age, position, experience, gender and institution type. It is suggested that researchers enhance SWB and psychological functioning by designing interventions that simultaneously improve job conditions, enhance personal resources, and reduce work stress. Existing interventions like workload and performance management should be revised by engaging the academic community in order to create a strategy that is sustainable. It is also suggested that the university focuses on promotion of wellness and stress-reduction strategies.

A few suggestions from the interviews indicated that it would be of benefit to have the university management be more responsive to the plight of academic staff. For example, it is suggested that more research assistants and tutors be recruited to help in doing research and teaching and thus

ease the time constraints and other pressures on academia rehabilitation of individuals who have suffered ill health or reduced well-being as a result of stress in the workplace. Finally, it would be valuable to get insights from the various lives linked with these participants (spouses/partners, children, university management) to assess their perceptions of the constructs discussed and to continue uncovering limiting assumptions within both realms that could lead to valuable individual and social change.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

In the present chapter of this research study, conclusions were made based on both the theoretical, as well as the empirical findings of the study. The limitations of the study were discussed. Further, recommendations for the university management and for future research were made.

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## **Appendix A: Interview Schedule**

### **Interview Questions**

## **Demographic**

Tell me about yourself?

How long have you been working as an academic staff?

## **Subjective Well-being**

What does well-being mean to you?

How satisfied are you with your quality of life?

How does the satisfaction with your quality of life impact your well-being?

To what extent do you think positive emotions impact on your well-being?

To what extent do you think negative emotions impact on your well-being?

What strategies do you apply in regulating the experience of negative emotions?

## **Job demand**

What is your understanding of job demand?

What are some of the challenges that you face on regular basis as an academic staff?

What are the associated physiological and psychological costs of job demands?

How does job demand impact your quality of life?

Does job demand influence your emotions positively or negatively? If so, how

Do you find it difficult to cope with job demands? If yes, how does that make you feel?

## **Job Resources**

What is your understanding of job resources?

What resources are available to reduce job demands as an academic staff?

What resources are available to achieve work goals?



What is your perception about having or being deprived of resources?

### **Work-life Balance**

In your opinion, what is your perception about creating a balance between work and life?

Tell me about your experience of work-life balance?

How do you balance life and work?

Has the experience of work-life balance influenced your quality of life in any way? If so, how does it impact?

Does the experience of work-life balance influence your emotions positively or negatively?

Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?

## **APPENDIX B: Informed Consent Document**

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Oyelami Olubukunmi, a Masters Student of Industrial Psychology, School of Applied Human Sciences, [bukunademi@gmail.com](mailto:bukunademi@gmail.com), 0710338632.

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research on the subjective well-being of academic staff. The aim and purpose of this research is to explore how academic staff conceptualise their own well-being as influenced by work-life balance and job demand-resource. The study is expected to enroll 10 participants who are lecturers on Howard College, UKZN to elicit necessary information on views about subjective well-being in interviews to be conducted. Information elicited from participants during the interviews would be audio-taped and thereafter transcribed verbatim for the purpose of data analysis. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be 45 minutes. The study does not involve any risks and/or discomforts to the participant. I hope that the study will increase the body of knowledge on the subjective well-being from a qualitative perspective and subsequently enlighten and assist policy makers in the educational sector to make policies that are not based on assumptions.

Participants must note that participation in this research is voluntary and also no incentive is provided. Participants have the right to withdraw without any negative consequences. Similarly, choosing to withdraw at any point during the research will not leave you disadvantaged in any way. You will not be expected to justify or explain your reasons for withdrawal. All information gathered will remain strictly confidential, and I will use a pseudonym when referring to you. When the research is complete, all the data will be disposed of.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number HSS/2003/071H).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at [bukunademi@gmail.com](mailto:bukunademi@gmail.com) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

## **HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

If you give consent to participate in this study by sharing your perspectives and experiences, please sign this form to show that you have read the contents.

## **Appendix C: Declaration of Consent**

### **DECLARARTION OF CONSENT**

I ----- have been informed about the study entitled, Subjective Well-being among Academics in UKZN: The Role of Work-Life Balance and Job Demand-Resource by Oyelami Olubukunmi.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study will be to increase the body of knowledge on the subjective well-being from a qualitative perspective and subsequently enlighten and assist policy makers in the educational sector to make policies that are not based on wrong assumptions.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at (provide details).

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

To audio-record my interview / focus group discussion

YES / NO

---

**Signature of Participant**

---

**Date**

## Appendix D: Gate keeper Permit



3 October 2017

Oyelami Olubukunmi (SN 215080547)  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
College of Humanities  
Howard College Campus  
UKZN  
Email: [bukuradedi@gmail.com](mailto:bukuradedi@gmail.com)

Dear Oyelami

### RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), towards your postgraduate studies, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

*"Subjective wellbeing among academics in UKZN: The Role of Work- life Balance and Job Demand-Resource".*

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by conducting interviews with academic staff on the Howard College campus.

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using 'Microsoft Outlook' address book. Identity numbers and email addresses of individuals are not a matter of public record and are protected according to Section 14 of the South African Constitution, as well as the Protection of Public Information Act. For the release of such information over to yourself for research purposes, the University of KwaZulu-Natal will need express consent from the relevant data subjects. Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely

MR SS MOKOENA  
REGISTRAR

#### Office of the Registrar

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 280 8035/2208 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 7824/2204 Email: [registrar@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:registrar@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



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## Appendix E: Ethical Clearance



11 January 2019

Ms Olubukunmi Oyelami 215080547  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
Howard College Campus

Dear Ms Oyelami

Protocol reference number: HSS/2003/017H

Project title: Subjective wellbeing among academics in UKZN: The role of work-life balance and job demand resource.

### Expedited Approval

In response to your application dated 19 October 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 3 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shamile Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/ps

cc Supervisor: Shafida Babai  
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Jean Steyn  
cc School Administrator: Ms Ayanda Nguli

### Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shamika Singh (Chair)

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