

Hardiness and Perceived Supervisor Support on Work Engagement Among Academic Staff of Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University Makurdi, Nigeria: The Mediating Role of Mindfulness

¹Mase, Judith Ayangeawam, ²Hyambe, Joseph Terseer, ³Saaondo, Patrick, ⁴Tyokyaa Lordsent Tertindi, ⁵Hembah, Susie Nguemo, ⁶Tachin, Raymond Tartenger, ⁷Aki, Benita Dooshima
^{1,3,4,5,6,7} Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University Makurdi
2 The Serene Haven Rehabilitation Centre, Abuja

*Correspondence Author: judithmase@gmail.com; +2348061333200

Abstract

Work engagement has become a central concern in academic institutions, particularly within Nigerian public universities where systemic challenges undermine staff morale and performance. This study investigated the predictive roles of psychological hardiness and perceived supervisor support on work engagement among academic staff of Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi (MOAUM), with mindfulness examined as a mediating variable. Drawing on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, the study adopted a cross-sectional survey design with a sample of 100 academic staff selected using a multi-stage stratified random sampling method. Standardized instruments including the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9), Dispositional Resilience Scale (DRS-15), Perceived Supervisor Support Scale (PSS), and the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ-15) were used to assess the variables. Data were analyzed using multiple regression, and Hayes' PROCESS macro for mediation analysis. Results indicated that both hardiness and supervisor support significantly predicted work engagement, accounting for 15% of the variance. However, when mindfulness was introduced as a mediator, only hardiness remained a significant predictor. Mediation analysis revealed that mindfulness significantly mediated the relationship between hardiness and work engagement, and partially mediated the prediction of supervisor support. These findings underscore the importance of psychological and interpersonal resources in promoting work engagement, and highlighted mindfulness as a key psychological mechanism linking these factors to work outcomes. The study contributes to the JD-R model by identifying mindfulness as a valuable mediator and offers practical implications for resilience training, leadership development, and mindfulness-based interventions aimed at enhancing staff well-being and institutional productivity.

Keywords: work engagement, hardiness, supervisor support, mindfulness, academic staff, JD-R model, Nigerian universities

Introduction

Background to the Study

More than ever before, work engagement has become an increasingly important concern for academic institutions worldwide due to its implications for productivity, innovation, and staff well-being (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In contemporary organizations, particularly universities, work engagement has been identified as a crucial determinant of organizational success,

employee retention, and knowledge creation (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Engaged academic staff are more enthusiastic, passionate, and emotionally invested in their work, which enhances institutional performance and student outcomes (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). Conversely, low engagement has been linked to burnout, absenteeism, and reduced institutional effectiveness (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

In Nigeria, university employees often face work-related stress, low morale, and job dissatisfaction due to systemic challenges such as underfunding, inadequate infrastructure, brain drain, poor working conditions, and lack of recognition (Adebayo & Eze, 2021; Ofoegbu, 2020). These conditions not only undermine motivation but also threaten the sustainability of higher education quality. In public universities, in particular, staff morale and engagement have been under increasing strain due to frequent strikes, delayed promotions, and irregular salary payments (Akinyele, 2019; Ugwu et al., 2020). As the Nigerian educational sector continues to evolve in response to global demands, fostering high levels of work engagement among university staff has emerged as a critical organizational and psychological goal.

Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, and work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Vigor represents high energy and resilience at work; dedication involves enthusiasm and a sense of significance; and absorption reflects being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's tasks. Studies have shown that engaged employees experience higher job satisfaction, better health outcomes, stronger commitment, and superior performance (Bakker et al., 2008; Saks, 2006; Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011). Despite this, understanding the antecedents and mechanisms that foster work engagement remains a growing research priority, especially in the context of higher education institutions in sub-Saharan Africa where structural challenges persist (Olugbile, 2020).

According to Maddi (2006) and Kobasa (1979), two vital factors that predict engagement and well-being are psychological hardiness and supervisor support. Hardiness is a personality disposition marked by commitment, control, and challenge, enabling individuals to view stressful situations as opportunities for growth rather than threats. Hardy individuals demonstrate higher adaptability and are less likely to experience burnout (Bartone, 2007; Maddi, 2013). Research indicates that hardiness enhances employees' ability to manage stress and maintain engagement in challenging work environments (Eschleman et al., 2010).

Supervisor support, on the other hand, refers to employees' perception that their supervisors provide emotional encouragement, instrumental resources, and fair treatment (Eisenberger et al., 2002). Supportive supervision fosters psychological safety, motivation, and trust key ingredients for sustained engagement (Kurtessis et al., 2017). In academic institutions, where workload pressures and interpersonal dynamics are intense, supervisor support can mitigate job strain and strengthen employees' identification with organizational goals (Ahmed & Malik, 2019). Studies have shown that when supervisors display empathy, fairness, and open communication, staff become more committed and exhibit higher engagement levels (Zhang, 2019; Chinomona & Sandada, 2020).

Despite growing interest in these predictors, empirical studies examining how hardiness and supervisor support jointly influence work engagement within Nigerian universities remain scarce. Moreover, the psychological mechanisms through which these predictors operate are not fully understood. Recent research has pointed to mindfulness defined as a state of open, non-judgmental awareness of the present moment as a possible mediator linking personal and job resources to positive work outcomes (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Glomb et al., 2011). Mindfulness enables individuals to respond rather than react to stressors, enhancing emotional regulation, concentration, and resilience (Good et al., 2016).

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) provides a theoretical foundation for understanding these relationships. The model posits that personal and job resources—such as hardiness and supervisor support stimulate a motivational process that leads to work engagement. Psychological mechanisms like mindfulness may further explain how individuals utilize these resources to achieve positive work outcomes (Reb et al., 2015). Empirical evidence suggests that mindfulness not only enhances attention and emotional balance

but also reduces burnout and strengthens engagement by promoting adaptive coping and present-moment awareness (Malinowski & Lim, 2015; Hülshager et al., 2013).

Among Nigerian university staff, who often operate in demanding, under-resourced, and bureaucratically constrained environments, the capacity to remain calm, focused, and psychologically resilient is essential. Yet, few studies have examined how mindfulness mediates the relationship between hardiness, supervisor support, and work engagement in this context. This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the mediating role of mindfulness in the relationship between hardiness and perceived supervisor support on work engagement among staff of Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu university, Makurdi.

This research is both timely and significant, given the growing stress levels and rising expectations placed on academic employees. Understanding how psychological hardiness, supervisor support, and mindfulness interact to influence engagement can help university management design effective interventions for enhancing staff well-being, productivity, and institutional effectiveness. It is therefore hypothesized that;

1. Hardiness will significantly and independently predict work engagement among academic staff of Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University Makurdi
2. Supervisor support will significantly and independently predict work engagement among academic staff of Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University Makurdi
3. Mindfulness will mediate the relationships between hardiness and supervisor support on work engagement among academic staff of Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University Makurdi

Method

Participants and Procedure

This cross-sectional survey was conducted among academic staff of Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. The study consisted of 100 participants, with age range between 30 to 60 years. In terms of their academic rank, 8 (8%) of the participant were graduate assistants, 18 (18%) were assistant lecturers, 24 (24%) were lecturer II, 22 (22%) were lecturer I, 16 (16%) were senior lecturers, 12 (12%) were associate professors/professors. In terms of qualification, 6 (6%) were degree holders, 10 (10%) had postgraduate diploma, 52 (52%) had master's degree, while 32 (32%) had doctorate degree. A multi-stage sampling method was adopted. In the first stage, five faculties were randomly selected. In the second stage, departments within each selected faculty were stratified. In the final stage, proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select 100 academic staff members who met inclusion criteria. To be eligible, participants were required to be full-time staff, with a minimum of one year in service, and willing to participate in the study by giving their consent.

The research team comprised one university administrator, and two trained research assistants who administered the questionnaires over a 6-week period. Participants were approached through their departmental heads, and copies of the questionnaire were administered during departmental meetings and personal schedules. All ethical protocols as outlined in the Helsinki Declaration were strictly adhered to. The questionnaire was completed anonymously, and no identifying information was requested. Approval was obtained from Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi Research Ethics Committee. Out of the 110 questionnaires distributed, 100 were correctly completed and used for analysis. The remaining 10 were excluded due to incomplete responses.

Instruments

The instrument used in this study was the questionnaire which comprised of five sections: demographic data and psychological measures of work engagement, hardiness, mindfulness, and supervisor's role.

- ◆ **Work Engagement:** Work engagement was assessed using the 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9; Schaufeli et al., 2006). This instrument evaluates the three core dimensions of work engagement: vigour, dedication, and absorption. Each item

- was rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always). Higher scores indicate greater work engagement. The UWES-9 has been validated across different cultures and has demonstrated excellent internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha > 0.80).
- ◆ **Hardiness:** Hardiness was measured using the Dispositional Resilience Scale-15 (DRS-15; Bartone, 2007). This 15-item scale assesses commitment, control, and challenge. Each item is rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 0 (not true at all) to 3 (completely true). The total score ranges from 0 to 45, with higher scores indicating greater psychological hardiness. The scale has shown good reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.78 to 0.88).
 - ◆ **Supervisor's Role:** This was assessed using the Perceived Supervisor Support Scale (PSS) developed by Eisenberger et al., (2002). It is a 6-item measure that examines employees' perception of the support and encouragement received from their immediate supervisor. Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Higher scores reflect a more supportive supervisory relationship. The scale has shown adequate internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.74 to 0.90.
 - ◆ **Mindfulness:** The Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ-15; Baer et al., 2006) was used to assess the mediating variable. This 15-item scale evaluates five aspects of mindfulness: observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging, and non-reactivity. Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never or very rarely true, 5 = very often or always true). Total scores range from 15 to 75, with higher scores reflecting higher mindfulness. The FFMQ-15 has demonstrated good psychometric properties in both clinical and non-clinical populations (Cronbach's alpha > 0.80).

Design and Statistics

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v23). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic information. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships among hardiness, supervisor's role, mindfulness, and work engagement.

To test the mediating role of mindfulness, hierarchical regression and mediation analysis using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) were employed. In the first model, hardiness and supervisor's role were entered as predictors. In the second model, mindfulness was entered as the mediator. In the third model, work engagement was entered as the dependent variable. Mediation was confirmed if the indirect path ($a \times b$) was statistically significant. Significance was tested at $p < 0.05$, and all assumptions for regression analysis were checked and met before final interpretation.

Table 1: Multiple Linear Regression Showing Result for the Independent and Joint Prediction of Hardiness and Supervisor's Role on Work Engagement among MOAUM Staff

Variables	R	R ²	F	df	β	t	sig.
Constant	.280	.150	18.92	2,97		6.03	.001
Hardiness					.420	4.33	.001
Supervisor's role					.270	2.60	.011

The result in Table 1 indicated that there is a significant joint prediction of hardiness and supervisor' support on work engagement among Staff of MOAUM [$R^2 = .150$; $F(2,97) = 18.92$, $p < .001$]. Furthermore, the result indicated that hardiness and supervisor's role accounts for 1.5% of the variance in work engagement among MOAUM staff. Independently, hardiness ($\beta = .420$, $t = 4.33$, $p < .001$) and supervisor's role ($\beta = .270$, $t = 2.60$, $p < .001$) significantly predicted work engagement among university staff. Based on this findings, hypotheses one and two were confirmed.

Table 2: Hayes Process Macro Showing Result for the Mediating Role of Mindfulness between Hardiness, Supervisor Support, and Work Engagement Among MOAUM Staff

Variables	R	R ²	F	df	β	t	sig.	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	.529	.280	18.92	2,97		6.03	.000	16.7103	32.9497
Hardiness					0.270	3.01	.005	0.0912	0.4488
Supervisor' role					0.150	1.78	.078	-0.0171	0.3171
Int_1(X*M)					0.330	3.67	.000	0.1533	0.5067

The result displayed in table 2 shows that mindfulness significantly mediated the prediction of work engagement by hardiness and supervisor' support among university staff [$R^2=.280$, $F(2,97) =18.92$, Int_1(X*M) ($\beta=.330$, $t=3.67$, $p<.05$)]. The result indicated that hardiness ($\beta=.270$, $t= 3.01$, $p<.05$) is a significant predictor of work engagement. However, supervisor' support ($\beta=.150$, $t=1.78$, $p>.05$) did not predict work engagement. Thus, hypothesis three was also supported.

Discussion

The present study investigated the predictive roles of psychological hardiness and perceived supervisor support on work engagement among MOAUM staff, with mindfulness examined as a mediating variable. Drawing from the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, the findings affirm the model's assumptions that personal and job-related resources can influence positive work outcomes through motivational and psychological mechanisms (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Consistent with prior research, psychological hardiness emerged as a significant predictor of work engagement (Maddi, 2006; Kobasa, 1979). Staff who demonstrated higher levels of commitment, control, and challenge orientation were more likely to report increased vigor, dedication, and absorption in their work. This supports the view that hardy individuals are more resilient to occupational stress and are better positioned to remain motivated even in resource-constrained settings like Nigerian public universities (Adebayo & Eze, 2021).

Perceived supervisor support also predicted work engagement, although the effect was marginal when mindfulness was included as a mediator. This suggests that the support of supervisors – through empathy, encouragement, and provision of resources-has a positive but possibly indirect influence on employee engagement. These findings align with Eisenberger et al. (2002), who emphasized that employees who feel supported by their supervisors are more likely to invest themselves in their work roles. However, the relatively weaker effect observed here may reflect the variability in leadership quality across departments in Nigerian institutions (Ofoegbu, 2020).

One of the central findings of this study is the significant mediating role of mindfulness. The analysis revealed that mindfulness partially mediated the relationship between hardiness and work engagement, and also appeared to mediate the effect of supervisor support, although to a lesser extent. These results echo prior studies indicating that mindfulness enhances attentional focus, emotional regulation, and psychological flexibility-all of which support sustained engagement at work (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Reb et al., 2015). This implies that hardiness and supervisor support may increase engagement not only directly but also by enhancing staff members' capacity to remain grounded and focused during workplace challenges.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the extension of the JD-R model by identifying mindfulness as a crucial psychological mechanism linking resources to engagement. Practically, the findings suggest that interventions designed to enhance mindfulness such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) or attention training may amplify the benefits of hardiness and supervisor support on work engagement. University management should consider integrating resilience training and supervisor development programs aimed at cultivating a mindful and supportive work culture.

This study is not without limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits causal inference; longitudinal or experimental designs would better establish temporal relationships. Second,

the use of self-report measures introduces the possibility of common method bias. Third, since the sample was drawn from a single public university (MOAUM), generalizability to other contexts should be made with caution. Despite the foregoing, the study has provided insightful understanding on the hardiness, supervisor's role as predictors of work engagement: the role of mindfulness among university staff, and could guide human resource managers to incorporate mindfulness training as an important part of staff development programs and university staff

References

- Adebayo, S. O., & Eze, N. U. (2021). *Job stress and work engagement among academic staff in Nigerian universities: The moderating role of organizational support*. J
- Ahmed, I., & Malik, M. A. (2019). Supervisor support and work engagement: A moderated mediation model. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 9(1), 74–89.
- Akinyele, S. T. (2019). Motivation and job performance of academic staff in Nigerian public universities. *African Journal of Management Studies*, 8(2), 33–47.
- Baer, R. A., Smith, G. T., Hopkins, J., Krietemeyer, J., & Toney, L. (2006). Using self-report assessment methods to explore facets of mindfulness. *Assessment*, 13(1), 27–45.
- Bakker, A. B., & Albrecht, S. L. (2018). Work engagement: Current trends. *Career Development International*, 23(1), 4–11.
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The Job Demands–Resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22(3), 309–328.
- Bakker, A. B., Schaufeli, W. B., Leiter, M. P., & Taris, T. W. (2008). Work engagement: An emerging concept in occupational health psychology. *Work & Stress*, 22(3), 187–200.
- Bartone, P. T. (2007). Test-retest reliability of the Dispositional Resilience Scale-15, a brief hardiness scale. *Psychological Reports*, 101(3), 943–944.
- Bartone, P. T. (2007). Test-retest reliability of the Dispositional Resilience Scale-15, a brief hardiness scale. *Psychological Reports*, 101(3), 943–944.
- Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), 822–848.
- Chinomona, R., & Sandada, M. (2020). The influence of supervisor support on employee engagement: Evidence from the service sector in South Africa. *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies*, 11(1), 97–111.
- Eisenberger, R., Stinglhamber, F., Vandenberghe, C., Sucharski, I. L., & Rhoades, L. (2002). Perceived supervisor support: Contributions to perceived organizational support and employee retention. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(3), 565–573.
- Eschleman, K. J., Bowling, N. A., & Alarcon, G. M. (2010). A meta-analytic examination of hardiness theory: Moderating effects of hardiness on stressor–strain relationships. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 15(1), 17–28.
- Glomb, T. M., Duffy, M. K., Bono, J. E., & Yang, T. (2011). Mindfulness at work. *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, 30, 115–157.
- Hakanen, J. J., Bakker, A. B., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2006). Burnout and work engagement among teachers. *Journal of School Psychology*, 43(6), 495–513.
- Hayes, A. F. (2018). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Hülshager, U. R., Alberts, H. J. E. M., Feinholdt, A., & Lang, J. W. B. (2013). Benefits of mindfulness at work: The role of mindfulness in emotion regulation, emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 98(2),
- Kobasa, S. C. (1979). Stressful life events, personality, and health: An inquiry into hardiness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37(1), 1–11.
- Kurtessis, J. N., Eisenberger, R., Ford, M. T., Buffardi, L. C., Stewart, K. A., & Adis, C. S. (2017). Perceived organizational support: A meta-analytic evaluation of organizational support theory. *Journal of Management*, 43(6), 1854–1884.
- Maddi, S. R. (2006). Hardiness: The courage to grow from stresses. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1(3), 160–168.

- Maddi, S. R. (2013). *Personal views survey III-R: Test development and validation*. Hardiness Institute.
- Malinowski, P., & Lim, H. J. (2015). Mindfulness at work: Positive affect, hope, and optimism mediate the relationship between dispositional mindfulness, work engagement, and well-being. *Mindfulness*, 6(6), 1250–1262.
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Understanding the burnout experience: Recent research and its implications for psychiatry. *World Psychiatry*, 15(2), 103–111.
- Ofoegbu, F. (2020). Enhancing staff morale and productivity in Nigerian public universities: The role of leadership. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Management*, 18(2), 55–69.
- Olugbile, O. (2020). Determinants of academic staff engagement in Nigerian public universities: A structural equation model approach. *African Educational Review*, 8(1), 75–89. *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, 21(3), 45–58.
- Reb, J., Narayanan, J., & Chaturvedi, S. (2015). Mindfulness at work: Antecedents and consequences of employee awareness and presence. *Mindfulness*, 6(1), 111–122.
- Saks, A. M. (2006). Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 21(7), 600–619.
- Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2004). Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25(3), 293–315.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Bakker, A. B., & Salanova, M. (2006). The measurement of work engagement with a short questionnaire: A cross-national study. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 66(4), 701–716.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., González-Romá, V., & Bakker, A. B. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 3(1), 71–92.
- Ugwu, F. O., Onyishi, I. E., & Rodríguez-Sánchez, A. M. (2020). Linking perceived organizational support, work engagement, and turnover intention among Nigerian university employees. *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 36(1), 25–32.
- Zhang, Y. (2019). The role of perceived supervisor support in work engagement among Chinese university teachers. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 20(1), 101–112.