
ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AS A DETERMINANT OF EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH: A CONCEPTUAL INTEGRATION FOR SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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Abstract

In contemporary occupational health discourse, the deterioration of workforce psychological well-being represents an escalating crisis manifest both on a macroeconomic global scale and within the specific socio-economic fabric of Nigeria. The attendant reports of issues of suicide, depression, etc. have become commonplace. This paper investigates the role of organisational culture as a predictor of employee mental health. This is a way of proffering a solution to the lack of theoretical development in this area. This study synthesises the Job Utilizing the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, Social Exchange Theory (SET), and Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) Theory, thereby offering a unified interdisciplinary framework to explain the phenomenon rooted in the sociocultural context of southwest Nigeria. Four distinct dimensions of organisational culture: mission, consistency, involvement, and adaptability, are established as playing a pivotal role in shaping employee mental health. By connecting organisational culture to mental health through perceived support and psychological safety, the proposed framework establishes four testable propositions that include a formal moderated mediation pathway. This paper consolidates fragmented literature, directly addresses

the Western-centric bias prevalent in occupational health theory, and offers a research agenda that is contextually relevant for Nigeria.

Keywords: Employee mental health, Organisational culture, Psychosocial safety climate, Social exchange theory, Nigeria

Introduction

Employee mental health is a vital factor that influences both organisational productivity and public health (World Health Organisation - WHO, 2022; International Labour Organisation - ILO, 2022). According to the WHO, mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing that allows individuals to manage life's challenges and make meaningful contributions to their communities, which is beyond being free from illness. The global economy incurs an annual loss of approximately US\$1 trillion due to depression and anxiety alone, which makes it vital and significant for researchers to investigate the systemic factors present in organisational settings (Eurofound, 2023; WHO, 2022). In Nigeria, the situation is a growing concern. With an estimated 20% to 30% of the population suffering from mental disorders, a treatment gap that exceeds 80% and fewer than 150 psychiatrists available for a population of over 220 million (Gureje & Oladeji, 2021). Adias et al. (2025) project that 75% of Nigerian workers face considerable stress related to their jobs.

Discussions on workplace mental health in Nigeria increased significantly following the suicide of a Globus Bank employee in January 2024, which was induced by an unfair and insane target. Her death made the issue of insane performance targets and inadequate psychological support systems become prominent (Vanguard, 2024a). From an economic perspective, stress related absenteeism costs the Nigerian economy between ₦350 billion and ₦400 billion annually (BusinessDay, 2025). However, proactive interventions for improving the wellness status of employees are scarce. Currently, there are three significant gaps that constrain scholarly efforts to address the emerging crisis, namely over-reliance on one-sector analysis (Adewuya et al., 2020), an inclination towards assessing organizational factors in fragments (Okoli et al., 2025), and the

uncritical borrowing of Western theoretical frameworks (Amah, 2023). As a way to fill these gaps, this study attempts to fill the gap in terms of a comprehensive model which could analyse the impact of organizational culture on employees' mental wellness. The objectives of the study are to:

- i. determine the key factors or dimensions of organizational culture that play an important role in influencing mental well-being of employees in Southwest Nigeria;
- ii. assess the manner in which the socio-cultural dynamics peculiar to Nigeria affect the link between organizational culture and mental well-being of employees;
- iii. investigate the means by which organizational culture affects the well-being of employees; and
- iv. develop an integrated theoretical framework with clear propositions.

Theoretical Framework

In order to conduct an inclusive multi-level approach, this study has included three theoretical approaches that have been identified as follows: The JD-R model, SET, and PSC theory. This is presented with regard to the different levels of analyses and their commonalities in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Theoretical Integration Summary

Theory	Level	Key Constructs	Mechanism	Nigerian Relevance
JD-R Model	Individual/Job	Job demands; resources; burnout; engagement	Health impairment & motivational dual processes	Explains resource depletion and high demands in Nigerian sectors
Social Exchange Theory (SET)	Relational	Reciprocity; psychological contract; POS; silence	Reciprocity norms; contract breach triggers distress	Explains hierarchical deference and silence as responses to cultural incivility
Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC)	Organisational	Management commitment; priority; communication; participation	Climate for psychological health protection	Explains how absent policies and cultural stigma undermine psychological safety

Note. JD-R = Job Demands-Resources; POS = Perceived Organisational Support; PSC = Psychosocial Safety Climate.

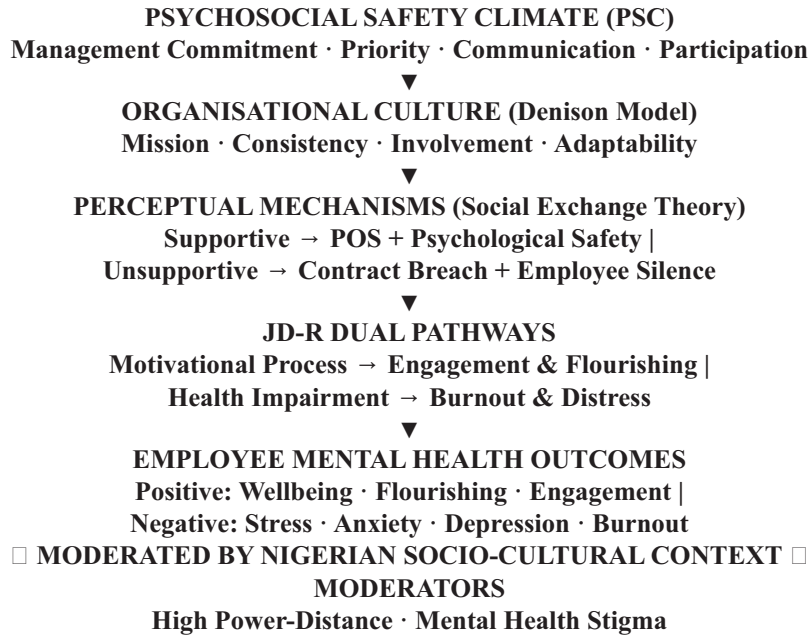


Figure 1: Integrated Conceptual Framework: Organisational Culture and Employee Mental Health in Southwest Nigeria

Table 2: Mapping Denison Cultural Traits to JD-R Dual Processes

Denison Trait	Function as Job Resource	Function as Job Demand	JD-R Pathway
Mission	Purpose, meaning, role clarity	Role ambiguity, goal conflict	Motivational / Hindrance
Consistency	Predictable norms, cohesion	Rigid, prescriptive norms	Motivational / Hindrance
Involvement	Empowerment, participation	Overload, lack of autonomy	Motivational / Challenge
Adaptability	Learning support, change self-efficacy	Poorly managed change, insecurity threat	Motivational / Threat

Note. JD-R = Job Demands-Resources Model. Pathway classifications follow Mazzetti and Schaufeli (2023).

Proposition 1: The Impact of Organizational Culture on Dual Mental Health Outcomes.

Within the corporate landscape of Southwest Nigeria, a resilient corporate culture functions as a dual-action mechanism that directly enhances employee mental health. It achieves this by simultaneously reducing psychological distress, specifically suppressing occupational burnout, workplace anxiety, depressive symptoms, and general stress, while actively cultivating psychological vitality, measured through heightened professional engagement, overall wellness, and emotional flourishing. This premise is theoretically anchored by blending the structural safety focus of Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) principles (Dollard & Bakker, 2010) with the core cultural dimensions, adaptability, systemic consistency, mission alignment, and employee involvement, delineated by Denison and Mishra (1995). Furthermore, by integrating the dual-continua framework established by Keyes (2005), this model evaluates mental health across a comprehensive spectrum. This approach explicitly recognizes that merely alleviating workplace exhaustion or psychological strain does not automatically mean that an employee is experiencing true psychological flourishing.

Proposition 2: Intervening Mechanisms of POS and Psychological Safety. Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Psychological Safety are intervening variables that act as mediators in the relationship between organizational culture and the mental wellbeing of employees. Supportive cultures enhance mental health by improving POS and safety, whereas toxic cultures impair mental health by triggering psychological contract breaches and employee silence. Rationale: According to Social Exchange Theory (SET), organizational culture dictates the quality of the exchange relationship between the employer and employee. Supportive environments stimulate cognitive appraisals of safety and care, driving positive health outcomes (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Conversely, an unsupportive environment signals a breach of the psychological contract, triggering withdrawal behaviours like silence, which systematically erode psychological wellbeing (Ahmad et al., 2024; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Zhao et al., 2007).

Proposition 3: Supportive cultures trigger motivational JD-R processes; toxic cultures trigger health impairment processes, with loss spirals accelerating deterioration in resource-constrained Nigerian workplaces. Rationale: The JD-R model's two way pathways account for both protective and damaging cultural effects. Gain and loss spirals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2023) are especially important in Nigerian organisations where external structural resource shield remain minimal.

Proposition 4: Moderated Mediation: Nigerian Socio-Cultural Context. The Nigerian sociocultural context moderates the mediated relationships in Proposition 2: (a) High power-distance reduces the POS mental health link by conditioning employees to perceive support as contingent on conformity; (b) Mental health stigma reduces the psychological safety help-seeking link as employees internalise injunctions against disclosing vulnerability. Rationale: Employees use their cultural values to judge company culture and decide if workplace support is genuinely helpful (Adias et al., 2025; Amah, 2023; Ogunyemi, 2022). Testing this multi-layered relationship requires a multilevel structural equation modelling (MSEM).

Discussions

This paper presents four key contributions. First, it consolidates dissimilar literature into a cohesive framework, thereby responding to Boxall and Macky's (2021) appeal for a theoretical connection between the characteristics of high-performance work systems and wellbeing through defined psychological mechanisms. Second, it enhances the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model by identifying organisational culture as a theoretically sound antecedent, in line with Bakker and Demerouti's (2023) request for contextual refinement. Third, by incorporating power distance and societal stigma as critical moderators of these core relationships, the study mitigates the Western-centric bias that Amah (2023) highlighted as a critical theoretical limitation. Finally, it answers the specific call by Dong et al. (2024) for expanded research on Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) inside collectivist and developing economies.

Conclusion

This study constructs a multi-layered moderated-mediation framework designed to evaluate corporate culture as a systemic predictor of employee psychiatric well-being within the specific industrial landscape of Southwest Nigeria. Rather than evaluating workplace variables in isolation, this model clarifies the precise structural pathways through which corporate environments either actively foster psychological health or catalyze psychological erosion. To achieve this, the conceptual architecture merges several distinct paradigms: the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, Social Exchange Theory (SET), and Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) principles, while utilizing the Denison framework to quantify cultural traits. The central argument demands a shift in corporate strategy: regional enterprises cannot realistically mitigate employee psychological crises through superficial wellness programs while leaving toxic structural mechanisms intact.

In this environment, operational adaptability, normative consistency, strategic mission clarity, and deep staff involvement cease to be optional managerial ideals; they function as the foundational pillars dictating whether human capital thrives or deteriorates. Consequently, the resulting four propositions establish a cohesive empirical roadmap with direct, transformative utility for public health policymakers, guidance counselling professionals, and corporate leaders across Nigeria.

Suggestions

To bring these ideas to life, we need to take action in a few key ways. First, companies should use standard, trusted surveys to keep an eye on stress levels and workplace culture. Second, we have to retrain managers so they know how to build an environment where staff feel safe speaking their minds, especially in offices where people are usually too intimidated to speak up to authority. Third, the government needs to step in and pass laws that any organisation that has over 50 employees to offer official mental health support and counselling. Finally, work psychologists should stop focusing entirely on one-on-one therapy; they need to start diagnosing and fixing the broken office cultures that cause the stress to begin with. This paper is just the

starting point. For workplace health in Nigeria to get better, we need research that balances global standards with our local realities, and this study sets that in motion.

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