



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Building Resilience in Times of Crisis: The Role of Perceived Wellbeing in Enhancing Employee Performance

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This study investigates the influence of perceived well-being on academic performance amidst crises. As crises significantly challenge individuals' psychological and emotional states, understanding how perceived well-being influences academic performance becomes crucial. Drawing upon a qualitative research design and Job Demand Control Support theory, an attempt is made to explore the academician experience during the crisis in Pakistan's higher education sector. Four case studies involving both public and private universities are conducted to observe the situations between different research contexts. The findings of this research shed light on the mechanisms through which perceived well-being influences academic outcomes during times of crisis. By noting social, physical, and organizational factors, the findings imply how academician performance can be guided to face the altered job demands due to the impact of crises. While the social element is perceived as manageable individually, physical and organizational elements require much consideration from the organizational part to retain employee performance in challenging times. The role of organizational support in providing necessary resources is crucial because perceived well-being on job demands during crises closely interacts with performance. The uniqueness of the human resource management function in Pakistan's educational sector raises an important practical implication for policymakers and universities to establish the relevant HRM practices in managing crises, particularly to articulate the implementation's social, physical, and organizational mechanisms.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A crisis can be defined as unforeseen events or circumstances that significantly threaten individuals, societies, communities, or organizations. From natural disasters to public health emergencies, economic downturns, and other unexpected situations, crises underscore the disruptive and calamitous nature of such events, necessitating immediate and urgent responses from relevant stakeholders (Lipsy, 2020). Natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and wildfires can inflict severe damage and devastation on individuals and communities (Quarantelli, 1999). Economic crises, characterized by financial instability and recessions, can lead to widespread job losses, creating stressful and urgent situations. Whether internal or international, political crises encompass civil unrest, geopolitical tensions, and conflicts, disrupting everyday life and requiring swift and effective responses (Abdelrahman, 2022). Further, health emergencies like the recent COVID-19 pandemic pose significant threats to communities, with far-reaching health implications on a global scale, necessitating many adaptations in personal and work aspects.

Regardless of its type, the crisis is likely to have profound effects on individuals and organizations, leading to collateral damages from one personal life to one's work life. For instance, the health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to severe global economic crises when every aspect of life changed abruptly. The losses of business, jobs, work stability, and household affordability negatively affected mental well-being, leading to increased rates of depression, anxiety, and other psychosocial risks that are more harmful than expected. Unfortunately, psychosocial risks can impact individuals, families, societies, and nations. The stigma of mental illness due to stress from resource loss and changes in life routines worsened mental health during the crises. This proves the importance of managing crises, especially for ensuring the employee's well-being, which is affected by personal and work matters. An essential part of the effort lies in providing employees with the support and resources to cope with the hardships and challenges and survive difficult times. Further, prioritizing crisis management is crucial for the organization to sustain business operations through a resilient work environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Well-being

Over the past decade, well-being has garnered significant attention among researchers trying to address related issues in individual and organizational performance. This is even more significant than before, given the detrimental impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic that hit the world. More attention to well-being is driven by a growing concern among organizations about understanding effective strategies to ensure organizational resilience and survival through challenging times. The complex interplay between individual well-being and organizational performance will likely be brought to the fore, realizing that organizations in modern environments are exposed to high uncertainties that require quick adaptation to remain competitive. While business is significantly affected by the pandemic, the need for productive employees is among the top priorities in the effort to bounce back from the impact of the crisis. This is consistent with the human resource management (HRM) perspective, which widely acknowledges employees as a crucial source of competitive advantage for firms. Numerous studies emphasize the pivotal role of employees in organizational success (Gray et al., 2023; Ortiz-Bonnin et al., 2023).

In conjunction with the attention given by the world to the issue of well-being, the World Health Organization (WHO) has provided a comprehensive definition of psychological well-being, emphasizing its association with an individual's capacity to navigate various aspects of life effectively (WHO, 2020). This understanding covers one's abilities to manage life stressors, contribute to society or community, and find meaning. This holistic view of well-being aligns with two major philosophical perspectives: hedonic and eudaimonic. The hedonic perspective focuses on the happiness and pleasure an individual can achieve in life, while the eudaimonic perspective prioritizes realizing human potential and fulfillment (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Although both views are distinct in their basis, they offer complementary indicators for understanding well-being in the context of employees and HRM.

In the workplace context, studies were conducted to delve into the concept of well-being, including Page & Vella-Brodrick (2009, 2013), who defined it as the quality of life experienced by employees in their professional environment. This encompasses job satisfaction, work-life balance, and overall mental health. These factors are likely pertinent in understanding the perceived well-being of employees at all times, particularly in a crisis. In the same vein, the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2017 introduced a broader perspective of well-being at work. It extends beyond individual experiences to encompass all facets of the working environment, including organizational culture, climate, and employee perceptions of the organization. This multifaceted approach recognizes the interconnectedness of organizational factors with employee well-being and underscores the importance of fostering a supportive workplace culture for overall well-being. The ILO's broader perspective of well-being at work underscores the importance of considering organizational factors in promoting employee well-being. By fostering a supportive workplace culture, creating a positive organizational climate, and ensuring fairness in organizational processes, organizations can

contribute to the holistic well-being of their employees (Guest, 2017; Chakraborty & Mahanta, 2019; Zakkariya & Philip, 2023).

Organizational studies provide extensive literature on the description of well-being; however, many authors suggest that a deeper understanding of the concept remains to be seen, i.e. (Guest, 2017; Seligman, 2018; Zheng et al., 2015). "Well-being" is defined as being happy, healthy, and comfortable. The concept of well-being revolves around physical, psychological, and emotional health (Kowalski & Loretto, 2017). Most authors associate well-being with the perception of employees by workplace initiative and interventions (Kowalski & Loretto, 2017; Zheng et al., 2015).

The linkage between employee well-being and performance

Performance is a broad concept, and as no single framework covers employee and manager performance, researchers have approached the concept from multiple perspectives (Edgar et al., 2017). Well-being and performance are related to each other. The individual perspective highlights the role of individual differences in the personalities, behaviors, and attitudes contributing to performance. The situational perspective, however, focuses on the environmental factors, including workplace structures and policies that contribute to performance. Previous research has differentiated between individual characteristics contributing to performance and the situational factors contributing to the well-being that increased employee performance (Taris & Schaufeli, 2018).

Employee well-being is a critical factor researched and found to influence job performance and organizational success strongly. The concept of well-being, as discussed, is multifaceted, so when employees feel higher levels of well-being in their lives, their performance will have positive indicators, including increased job performance, productivity, and high engagement (Allan et al., 2019). The research conducted in various industries reflects that organizational initiatives toward improving the well-being of employees lead to an increase in their performance.

The happy-productive worker hypothesis presents the employee's performance because of worker well-being. This hypothesis states that a happy worker would perform more and be more productive than an unhappy worker (Zelenski et al., 2008). The hypothesis originating from Hawthorne studies and the Human Relation Movement of the 1930s is still popular today (Cropanzano & Wright, 2001). There are substantial studies that show that well-being and performance are related. The multiple aspects of understanding the relationship between well-being and performance require understanding theories related to the link between well-being and performance.

The role of human resource management (HRM)

HRM is known to have an "indirect" effect on performance by ensuring employee well-being (Guest, 2017). However, there is research that identifies a direct role in well-being and developing performance (Van De Voorde et al., 2012). The concept of "mutual gains" has been popular because it states that HRM gives an indication to the employees that their contribution and well-being are valued and being taken care of, which, in return, increases their performance, therefore creating a win-win situation (Guest, 2017; Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019; Van De Voorde et al., 2012). In contrast, "conflicting outcomes" challenge this hopeful view and portray a rather dark image, claiming that HR practices can increase performance but at the cost of employee well-being by increasing workload, having unrealistic expectations, and putting strain on the employees. This creates a "lose-win" situation for the employees and the organizations (Lu et al., 2015).

HRM practices within the organization are a competitive advantage and a tool for the motivation of the employees. HRM practices must facilitate employee performance and benefit the whole organization. HRM practices are gaining increased influence in academia across the world as research focuses on the role of HR in improving the performance of employees. The perception of employees in academia regarding these practices over their performance is an interesting debate. Employees perceive that some HR practices directly contribute to their performance, like "training

and development" activities, as they contribute to their career success and performance (Ijaz et al., 2016).

A thorough review of HRM function and employee well-being suggests five significant provisional HR activities (Guest, 2017). The first activity is investing in employees, highlighting the organizational functions of recruitment and selection, training, development, and mentoring. The second activity is providing engaging work involving autonomy and skill challenges. The third activity is providing a positive social and physical environment focusing on health and safety, fairness, employee security, and required social interaction. The fourth activity is voice, which includes communication and feedback. The last activity is organizational support, which includes participative management, a flexible working environment, and performance management (Guest, 2017). The researcher chose the model by Guest (2017) based on the assumption that most higher education teachers must know the HR department and its work. Therefore, this model provides a more straightforward understanding for teachers from all different backgrounds and departments, which are the study's respondents.

The research context

Pakistan, an underdeveloped country, faces challenges in various sectors, and higher education is mainly one of the neglected ones. The research over the last decade conducted on the role of HR departments in improving the performance of universities broadly shows that the presence of Human Resource Management Departments in universities is almost nonexistent (Hashim et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2012; Sial et al., 2011). Therefore, attempts are made to explore the perceived well-being of employees in facing the crisis and its influence on their performance.

Employee performance in the higher education sector

The crisis of COVID-19 deeply impacted the performance of employees worldwide. The employees of the higher education sector also had to adapt to the changes caused by the pandemic, and a quick response was required in situations where challenges were of various natures. The most critical challenge was to adapt to the new technologies, remote work, and online instruction methodologies, which directly impacted their performance as a professional. It was reported in various studies that the academicians faced challenges adapting to the new instructional methodology, particularly regarding student engagement. It had questions regarding the effectiveness of those modes, considering the quality of education (Bashir et al., 2023). In addition, the digital divide and disparity in Pakistan were the leading factors, as not all the academicians and students had access to the internet and the necessary equipment to do practical remote work.

Apart from the operational issues, the crisis of the global COVID-19 pandemic also influenced the mental health and well-being of the academicians in the higher education sector of Pakistan. The uncertainties, changing workloads, new expectations, and blurred work-life balance impact job satisfaction and employee performance (Ali et al., 2020). The absence of social interactions and missing elements of human connection during lockdowns also contributed to the challenges within an educational setting (Sarwar et al., 2020). Due to the financial burden on higher education institutes, many employees face the threat of losing their jobs and deductions in the salary packages, leading to additional stress (Ghaffar et al., 2020). A relatively smaller number of students are enrolled, and the financial issues experienced by both institutions and students have further intensified these challenges.

Research has yet to determine a comprehensive approach that can provide insight into the solutions that can help educational institutions in a similar crisis in the future. The burden of responsibility lies on the administrators. However, the changes in the external environment and government policies also impact the decisions, making the challenge even more difficult to handle. The organizations need to work on the operational competencies of the academician during such a crisis by offering training programs on digital literacy, finding ways to restore their capabilities financially, and continuously working on pedagogical skills to improve performance (Bashir et al., 2023). However, the more

significant challenge remains for the universities to determine how to improve the employees' overall well-being in the crisis, as the operational impact is visible. However, the psychological impact is hard to measure (Ali et al., 2020). The higher education sector of Pakistan needs to determine the value of well-being initiatives to prepare all relevant stakeholders, including the academician, students, and staff members, to be proactive in a similar crisis in the future.

Higher education sector in Pakistan

All educational sectors have witnessed an impact in various terms while responding to the crises of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, in Pakistan, these challenges include but are open to access to resources, instructional methodologies, financial constraints, adaptability, and the ability to respond quickly to changing situations (Farooq et al., 2020). The implications of COVID-19 restrictions, including the lockdowns and social distancing measures, are that universities were required to shift to online modes while facing challenges of various natures (Hussain et al., 2020). Pakistan, an underdeveloped country, still needs to work on providing access to facilities in all areas. In this case, the lack of internet access in most areas of the country exposed the limitation in measuring the efficiency of the online mode of education (Mumtaz et al., 2021).

The quality of education in comparison to standard classroom teaching after being shifted to the remote setup is also a concern as the academician first had to learn the complexities of the Learning Management Systems (LMS) and then respond to the challenges of the online teaching methods (Adnan, 2020). Some universities adapted to complete online modes and are still building on them; some followed a more hybrid approach, and for some, where constraints were much more severe, this time halted educational progress. These challenges have allowed researchers to develop "best practices" in similar crises. The situation provides an opportunity to reevaluate pedagogical methods and the need for strategic planning to ensure educational continuity in times of crisis (Sohil & Sohail, 2022).

The burden of financial strains has been a critical factor for the higher education universities in Pakistan during the crises of the global COVID-19 pandemic as reduced enrollments, bearing the costs of the digital shift, and facing unexpected expenses led to an impact on the revenue of the universities. In Pakistan, the emphasis of the HEC (Higher Education Commission) is on the financial autonomy of the universities, which was hampered at this time (Sohil & Sohail, 2022). Moreover, universities face the challenge of acquiring the latest equipment and providing facilities for academicians and students to continue their education (Ghaffar et al., 2020). The students coming to Pakistan on academic scholarships were also affected by the travel restrictions imposed due to COVID-19 implications, restricting international students' economic and cultural contributions.

Apart from the economic and operational challenges being faced by the universities, the research continues to measure the impact of the crisis on the mental and physical health of significant stakeholders, including students, academician, and staff members, where they are also facing a risk of being exposed to a life-threatening virus yet planning and preparing to shift to a new learning environment and makes an effort to create an impact (Adnan, 2020). The continuity and improvement of academic quality is the prime challenge for all universities.

Underpinning theory

In this study, the Job-Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) model was used as an underlying theory to explain the perceived well-being and performance of academicians in Pakistan during a crisis. Karasek (1979) presents the job-demand-control model as a comprehensive and influential theory to study employee well-being and performance. As proposed in the Job Demand-Control (JDC) Model, there are two major categories, i.e., job demand and job control, where job demand refers to the physical and psychological requirements of the job at hand, and job control leads to the concepts of autonomy and decision-making authority at the job. This results in provisions for a more comprehensive evaluation of the job, focusing on the challenges and the resources available to the employee (Karasek, 1979). Some of the findings from the later studies suggest that the higher the

level of demand from the worker, the higher the control (support), as it provides opportunities for the workers to enhance their capabilities and perform better (Siegrist, 1996).

The Job-Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) model extends to the findings of the Job-demand-control and adds a third dimension of social support. By adding the social context, the model acknowledges the value of interpersonal relationships and organizational culture and its contribution to ensuring the well-being of the employees. Providing such resources (physical, social, and organizational) becomes essential to improve the employee's well-being (Taris & Schaufeli, 2018). In a crisis, when there is high job demand and low job control, the research has shown that the social aspect serves as a buffer while mitigating the effect of stressors and enhancing the employees' well-being (Usman et al., 2023).

Unlike other well-being models, which emphasize the individual, the JDCS model provides actionable insights for organizations to implement (Van Der Doef & Maes, 1999). If the organization can identify the job characteristics associated with learning and development in crises, job redesign strategies can improve employee well-being and performance (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). To create a healthy and supportive work environment during times of crisis, the JDCS model can provide a balanced and practical approach to ensuring the well-being and performance of the employees.

While perceived well-being and employee performance are vital for organizations, this aligns with the assumptions of the Job-Demand-Control-Support model to be employed as an underpinning theory for this study. The existence of job demands and job control were explored to see their connection with employee performance during crises. This is consistent with the identified factors likely to influence employee engagement and performance, as people tend to reduce exhaustion and crisis uncertainties (Vu et al., 2022). Many studies supported the influence of job demand, role perception, resources, and organizational support in understanding the nexus between well-being and employee performance (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023; Van ver Meer, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methodology through case study design was used for this study. While qualitative research focuses on approaches including observation, interviews, written records, pictures, and physical evidence to answer the research questions (Maxwell & Reybold, 2015), this aligns with the need to explore respondents' experiences during a crisis. A case study design enables the study to describe a particular episode in a real-life event based on an individual's experience and understanding. The case study approach is ideal when investigating phenomena in natural settings without controlling the variables. Further, case studies apply to an interpretive or positivist philosophy of research depending on the research objectives, the type of data collected, and the techniques used to analyze the data (Yin, 2017). In this research, an interpretive approach is chosen to explore the issue of employee well-being and performance in times of crisis.

Four Pakistani universities, comprising two public and two private universities, were involved in this study. These universities are chosen because they are leading in the sector they represent. Including different types of universities in investigating well-being and performance would provide substantial insight into the complexities of situations facing employees during challenging times. It would be interesting to know that previous research found a significant difference in HRM practices between public and private universities in Pakistan (Khalid et al., 2012). Since COVID-19 is a recent phenomenon, there has yet to be substantial research on the perceived well-being and performance of academicians in higher education institutes of Pakistan, either in public or private sector universities. Therefore, more insights could be gathered to benefit the Pakistan education sector. A list of selected universities is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: List of universities involved in the study

No.	Public Sector Universities	Private Sector Universities
1.	COMSATS University Islamabad	The University of Lahore
2.	Abbottabad University of Science and Technology (AUST)	FAST University Islamabad

Respondents to this study were chosen among the academicians of the selected universities. To answer the research issue about the experience during the crisis, respondents are selected among those impacted directly by the COVID-19 pandemic. The purposive sampling method is suitable for this study as it helps to identify the respondents who share similar characteristics and have knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon to be studied. Through purposive sampling, the respondents can communicate their experiences in an expressive and reflective measure related to the phenomenon to be studied (Wu Suen et al., 2014). The specific criteria for the screening purpose are that the respondent should have at least three years of experience as a full-time academician in the selected university. This ensures they have sufficient experience to describe and explain the crises. Purposive sampling is typically used in qualitative studies as researchers carefully select subjects based on the study's purpose, expecting all participants to suit the research objectives and requirements. As a result, members of the accessible population are not interchangeable, and the sample size is determined by data saturation (Wu Suen et al., 2014).

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather the data from respondents. It allows the researcher and participants to emphasize any anticipated issue and make clarifications where needed (Galletta & Cross, 2013). The interviews were recorded using an audio recorder before the transcribing process was done. Employee interviews were scheduled and conducted over six months (March-August 2021). The respondents were contacted by email and telephone conversation (WhatsApp) for an appointment. The researcher paid particular attention to the interview protocols to ensure the focus remained on the research question. The interview questions are broad and thorough so that the respondents can bring their ideas and selection of words (Gioia et al., 2012). The questions may change during the interview depending on the respondent's feedback. Thematic analysis and the Gioia data analysis framework were employed to interpret the interview data. Leximancer software was used to develop concept maps and data structures. Leximancer is a reliable software tool for processing extensive textual data to derive similar concepts. One of the significant benefits of using this software is that it analyzes the data while eliminating the researcher's interference (Jones, 2010).

Validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of data

Using the Gioia framework of data analysis is one way to achieve the validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of data in this study. Gioia's framework works by organizing the data based on three levels of analysis: first-order, second-order, and aggregate dimension. This is to avoid personal biases in the data interpretation based on the researchers' preferences. Based on Gioia's framework, to organize the data and enhance quality rigor, the data is categorized into first and second-order categories before a more structured concept is developed later. In the initial interview, the terms and concepts seem overwhelming in number, and as the process continues, the researcher can label the terms based on the response, and connections start to build as the respondents report their experience of the same phenomenon; therefore, the themes and concepts start to shape up. The similarities and differences among the responses and ideas start to shape up. In second-order analysis, the emerging themes suggest concepts that can help describe the phenomena under study (Gioia et al., 2012). Paying close attention to the shaping of concepts can help map the understanding of the phenomenon under study. The aggregate dimension stage is where it can be determined if the formation of themes and concepts has led to "theoretical saturation." Unlike quantitative research methodology that achieves statistical generalizability, theoretical saturation in qualitative is drawn based on the assumptions of the underpinning theories.

After generating the first-order, second-order, and aggregate dimensions, a data structure is built with a substantial outcome for the whole analysis process, leading toward developing results. The data structure graphically represents the raw data being converted into terminologies and themes, a key component of qualitative research rigor (Pratt, 2008). This helps the researcher view the data theoretically, where the relationships between the themes and the interconnected are visible and can be interpreted by the researcher.

DISCUSSION

A total of 16 academicians from four universities were interviewed, representing two universities of public and private universities in Pakistan respectively. The demographic background of the respondents is shown in Table 2. According to the age distribution, the respondents are well-represented in each group. All respondents are less than 55 years of age. As a lecturer, respondents' educational background is those with master's degrees and above. A wide range of tenure durations can be seen, suggesting that all respondents have sufficient experience in teaching. Since all respondents fulfilled the requirements of having more than three years of teaching experience, they are eligible to participate in this study.

Table 2: Demographic background

Demographic Criteria	Public Sector	Private Sector
<i>Age</i>		
25-34	3	4
35-44	3	2
45-54	2	2
55 and above	-	-
<i>Educational Background</i>		
Masters	4	4
PhD	3	4
Post-Doc	1	-
<i>Teaching Experience</i>		
< 5 years	-	-
6 -10 years	4	5
11- 15 years	2	3
16 - 20 years	2	-
20 years and above	-	-
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	1	1
Married	7	7
Number of respondents	8	8

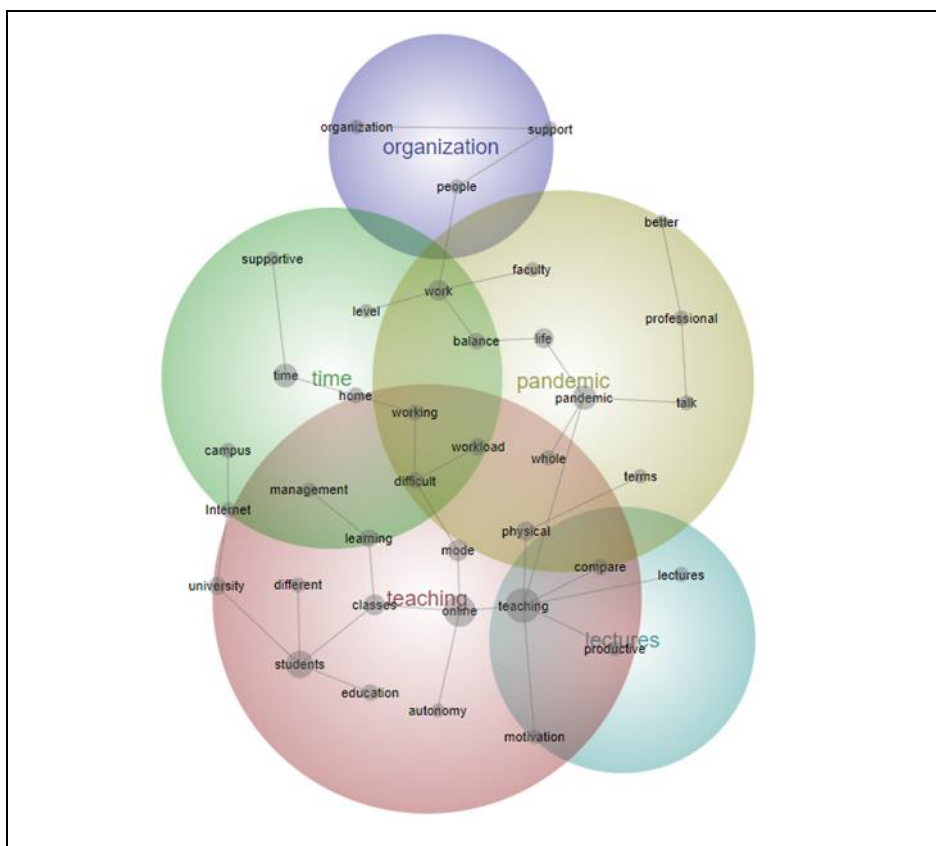
Out of all respondents, ten interviews were conducted in person, and six interviews were conducted online through Microsoft Team Meetings software. The interviews were conducted in English, the formal language in Pakistani universities. The interviews were recorded and transcribed manually. The transcribed data was processed using Leximancer software. Using Leximancer software enables similar concepts in wording and meaning to be merged, and irrelevant concepts were removed, as suggested by (Nik Mat et al., 2023). From the interview responses, the merged concepts include words like (students, student), (changes, change, changed), and (class, classes). Words excluded include (able, comes, during, making, given, regarding, take, things, and used). This is because the words are general and only verbs used in the sentence, which is irrelevant information for the data analysis. This approach has helped generate meaningful results from the data using Leximancer, as suggested by (Nik Mat et al., 2023).

Based on Gioia's methodology, first-order analysis was conducted involving exact words and phrases from the interview transcripts, and no categories of responses were made at this stage. First-order analysis focused on the variety of responses based on the respondents' own words. A second-order

analysis was done by arranging the first order into groups/themes. To assist this thematic process, the assumptions of the underpinning theory were referred to ensure the reliability and validity of the interpretation. This study used the Job-Demand-Control-Support Model as an underpinning theory to explain the linkage between employee-perceived well-being and performance. The main elements of the theory guided the data interpretation to avoid the researcher's personal biases. The themes are generated based on the similarity in the responses.

Using Gioia methodology, key concepts are developed through concept maps, in which their hierarchy is organized and labeled relationships are linked (Gioia et al., 2012). As shown in Figure 1, the themes presented on the Leximancer Concept Map are heat-mapped, describing red and orange as "hot colors" representing the most important themes. Further, colors like blue and green are relatively less critical. The concept map also provides the connectivity between themes, which are the most important and the least relevant. The connectedness of concepts within that theme gives the researcher a way to measure the importance of a theme within the dataset (Leximancer, 2021).

Figure 1: Concept map for perceived performance - RQ2



Based on the concept map shown in Figure 1, the red circle's most crucial theme is teaching. The other circles on the concept map are pandemic, time, lectures, and organization. The enormous teaching circle is linked closely to smaller circles of time, pandemic, and lectures. However, not all words in the concept map can be taken as relevant information for data structure development. For example, the circle comprising 'lectures' is repetitive and mainly related to teaching. Therefore, it is not included in the data structure. This process involves the second-order analysis, where the grouping is made on the relevant themes in the concept map through the assumptions of underpinning theory, the Job-Demand-Control-Support model.

The data structure was later developed based on the analysis conducted, which is the last stage of aggregate dimensions.

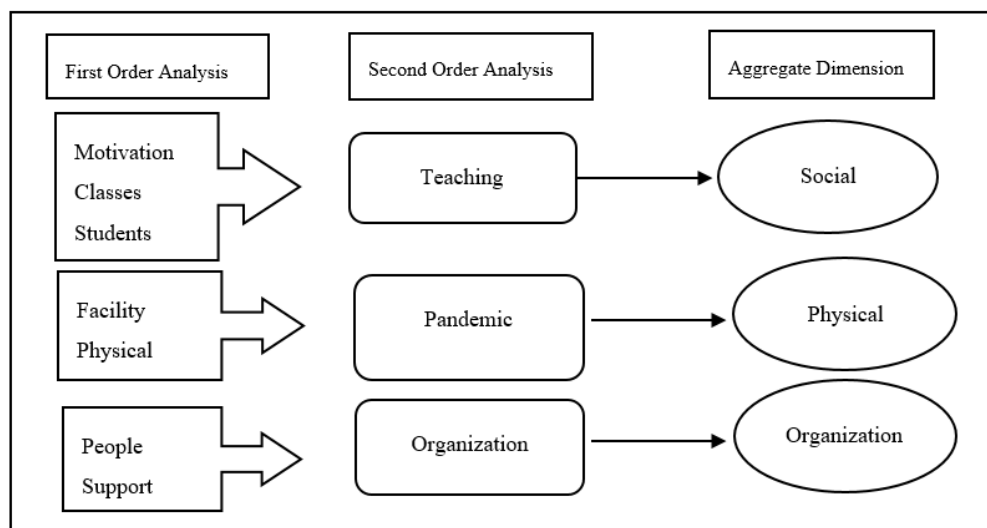


Figure 2: A data structure for perceived work-related well-being during crisis

Social

"Motivation" is the crucial concept of "teaching." The pandemic resulted in difficulties for educators that impacted their motivation. The perspectives of academicians throw light on how the pandemic affected their motivation to perform as lecturers while maintaining their health conditions during a pandemic. One respondent said,

"I kept thinking of ways to keep my students engaged and not waste their time. We need to make them learn and become successful during that time, even though the pandemic is there. So, in a way, what I think that my main motivation is maybe that's due to the thing because if I wanted my children, I have this kind of a thing or kind of a mentality that if I want my children to learn, my own children to learn, so definitely those children also." (Prv2_2)

Another key idea within the theme is the comparison between online and traditional classroom settings for teaching. The pandemic forced a shift to online learning, disrupting the established modes of teaching. It is possible that academicians discussed their experiences and difficulties with this change as it requires time management and student cooperation for the new form of teaching work. Respondent shared their opinion on this;

"I think both modes of teaching are good. I would go with a combination of both, as both have benefits. In online teaching, you are more flexible and can use computers and the internet to share many helpful resources with the students and can deliver a very rich lecture. Similarly, when it comes to in person teaching, the eye contact, body language and live interaction is also important." (Pub1_1)

Most respondents spoke about the process of managing change during the pandemic, which explores their flexibility and potential differences in teaching effectiveness depending on the style of instruction. This is encapsulated with the term "autonomy" as an essential sub-theme under the topic of "teaching." It represents the level of control that the academicians have over their teaching methods and information delivery. The autonomy of academicians is discussed mainly in curriculum design, teaching techniques, and evaluation procedures impacted from face-to-face classrooms to online teaching.

"I felt at ease and enjoyed autonomy as requirements from the University were quite easy to understand and one had to follow that." (Pub1_3)

"When I recall that time, I did enjoy freedom to choose which software I wanted to and particularly I was thrilled with the timings being flexible as we did not worry about the timing of the class it was based upon the mutual understanding of teacher and student. We used multiple gadgets for our analysis, and we also reported some lectures, like pre-discussions about those lectures. (Prv1_3)

The concept map's first theme of "teaching" is consistent with the social element in the JDCS model. The complex link between perceived well-being and teaching effectiveness is mainly considered and received attention by academicians based on the need for interpersonal skills to teach students. While the pandemic surprises everyone, academicians need more time to respond and act quickly so that it will not affect classes and students. The items in the circle of "teaching" suggest the interplay between internal and external forces that influence the respondent's intention and perceived understanding to perform as an academician. This supports the connotation of the nexus between both forces in facing uncertainties during crises (Sherman & Roberto, 2020). The situation also explains the approach taken by the respondents to reduce the impact of the crisis on their job completion (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). The findings of this study prove that individual sensemaking risks can stimulate employees' understanding to perceive their performance and assist in crisis management (Haas & Yorio, 2018).

Physical

The respondents repeatedly used the word "pandemic" in their interviews, referring to their professional lives during the global pandemic, COVID-19. The pandemic made their work different and more complex, and they had to learn new things to keep doing a good job, as shown by the following responses:

"I think workload increased in online mode because you know you have to follow so many different ways of teaching, so you have to prepare more." (Prv1_5)

"Academically, it was a big challenge for teachers to boost up the confidence of students and to look at their workload, their household thing. Means that was a very challenging time for all teachers." (Pub1_1)

Respondents reflected their attention on the problems and responsibilities they faced in their professional jobs during the crisis of COVID-19. This idea encompasses the increasing adaptations, demands, and expectations that academicians encounter when managing remote and hybrid modalities of instruction. This diverse workload demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining educational standards and student support in the context of pandemic-related disruptions. Most respondents expressed concern about the need for the appropriate facility to replace physical classes on campus. During the pandemic, the respondents' own house became a dynamic setting where administrative chores, teaching, and personal life merged. Academicians had to deal with the difficulties of creating appropriate teaching settings in their homes while managing domestic tasks and other distractions. This concept highlights the integration of work and home life. The boundary-blurring nature of remote education and the necessity for suitable work-life balancing measures is also highlighted.

The concept of working from home is a critical topic in the professional theme, demonstrating the considerable influence of the pandemic on respondents' professional lives. While this arrangement has certain advantages, it also creates challenges such as interruptions, family connections, and the delicate balance between work and home life. Changing home areas into offices adds to the physical complexity that influences their performance during a pandemic.

The physical and professional facilities aligned with the physical theme under the assumptions of the JDCS theory. As proposed by the JDCS model, the job demand during a crisis is manageable only if employees are provided with sufficient resources for them to adapt to the changes (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). This is especially true when the pandemic exposes the respondents to unfavorable impacts and drastic changes, such as from face-to-face mode of classes to online. Providing sufficient information, facilities, and equipment may weaken the unfavorable impact on their well-being (Shin & Hurr, 2021). This study shows that the respondents also used personal resources to fulfill the need for online classes, as they are required to work from home. Previous researchers believed utilizing personal resources indicates the employee's ability to develop resiliency and self-control in challenging times (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Organization

The difficulty adjusting to the new method of teaching and pandemic situations were the main reasons respondents spoke about the need for support from the university. The feedback was related to the shift in teaching strategies that required proficiency with a variety of software applications, the creation of new materials, and the adaptation of activities for an online environment. The responses capture the idea that the switch to online instruction increased the workload and added a new level of complexity and preparation. It shows the increased workload brought on by the change. The requirement for educators to use technological tools and software, adopt new teaching methodologies, and plan unique activities for online classrooms adds a layer of complexity to their responsibilities, resulting in an increased burden.

"I realized that a class at home and a class at university is a completely different experience. I was more inclined into my family matters then because I was there at home." (Prv1_4)

The sub-theme "people" emphasizes the crucial role of HR activities in an organization, especially in managing employee well-being in times of pandemic. Interestingly, most respondents are making speculations about the role of HR during the pandemic. The respondent, being unaware of what the HR department does in their respective university, makes speculation and determines that it has to do with "people." The emphasis on the fact that HR is ultimately people-centered shows the role of support from the university. Respondents' expectations cover priorities on supporting the development and advancement of employees, encouraging their engagement and satisfaction, and ensuring their general well-being. The respondents primarily related this to the choice of people rather than a policy. One respondent said,

"It depends a lot on the people; it is in that way. You can say it is open. If people want to give their opinion, they can give. But people are afraid they won't go to the top management. (Pub2_3)

There must be more clarity over open communication and interaction within the university during a pandemic. As a result of the absence of a centralized HR department, the complicated decision-making landscape is typically dispersed among several management roles and positions. Respondents said there is a need to foster an atmosphere that encourages and is non-threatening for staff members to openly voice their opinions, especially with the changes in the teaching and learning method. In facing the pandemic, respondents believed that the need for clear instructions greatly influences decision-making and staff well-being. The concern of the respondents regarding motivation and support provided by the organization in crisis time is also evident in the following statement;

"Organizations sometimes need to be reassured, which I guess they have failed somehow because different people have different opinions. So, the director or our head of the organization should be very vocal and keep reassuring by staying in touch with employees and writing good emails maybe." (Pub_2_Emp1)

The findings of this study suggest that the change during the pandemic needs to be better communicated to academicians. While the pandemic forced organizations to adjust their teaching and work practices, this needs to be articulated through instructions from the management. Adequate communication is important to reduce ambiguity among academicians on work-related issues during a crisis (Britt et al., 2021). While education institution is one of the sectors that resulted from altered job demands during the crisis due to the need to work from home, the role of organizations is crucial in offering the resources and information to assist employees (Wang et al., 2021). The respondents consistently express this, especially regarding the need for autonomy and online-related tools and equipment for online teaching and learning. Organizational support is believed to be the most important resource that is essential to guide and assist employees in achieving their work goals during a crisis (Wang et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study explores the relationship between perceived well-being and performance among academicians in Pakistan's higher education sector. Findings suggest that academicians perceived all social, physical, and organizational elements as essential to influencing their job demands as lecturers and for them to perform during a crisis. This finding integrates well with the assumption of the JDCS model in explaining the nexus between perceived well-being and performance during challenging times. As such, the higher the level of job demand perceived by the employees, the higher the control (support) of the organization should be. Providing necessary support is required as it motivates employees to adjust their job demands, enhance their capabilities, and maintain their performance regardless of the situation. Findings also imply that employees' perception of job demand in crisis management influences their well-being and performance. Although the individual effort to adapt to changes could reduce their uncertainties about the altered job demands during the crisis, however resources and support from the organization interact more with employees' performance. This concludes the findings of this study that the interplay between perceived well-being and performance occurs with the engagement of employees and organization, which are embedded in job demands, control, and support mechanisms.

Authors' contribution

First author, UH is a PhD student at Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Development, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu under the supervision of the corresponding author Dr. NHNM. UH under supervision of Dr. NHNM conceived the idea of working on the issue of employee well-being during crisis. UH collected the data by conducting interviews of the higher education teachers in Pakistan. Conducted analysis using Leximancer software and reported findings and results under supervision of Dr. NHNM. Dr. NHNM supervised the writing of this manuscript and provided expert opinion throughout the whole process. Both authors have read and approved the manuscript before submission.

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