

Workplace Happiness and Fulfillment: The Interplay of Eudemonic and Hedonic Well-Being Among University Employees in Kenya

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ABSTRACT: Workplace happiness and fulfillment are increasingly vital within higher education institutions, particularly in complex and demanding environments. This study explores the relationship between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being and their influence on workplace happiness and job satisfaction among university employees in Kenya. A cross-sectional survey targeting academic and administrative staff from the University of Nairobi, Moi University, and Maseno University was conducted. Using Hayes' PROCESS Model 6, the study examined serial mediation and moderating effects of organizational factors. Findings indicate that hedonic well-being significantly predicts eudaimonic well-being ($R^2 = 0.392$, $p < 0.001$), and both dimensions influence workplace happiness ($R^2 = 0.636$, $p < 0.001$), with forward-looking attitudes being particularly impactful. Eudaimonic well-being partially mediates the relationship between hedonic well-being and workplace happiness ($R^2 = 0.667$, $p < 0.001$). Further, hedonic well-being predicts job satisfaction directly ($R^2 = 0.469$, $p < 0.001$), with the hedonic work environment contributing positively ($p = 0.005$). When eudaimonic well-being and workplace happiness are added to the model, predictive power improves ($R^2 = 0.697$, $p < 0.001$), with both emerging as significant predictors ($p = 0.001$). Interestingly, while the hedonic work environment remains significant ($p = 0.013$), forward-thinking attitudes show a negative effect ($p = 0.042$). Organizational factors such as leadership style, support, and development opportunities significantly moderate the relationship between well-being and job satisfaction. The results support the Job Demands-Resources Model and Self-Determination Theory. Institutions should integrate hedonic and eudaimonic strategies to enhance satisfaction, retention, and resilience among employees.

KEYWORDS: Employee well-being, Eudemonic well-being, Hedonic well-being, Higher education, Job satisfaction, Workplace happiness

1. INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of higher education, university employees are increasingly exposed to complex challenges, including intensified workloads, digital disruptions, and performance-based accountability systems. These pressures—amplified by global trends such as technological change and constrained resources—have brought employee well-being to the forefront as a strategic organizational priority (Kinman & Wray, 2018; Barkhuizen et al., 2014).

For many years, workplace motivation was mostly tied to external rewards—things like salary, job stability, and promotions. But today, the conversation has shifted. More and more, organizations are recognizing that what truly matters to employees goes beyond the paycheck. Psychological well-being, meaningful work, and opportunities for personal growth are now seen as essential ingredients for lasting engagement and performance (Van den Broeck et al., 2021; Kern et al., 2020).

Within this evolving landscape, two key dimensions of well-being have emerged. Hedonic well-being focuses on feeling good—experiencing comfort, happiness, and satisfaction. Eudaimonic well-being, on the other hand, is about living with purpose, growing as a person, and staying true to one's values (Huta, 2016). Both are vital, and together they offer a more complete picture of what it means to flourish at work.

In the academic world, where professional identity, intellectual freedom, and intrinsic motivation often drive performance, these two dimensions come together in complex ways. They shape how university staff experience their roles—affecting everything from daily motivation to long-term job satisfaction (Salas-Vallina et al., 2017). Yet despite their relevance, there's still a lack of in-depth research in the Kenyan higher education context exploring how hedonic and eudaimonic well-being interact to influence

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staff experiences. This presents a valuable opportunity for research that can lead to more human-centered, responsive academic environments.

Furthermore, organizational factors such as leadership practices, support structures, and institutional policies may moderate or enhance these well-being effects. Recognizing these gaps, this study adopts Hayes' PROCESS Model 6 to investigate the serial mediation effects of eudaimonic well-being and workplace happiness on the relationship between hedonic well-being and job satisfaction.

Therefore, the study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the direct effect of hedonic well-being on job satisfaction among university employees.
2. To analyze the indirect effects of hedonic well-being on job satisfaction through eudaimonic well-being and workplace happiness as serial mediators.
3. To evaluate the mediating role of eudaimonic well-being in the relationship between hedonic well-being and workplace happiness.
4. To assess the combined (serial) mediation effect of eudaimonic well-being and workplace happiness in linking hedonic well-being to job satisfaction.
5. To explore the moderating role of organizational factors (e.g., leadership, culture, institutional support) on the direct and indirect paths.

This study contributes to the growing discourse on psychological well-being in academia and provides evidence-based insights for enhancing employee fulfillment, staff retention, and organizational effectiveness in Kenyan universities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Workplace Happiness and Job Satisfaction

Workplace happiness and job satisfaction are increasingly recognized as pivotal constructs in the organizational behavior and human resource management literature. Their relevance is amplified in knowledge-intensive environments such as universities, where cognitive labor, emotional investment, and autonomy are critical to employee success and institutional performance.

Workplace happiness is increasingly recognized as a multidimensional construct encompassing positive emotions, engagement, and a sense of meaning in one's professional role (Salas-Vallina et al., 2017). It includes affective experiences such as joy, enthusiasm, and satisfaction, which are often derived from daily interactions, task accomplishment, collegial relationships, and a supportive organizational culture. In academic institutions, workplace happiness may manifest through collaborative scholarship, academic freedom, and opportunities for intellectual autonomy and expression. When employees experience happiness at work, they are more likely to exhibit greater organizational commitment, creativity, and resilience, thereby enhancing both individual well-being and institutional performance (Lavy, 2022).

Job satisfaction is a broad evaluative judgment about one's job that encompasses both affective (how individuals feel about their work) and cognitive (what they believe about it) dimensions (Huang et al., 2016). It includes satisfaction with key aspects such as remuneration, job security, working conditions, interpersonal relationships, and opportunities for professional growth. While workplace happiness is typically more transient and emotion-driven, job satisfaction is relatively stable, forming cumulatively through ongoing job experiences and perceptions. Recent studies reveal a strong positive correlation between workplace happiness and job satisfaction. For example, Salas-Vallina et al. (2017) emphasize that positive emotional experiences at work significantly enhance employees' overall job satisfaction, particularly when organizations invest in supportive leadership, autonomy, and social connectedness. In academic settings, this link is particularly salient given the intrinsic motivations of many scholars and educators, who often derive satisfaction from intellectual engagement, meaningful research, and a sense of purpose beyond extrinsic rewards.

However, the directionality and structure of these relationships remain underexplored. Specifically, few studies have examined the serial mediating role of workplace happiness between different facets of well-being and job satisfaction, particularly in low- and middle-income contexts. This study seeks to fill this gap by proposing and testing a model in which hedonic well-being leads to eudaimonic well-being, which then influences workplace happiness, culminating in job satisfaction. Understanding this chain of influence provides a more granular view of how psychological resources are mobilized into sustainable job attitudes.

2.2 Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-being

Understanding what makes people truly thrive at work requires us to look beyond surface-level satisfaction and consider both pleasure and purpose. That's where the dual approach to well-being—hedonic and eudaimonic—comes in. Hedonic well-being is

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about enjoying what we do, feeling good, and being satisfied with life. It shows up in the workplace when we're engaged in tasks we love, feel recognized for our efforts, or work in a positive and supportive environment (Khaw & Kern, 2021).

On the other hand, eudaimonic well-being goes deeper. It's about feeling that what we do matters—that we're growing, making a difference, and living in line with our values. In academic settings, this often comes from the satisfaction of mentoring students, conducting meaningful research, or contributing to knowledge that impacts society (Huta, 2016).

Though once seen as separate, research increasingly shows that these two types of well-being actually support each other. Huta and Waterman (2014) suggest that enjoyable moments can act as stepping stones toward deeper personal fulfillment—especially when the environment supports our growth. Think of a lecturer who loves interacting with students (hedonic), and in doing so, feels a powerful sense of purpose in shaping young minds (eudaimonic). When universities intentionally support both joy and meaning in the workplace, they create spaces where staff can flourish—professionally and personally.

In African academic institutions, where challenges such as resource scarcity, administrative overload, and political interference are common, fostering both dimensions of well-being can act as a buffer against burnout and disengagement. This dual focus also aligns with the African Ubuntu philosophy, which emphasizes collective humanity, shared purpose, and communal well-being, bridging the gap between personal joy and societal contribution.

2.3 The Role of Organizational Factors

Organizational factors are instrumental in shaping the extent to which individual well-being translates into tangible workplace outcomes such as job satisfaction, engagement, and productivity. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) provides a foundational framework for understanding this relationship. According to the model, every occupation has specific risk factors associated with job stress, which can be categorized broadly into job demands and job resources. Job demands—such as excessive workloads, role ambiguity, and time pressure—can lead to psychological strain and burnout, especially when unmitigated by adequate resources. Conversely, job resources—such as autonomy, performance feedback, supervisory support, and opportunities for development—serve a motivational role and can buffer the negative effects of job demands while enhancing personal growth, learning, and engagement.

In the university context, these dynamics become even more complex. Academic staff often navigate multiple overlapping responsibilities, including teaching, research, student mentorship, administrative duties, and community engagement. This multiplicity of roles can elevate stress levels if not supported by robust organizational structures. However, when academic institutions invest in supportive environments, they can transform potential stressors into opportunities for professional fulfillment and innovation. For example, providing clear research expectations, access to learning management systems, administrative support, and transparent performance evaluation criteria can improve both hedonic well-being (through immediate relief and satisfaction) and eudaimonic well-being (through enhanced capacity for goal achievement and growth).

Leadership style is a critical determinant in this ecosystem. Numerous studies have confirmed that transformational leadership—marked by inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and idealized influence—correlates positively with employee well-being. In the academic setting, leaders who offer a compelling vision for institutional growth, provide emotional and professional support, and foster innovation in teaching and research create a climate where faculty and staff feel energized and valued. Such leadership not only boosts morale but also promotes a sense of shared purpose and belonging, thus enhancing eudaimonic experiences. In contrast, authoritarian or transactional leadership approaches, which emphasize compliance and routine, may suppress creativity and disengage academic staff, particularly in institutions striving for global relevance and innovation.

Institutional culture also exerts a profound influence on the translation of individual well-being into job satisfaction. Culture encompasses shared values, norms, and assumptions that guide behavior within an organization. A positive institutional culture—characterized by transparency, collaboration, inclusion, recognition, and respect for diversity—fosters trust and psychological safety, enabling employees to express themselves, take risks, and build meaningful professional relationships. In such environments, both hedonic (e.g., daily enjoyment and social connectedness) and eudaimonic (e.g., meaningful contributions and personal growth) well-being are supported. However, toxic cultures marked by favoritism, poor communication, discrimination, or rigid hierarchies can erode employee morale, increase turnover intentions, and negate the benefits of individual psychological resources.

Beyond culture and leadership, professional development opportunities serve as a key organizational lever for enhancing employee well-being. Ongoing training, research grants, conference sponsorships, study leave, mentorship programs, and sabbaticals help reinforce feelings of competence and progression. These opportunities are especially critical in academic settings, where intellectual curiosity and continuous learning are central to employee identity and motivation. When institutions invest in

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capacity building, they not only equip staff with new skills but also signal their commitment to employee growth and retention. This signaling reinforces employees' belief in the institution's values, which in turn fosters loyalty, job satisfaction, and positive emotional engagement.

Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa underscores the role of institutional support in mediating employee outcomes in higher education. Kinman and Wray (2018) as well as Barkhuizen et al. (2014) found that in resource-constrained environments, perceived organizational support—including administrative responsiveness, fairness, and professional autonomy—has a significant positive impact on psychological health and job satisfaction among university staff. However, most of these studies are either qualitative or cross-sectional, and few employ advanced analytical frameworks that explore how organizational variables moderate or condition the effects of well-being on workplace outcomes. This study addresses this gap by integrating organizational factors as moderators in a serial mediation model, enabling the assessment of whether such factors amplify or attenuate the indirect effects of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being on job satisfaction via workplace happiness.

Furthermore, the Kenyan higher education sector presents unique organizational challenges that heighten the relevance of this analysis. Public universities in Kenya face chronic underfunding, growing student populations, academic staff shortages, and often politicized governance structures. In this context, supportive leadership, nurturing institutional culture, and developmental incentives become more than just enhancers—they are essential mechanisms for sustaining academic excellence and retaining qualified personnel. For example, a university that ensures fair promotion policies, encourages interdisciplinary collaboration, and involves academic staff in decision-making processes is more likely to cultivate a workforce that is both happy and satisfied with their roles, despite systemic limitations.

In sum, organizational factors act as contextual enablers or constraints that shape how individual psychological resources are deployed and sustained in the workplace. Leadership, culture, and professional development opportunities determine the quality of the work environment, which in turn influences how hedonic and eudaimonic well-being contribute to workplace happiness and job satisfaction. Understanding these dynamics is essential not only for academic theory but also for practical institutional planning and policy-making. This study's focus on the moderating role of organizational factors provides a richer and more contextualized analysis of how well-being operates within real-world academic environments, particularly in the Global South.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study draws on two influential psychological frameworks: Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Well-Being Theory (PERMA Model). These models offer a comprehensive lens for understanding how well-being—both hedonic and eudaimonic—translates into workplace happiness and job satisfaction, particularly in higher education contexts where intellectual labor, autonomy, and intrinsic motivation are central to employee experiences.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), as further refined by Ryan and Deci (2017), posits that individuals experience optimal functioning and psychological well-being when three innate psychological needs are fulfilled: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy involves the experience of volition and choice in actions aligned with personal values; competence refers to feeling effective and skillful in one's pursuits; and relatedness involves a sense of belonging and meaningful connection with others. These needs are considered universal across cultures and contexts, and are particularly significant in academic settings, where educators and researchers thrive through self-directed learning, mastery of their disciplines, and collegial collaboration (Van den Broeck et al., 2021). Eudaimonic well-being, which emphasizes purposeful living, personal development, and authentic engagement, aligns closely with SDT's framework. When university staff have the autonomy to design curricula or choose research paths, feel competent in navigating academic demands, and enjoy meaningful relationships with colleagues and students, they are more likely to flourish and exhibit long-term commitment to their professional roles. SDT also emphasizes the quality of motivation—whether intrinsic or extrinsic—as a critical determinant of well-being. In many African university settings, where extrinsic motivators such as promotions or financial rewards may be scarce or inconsistently distributed, the ability to cultivate and support intrinsic motivation becomes essential. This makes SDT especially relevant to the Kenyan higher education context, where faculty members often derive motivation from internal sources such as the joy of teaching, academic freedom, or making an intellectual contribution to society. Moreover, institutional policies that enhance autonomy-supportive environments, provide professional development to boost competence, and foster a sense of community can significantly elevate both eudaimonic well-being and overall job satisfaction. Complementing Self-Determination Theory is the PERMA model of well-being, which identifies five core pillars of flourishing: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (Seligman, 2018; Butler & Kern, 2016). Positive emotion refers to the experience of joy, satisfaction, and other uplifting feelings that contribute to overall well-being. Relationships highlight the importance of supportive and trusting interactions, meaning refers to having a sense of purpose that transcends the self, and accomplishment relates to the pursuit and achievement of personal and professional goals. These

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five dimensions reflect both hedonic aspects (positive emotion) and eudaimonic elements (meaning and accomplishment), providing a holistic understanding of what it means to thrive at work. In the academic context, the PERMA model is highly illustrative. For example, a lecturer who feels joy while teaching (positive emotion), becomes deeply engaged in writing a research paper (engagement), collaborates with colleagues on a project (relationships), mentors students with a sense of calling (meaning), and publishes in a reputable journal (accomplishment) is experiencing well-being in line with all five PERMA dimensions. Such holistic flourishing not only enhances individual resilience and motivation but also contributes to improved institutional outcomes such as retention, innovation, and student satisfaction. Together, SDT and PERMA provide a unified and robust conceptual apparatus for understanding how psychological well-being influences key workplace outcomes. While SDT explains the motivational mechanisms behind why individuals seek meaning, competence, and connection, PERMA details the multidimensional structure of human flourishing, blending immediate emotional gratification with long-term fulfillment. Both theories underscore that employee well-being is not merely a function of job design or compensation, but also of the psychological environment and interpersonal dynamics within the organization. Integrating these frameworks is especially critical in the Kenyan university context, where staff members often face high workloads, limited resources, bureaucratic constraints, and increasing performance expectations. Under such conditions, fostering eudaimonic well-being through autonomy, meaningful work, and supportive relationships becomes not just beneficial, but necessary. These internal resources can act as psychological buffers that mitigate the adverse effects of external pressures and systemic inefficiencies. Furthermore, a dual focus on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being offers a balanced perspective that goes beyond surface-level satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of deep-seated personal growth and organizational alignment. The theoretical integration of SDT and PERMA thus supports the current study's hypothesized model, which posits that hedonic well-being enhances eudaimonic well-being, which in turn fosters workplace happiness and ultimately leads to job satisfaction. This pathway is further moderated by organizational factors such as leadership quality, institutional support, and professional development opportunities. Understanding these mechanisms through the lens of SDT and PERMA not only enriches theoretical discourse but also offers practical implications for university administrators seeking to build psychologically healthy, motivated, and high-performing academic teams.

2.5 Conceptual Framework and Serial Mediation

To operationalize the relationships proposed in this study, we utilize Hayes' PROCESS Model 6, a statistical tool for testing serial mediation. This model is especially useful for examining how multiple mediators link an independent variable to a dependent variable in a sequential manner.

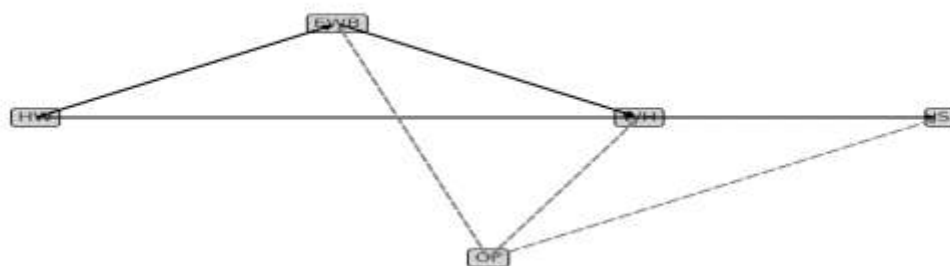
Hypothesized Pathways:

1. **Hedonic Well-being → Eudaimonic Well-being:** Experiencing joy and comfort can foster deeper existential fulfillment, especially in nurturing environments.
2. **Eudaimonic Well-being → Workplace Happiness:** A sense of meaning and purpose enhances one's positive emotional state at work.
3. **Workplace Happiness → Job Satisfaction:** Enjoying one's work leads to higher evaluations of the job itself.
4. **Moderation by Organizational Factors:** These effects are strengthened in institutions with supportive cultures, fair leadership, and adequate resources.

This configuration allows us to test not just whether these variables are related, but how and under what conditions these relationships occur.

Conceptual Framework: Hayes' PROCESS Model 6 (Serial Mediation with Moderation)

Conceptual Framework: Hayes' PROCESS Model 6 (Serial Mediation with Moderation)



Interactive charts of this type not yet supported **FIGURE 1**

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- Hedonic Well-being (HW) as the independent variable
- Eudaimonic Well-being (EWB) and Workplace Happiness (WH) as serial mediators
- Job Satisfaction (JS) as the dependent variable
- Organizational Factors (OF) as a moderator influencing the mediated relationships.

2.6 Research Gaps

Despite substantial theoretical groundwork, empirical research—particularly in African contexts—remains limited. Several gaps are noteworthy:

1. **Lack of Serial Mediation Studies in Higher Education in Kenya:** Although well-being research is growing globally, few studies in Kenya have used advanced models like PROCESS to analyze sequential mediation involving psychological and organizational variables in academic institutions.
2. **Overemphasis on Isolated Constructs:** Many studies examine either hedonic or eudaimonic well-being in isolation, neglecting their dynamic interplay. This limits our understanding of how pleasure and purpose jointly shape work outcomes.
3. **Neglect of Organizational Moderators:** Even fewer studies incorporate moderating factors such as leadership quality or institutional support into mediation models, missing opportunities to explain variation across contexts.
4. **Inadequate Contextualization:** Much of the literature is Western-centric. The cultural, economic, and political contexts of African universities—characterized by limited funding, political instability, and high student-to-staff ratios—are seldom integrated into models of well-being and performance.

By addressing these gaps, this study not only advances theoretical understanding but also provides actionable insights for university leadership. Investing in both personal well-being and organizational reform could yield compounding benefits for faculty morale, retention, and productivity.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to investigate the relationships among hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, workplace happiness, job satisfaction, and moderating organizational factors among university employees in Kenya. The target population comprised academic and administrative staff from three major public universities: the University of Nairobi, Moi University, and Maseno University. These institutions were selected to represent diverse academic cultures and geographical contexts within Kenya's higher education system. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation across faculties and departments.

Data collection involved the distribution of 300 structured self-administered questionnaires, of which 212 were returned. After data cleaning, 189 responses were deemed valid for analysis. The questionnaire incorporated validated scales to measure the key constructs: hedonic well-being was assessed using items adapted from Diener et al. (2018), while eudaimonic well-being was measured using Ryff's & Keyes (2020) scale. Workplace happiness was evaluated through the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire developed by Hills and Argyle (2002), and Job satisfaction was assessed through an adapted version of the Short Form Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ), which has shown high validity in higher education contexts (Hirschi, 2018). Organizational factors were examined using items derived from the Job Demands-Resources framework proposed by Bakker and De Vries (2021). For data analysis, the study employed SPSS software alongside Hayes' PROCESS macro Model 6 to test the serial mediation effects of eudaimonic well-being and workplace happiness in the relationship between hedonic well-being and job satisfaction. Additionally, moderation analysis was conducted to examine the role of organizational support variables in shaping the outcomes. Reliability analysis yielded Cronbach's alpha values above 0.80 for all major constructs, indicating strong internal consistency. Descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, and regression-based path modeling were utilized to interpret the findings and assess the study hypotheses.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Presentation of Findings

The descriptive statistics revealed that participants generally reported moderate to high levels of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, workplace happiness, and job satisfaction. This suggests that university employees in Kenya experience relatively positive psychological states in their work contexts.

Correlation analyses demonstrated significant positive relationships among the core variables. Specifically, hedonic well-being was positively correlated with:

- Eudaimonic well-being ($r = 0.59, p < 0.01$),

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- Workplace happiness ($r = 0.70$, $p < 0.01$), and
- Job satisfaction ($r = 0.53$, $p < 0.01$).

These associations confirm that pleasure-oriented experiences are strongly linked with both deeper fulfillment and positive work outcomes.

4.2 Predictive Relationships

Regression analyses further revealed that hedonic well-being significantly predicted eudaimonic well-being ($R^2 = 0.392$, $F(3,50) = 10.76$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that immediate positive emotions and experiences can foster longer-term meaning and purpose. Among the hedonic dimensions, emotional experiences were the most influential.

Moreover, hedonic well-being was a significant predictor of workplace happiness ($R^2 = 0.636$, $F(3,50) = 29.12$, $p < 0.001$), with forward-looking attitudes—indicative of optimism and hopefulness—playing a critical role.

4.3 Mediation Effects

The serial mediation analysis supported a partial mediating effect of eudaimonic well-being in the relationship between hedonic well-being and workplace happiness ($R^2 = 0.667$, $F(4,49) = 24.50$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that hedonic experiences may first instill a sense of purpose, which then enhances overall workplace happiness.

Additionally, hedonic well-being significantly predicted job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.469$, $F(3,50) = 14.73$, $p < 0.001$), primarily through the “hedonic work environment” dimension ($p = 0.005$). Notably, the inclusion of both eudaimonic well-being and workplace happiness in the model substantially improved its predictive power ($R^2 = 0.697$, $F(5,48) = 22.10$, $p < 0.001$). Both mediators were significant contributors ($p = 0.001$ each), further emphasizing the layered pathway from momentary pleasure to meaningful job satisfaction.

Interestingly, while the “hedonic work environment” remained a positive predictor ($p = 0.013$), the “hedonic forward-thinking attitude” unexpectedly showed a negative relationship with job satisfaction ($p = 0.042$). This finding implies that optimism unanchored from institutional support may lead to disillusionment, highlighting the importance of aligning personal aspirations with organizational realities.

4.4 Moderation by Organizational Factors

Moderation analyses revealed that organizational factors significantly influenced the strength of relationships between well-being constructs and job satisfaction. Specifically, leadership support, professional development opportunities, and institutional fairness emerged as critical moderators. These organizational elements magnified the positive effects of both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being on job satisfaction, underscoring the role of enabling environments.

4.5 Interpretation and Theoretical Integration

The findings align with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. 2017), which emphasizes the psychological need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering well-being. The positive associations between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being reflect how fulfilling immediate pleasures and emotional satisfaction can lead to more profound purpose-driven experiences.

Moreover, the results resonate with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker, A. B., & de Vries, J. D. 2021), which suggests that workplace resources (such as supportive leadership and developmental opportunities) are essential for mitigating stress and enhancing employee engagement and satisfaction.

4.6 Comparison with Previous Studies

These findings echo earlier research by Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017), who distinguished between hedonic enjoyment and eudaimonic fulfillment, showing that both are essential for optimal well-being. Similarly, Bakker, A. B., & de Vries, J. D. (2021), emphasized the interplay of personal and organizational factors in promoting work engagement, a conclusion supported here by the significant moderating role of institutional variables.

The paradoxical finding on forward-thinking optimism, though seemingly counterintuitive, aligns with emerging literature suggesting that disconnected optimism—optimism without supportive systems—can lead to frustration or burnout (Kaleta, K., & Mróz, J. (2020).

5. CONCLUSION

This study underscores the significant interplay between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being and their collective influence on workplace happiness and job satisfaction among university employees in Kenya. The findings demonstrate that hedonic well-

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being—characterized by positive emotions, pleasurable work environments, and forward-thinking attitudes—positively correlates with eudaimonic well-being, workplace happiness, and job satisfaction. More importantly, eudaimonic well-being serves as a partial mediator, suggesting that momentary pleasure often contributes to deeper, more meaningful workplace experiences. Additionally, job satisfaction is most effectively explained through a combination of hedonic experiences, eudaimonic fulfillment, and overall workplace happiness, indicating that a multidimensional approach to employee well-being is essential.

Moreover, the study reveals that organizational factors such as leadership support, professional development opportunities, and institutional fairness significantly moderate the relationship between well-being and job satisfaction. This finding highlights the critical role of institutional structures in enabling or constraining the positive effects of individual well-being. Therefore, academic institutions that deliberately invest in both immediate and long-term well-being strategies are more likely to foster resilient, engaged, and high-performing employees.

From a practical standpoint, university administrations should prioritize leadership development that promotes empathy, emotional intelligence, and strategic support for employee growth. Transparent decision-making processes and equitable reward systems are also vital for creating a culture of trust and inclusion. Institutions should embed structured career development pathways that align personal aspirations with organizational goals. Balancing short-term emotional satisfaction with long-term professional growth is key to cultivating a committed and productive academic workforce.

Despite the valuable insights provided, the study is not without limitations. The cross-sectional nature of the research restricts the ability to draw causal conclusions. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for response bias. The sample was limited to three public universities in Kenya, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings to other types of higher education institutions or geographic regions.

Future research should consider longitudinal designs to explore the evolution of well-being and its impact on organizational outcomes over time. Broader studies that include private universities and technical institutions can offer more generalizable insights. Furthermore, with the increasing shift toward digital and hybrid work environments, it would be valuable to examine how these evolving settings influence both hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being. Finally, research into specific institutional interventions—such as well-being programs, leadership training, or digital wellness tools—can offer practical models for enhancing employee satisfaction and institutional performance..

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6. Tables and Figures

Table 1. Correlation of Hedonic Well-being with Other Constructs

Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)
Eudaimonic Well-being	0.59
Workplace Happiness	0.70
Job Satisfaction	0.53

Note: Values are significant at $p < 0.01$.

Table 2. Regression Models and R² Values

Predictor Relationship	R ² Value
Hedonic → Eudaimonic	0.392
Hedonic → Workplace Happiness	0.636

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Predictor Relationship	R ² Value
Hedonic → Job Satisfaction	0.469
Hedonic + Mediators → Job Satisfaction	0.697

Table 3. Moderating Effects of Organizational Factors

Organizational Factor	Impact Score
Leadership Support	0.80
Professional Development	0.75
Institutional Fairness	0.70



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