




Determinants of mental health: Role of organisational climate and decent work amongst employees



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Orientation: In South African organisations, a dual work is argued as important: first, the promotion of decent working conditions and secondly, encouraging workplaces that safeguard the mental well-being of employees.

Research purpose: This study was aimed at investigating the determinants of mental health accounting for the role of organisational climate and decent work among public service employees in South Africa.

Motivation of the study: There is a need for organisations to pay attention to those aspects that improve the mental well-being of employees. This also includes the promotion of workplace that in turn emphasises the promotion of decent work.

Research approach/design and method: A cross-sectional quantitative research design was adopted, using a self-administered questionnaire. A convenience sampling technique was used. Data were collected from a sample of 289 public service employees working in the South African public service in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa.

Main findings: The study found organisational climate to have a direct and positive association with decent work. Further, there was support for the mediation of decent work on the relationship between organisational climate and employee mental health.

Practical/managerial implications: The main practical implication of the study is the need to argue for the promotion of decent working conditions through organisational interventions in supporting employee mental health.

Contribution/value-add: This becomes crucial in business environments where employees often suffer challenges that affect their well-being.

Keywords: employee mental health; organisational climate; decent work; organisation; South Africa.

Introduction

Promotion of employee mental health is deemed vital for the success of contemporary businesses (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2015; Mayo et al., 2021). There are growing calls for businesses not only to embrace but also be advocating for the promotion of employee mental health (Greenwood & Anas, 2021; Sachs et al., 2019). This becomes important especially as businesses seek to recover from the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic (Chinyamurindi, 2022; Park & Fowler, 2021). In post-recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic, employee mental health support services are needed, especially in organisations (Greenwood & Anas, 2021). These can be a safeguard and a resilience-building mechanism for businesses (Maruping et al., 2021). From this, new envisaged roles are being argued for the Human Resource Management (HRM) function, especially in the African continent (Chinyamurindi et al., 2021). Key to this role is the advocacy that can be done through the organisation and its employees in promoting health outcomes (Hubert et al., 2022), especially mental health (Mathibe & Chinyamurindi, 2021).

Calls exist in the literature for the need to understand how organisations can assist employees in navigating through challenges that are being experienced (Greenwood, 2021). In seeking to arrive at such interventions, a need exists for a collaborative spirit between the employer and the employee (Chinyamurindi, 2022). A crucial aspect also concerns the conditions that promote harmonious work and decent working conditions (Chada et al., 2022). Within the confines of the workplace and considering the role of the HRM function, the promotion of well-being becomes crucial

(D'Auria et al., 2020), which also includes mental well-being (Mathibe & Chinyamurindi, 2021). Such an understanding can potentially aid the HRM function in its service delivery to the organisation, especially in view of ongoing challenges (Bapuji et al., 2020). Further, such efforts can potentially address challenges faced, especially, in African organisations. These include low productivity, absenteeism and a high labour turnover (Chinyamurindi, 2019). In essence, paying attention to issues related to mental well-being and the conditions of work can potentially enhance the competitiveness of business organisations (Greenwood & Anas, 2021). There is, therefore, a need to prioritise people management and support within organisations (Handfield et al., 2020). Potentially, this can be a source for gaining a competitive advantage (Evans, 2019) and a more harmonious workplace (Chada et al., 2022; Chinyamurindi, 2022).

Some of the mental health challenges acknowledged in the workplace have been linked to factors in the workplace such as poor communication, the company's organisational culture and management practices, workplace bullying and psychological harassment (Kestel, 2019). These factors align with the definitions of organisational climate and potentially point to organisational climate as harbouring stressors, if not supervised, which may lead to experiencing mental health challenges in the workplace (Qureshi et al., 2013). Employees do not experience mental health issues in seclusion; the employers and organisational settings can also play a role (Chinyamurindi, 2019). An unhealthy work environment may impact negatively on employees. Psychological effects such as anxiety, anger and lack of concentration are some of the negative outcomes reported in unhealthy work environments (Qureshi et al., 2014). Mental health should, therefore, be viewed and treated as an organisational priority instead of an individual challenge (Chinyamurindi, 2022).

It becomes necessary for organisations to continually place emphasis on the promotion of employee mental health (Mathibe & Chinyamurindi, 2021). Every employee desires working conditions that promote equity, freedom, security and safe working conditions (International Labour Organization, 2022). This has been espoused even in the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015) calling for a link between business and society (Köhler et al., 2019). These desired working conditions form the definition of decent work (International Labour Organization, 2022). The challenges experienced by public service employees have been noted to originate from their work conditions (Chinyamurindi, 2019), with these challenges linked to negative outcomes in the workplace such as increased mental health challenges (Chinyamurindi, 2019) and amplified turnover (Shibiti, 2019). Within the workplace, mental health risks can include excessive workloads and negative behaviour enabling culture, unsafe and poor working conditions and long inflexible working hours among many others (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). Challenges experienced by public service employees are recognised to be a result of alterations in work control, decision power and independence

(Schmidt et al., 2017). Safe and healthy working environments, achieved through the promotion of decent work, can minimise work tensions and conflict, thereby plummeting staff turnover and increasing performance and productivity (WHO, 2022). By promoting decent work in organisations, mental health can be also be promoted through the inclusion and provision of opportunities for building positive relationships provided by decent work (Chada et al., 2022; WHO, 2022). It, therefore, becomes necessary to consider decent work in the quest to understand employee mental health and promote healthy workplaces.

An employee's perception of their organisation's policies, practices and measures as associated with their experience is important for organisations. There is an acknowledgement that if the organisation's environment threatens an employee's security, freedom, equity and safe working conditions, negative effects such as stress can affect their mental health (Qureshi et al., 2014). It is against this background that this study explored the potential role that organisational climate can have as a determinant of employee mental health. This included ascertaining the role that decent working conditions could potentially play not just in the organisational climate but also regarding employee mental health. Such a quest potentially answers a call in promoting a body of evidence around this topic especially within African organisations (Shava & Chinyamurindi, 2021). Public service employees are important for the build-up of the nation, and this study contributes towards positive nation building by addressing the menace of challenges encountered by them. By considering decent work as a determinant, the study contributes towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal number 8 that focuses on the promotion of decent work for sustainable development. The study will also provide organisations with pointers towards the relevant employee mental health support services needed in organisations post-COVID-19. Continued efforts and research need to be done to ensure that programmes and interventions introduced have their basis on the best information available for promoting the mental health of employees. There are few studies linking mental health, organisational climate and decent work. This study contributes to the body of research by considering the mediating role of decent work on organisational climate and employee mental health within an African organisation context.

The paper follows a structure. The next section reviews the literature. This is followed by the methodology adopted in the study. Thereafter, the results and discussion are presented in relation to the presented literature. The final section concludes the paper with practical implications being drawn for the organisation including policy ramifications.

Theoretical background and hypotheses development

This paper focuses on two theories in understanding the determinants of employee mental health. The first is the organisational climate theory (Aarons et al., 2014), the

emphasis of which is that the organisational environment, through policies, procedures and practices, informs the resultant behaviours in the organisation (Schneider et al., 2017). Priority is placed on the social processes within the organisation and the resultant interactions and communication between employees and managers (Schneider et al., 1992). These processes happen in response to job demands and from these resources are used to cope with challenges (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Promoting a conducive organisational culture can serve as an aid for all stakeholders in organisations (Andersson et al., 2020).

The second theoretical consideration is the psychology of working theory (PWT) (Duffy et al., 2016). In this theory, work is regarded as having an important meaning in the lives of individuals (Blustein, 2001). An important outcome of this is the promotion of positive experiences of work that in turn support mental health (Blustein, 2013). There is, therefore, a need to consider the role that the social, economic and political factors can have on the lives of individuals and their work (Blustein et al., 2019). These factors can potentially affect the experience of decent work (Duffy et al., 2016). Within the PWT, tenets of decent work include: (1) physically and interpersonally safe working conditions, (2) access to health care, (3) adequate compensation, (4) hours that allow free time and rest and finally, (5) organisational values that complement family and social values (Duffy et al., 2017).

Organisational climate and employee mental health

The organisational climate is defined as consisting of those behaviours deemed to be acceptable or not acceptable in view of the goals of the business (Kılıç & Altuntas, 2019). Such behaviours are encompassed within the rules, practices and procedures of the organisation (Schneider et al., 2013). Through the interaction of employees with the rules, practices and procedures of the organisation, an eventual climate is formed (Ali et al., 2018). Factors in the organisation such as the perceived organisational climate have been found to be linked with aspects related to how individuals adjust to change (Valenzuela et al., 2020). The ideology here is that the organisational climate creates an environment in which employees respond to changes they face. It becomes prudent for managers to be intentional in creating an organisational climate that allows for employees not only to flourish but also be productive (Datta & Singh, 2018). This can be done in improving aspects that reinforce the organisational climate. These aspects include training and learning, teamwork, support services for employees and role clarity within the organisation (Akron et al., 2022).

The organisational climate has been linked to several outcomes. Findings in China show the organisational climate to be linked to the harmony and sense of self-responsibility that employees can develop (Huang et al., 2022). Others attribute a conducive organisational climate to healthy knowledge-sharing behaviours (Al-Kurdi et al., 2020). This potentially can affect the performance of employees and the

productivity levels a business strives for (Sherman et al., 2018). When organisations encourage a context where the organisational climate is prioritised, this usually results in empowered employees (Liu & Tang, 2019). These empowered employees through a conducive organisational climate have been found to be able to manage conflicts better (Apipalakul & Kummooon, 2017). From these, positive behaviours can potentially emerge favourable to the individual and the organisation. Calls exist within the literature in extending an understanding through linkages between the organisational climate and employee health outcomes (Loh et al., 2019).

Hypothesis 1: Organisational climate has a direct and positive association with employee mental health

Decent work and employee mental health

There are growing calls to pay attention to the promotion of decent work. Scholars attribute decent work to consist of how individuals ascribe meaning and fulfilment through the work they do (Di Fabio & Blustein, 2016). Decent work also captures aspects that make work enjoyable. This includes adequate remuneration, social protection and a context conducive for work (Ferraro et al., 2020). In essence, favourable and decent work conditions can assist individuals to ascribe a meaningful contribution in their lives (Di Fabio & Maree, 2016). The result of this as an outcome is also a workplace that is productive and that allows individuals to thrive (Blustein et al., 2019). This may potentially include positive healthy behaviours (Bawuro et al., 2019).

In promoting decent working conditions, some benefits may be accrued. With reference to the employee, addressing conditions of work may assist them to be more engaged in their work (Bakker & Van Wingerden, 2021). This level of engagement may also result in positive work behaviours (Schaufeli, 2021), including outcomes that encourage well-being (Argote et al., 2021). For the organisation, addressing conditions of work can be attributed to organisational outcomes that affirm a level of productivity and better performance (Ferraro et al., 2020; Graça et al., 2021).

Hypothesis 2: Decent work has a direct and positive association with employee mental health

The effect of mediation of decent work on organisational climate and employee mental health

The presence of a supportive organisational climate can only thrive in the presence of work conditions that support such an ideal. The presence of a meaningful and healthy environment can support such an organisational climate (Zhang et al., 2022). The presence of decent working conditions assists both the realisation of an environment suitable for work (Blustein et al., 2019) and achieving employee and organisation outcomes (Adams et al., 2022). The context created can possibly allow the experience of decent work (Di Ruggiero et al., 2015). This requires paying attention to variables such as organisational climate as important contextual factors that can influence

the experience of work (Duffy et al., 2017), which in turn allows for employees to have confidence in their experience of work (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) and possibly favourable outcomes in terms of mental and physical health (Duffy et al., 2016).

In prioritising their efforts towards business growth including productivity, emphasis should be on paying attention to factors that encourage conditions of work. These are noted to have advantages in also assisting the well-being of employees (Argote et al., 2021). Saliently, attending to the match between the organisational climate and priority for decent work can be useful in response to the challenges organisations face in the form of demands. Such demands when not managed will potentially create mental health challenges (Bjornberg, 2017; Schaufeli, 2017).

Hypothesis 3: Decent work mediates the relationship between organisational climate and employee mental health

In view of the presented literature, Figure 1 shows the research model to the study.

Research methodology

Data collection procedures

A quantitative research approach was utilised relying on the survey data collection technique. The study was conducted in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa relying on public service departments located in Bisho. The research used a convenience sampling technique. Five public entities were approached to take part in this research and a total of 500 questionnaires were distributed. From all this, a total of 289 respondents were attained with questionnaires deemed suitable for data analysis. This was a response rate of 58%.

Measures

Three main measures were used for this study. Firstly, organisational climate was measured using a 15-item scale (Peña-Suárez et al., 2013). Secondly, decent work was measured using a 15-item scale developed by Duffy and colleagues (Duffy et al., 2017) with five dimensions that include: (1) safe working conditions, (2) access to health care, (3) adequate compensation, (4) free time and rest and (5) complementary values. And thirdly, employee mental health was measured using a six-item scale, the Kessler Psychological

Distress Scale (K6) (Furukawa et al., 2003). Respondents for the K6 were asked to indicate how they had felt during the past 30 days: (1) nervous; (2) hopeless; (3) restless or fidgety; (4) so depressed that nothing could cheer you up; (5) that everything was an effort and (6) worthless. All three scales were measured on a five-point Likert scale. Concerning reliability, the Cronbach alpha coefficients (CACs) from the study all met the required threshold of 0.7, as stipulated (Nunnally, 1978).

All the scales used in the study have been validated in a similar context or setting. Firstly, the decent work scale has been tested within a developing nation context and found to have sufficient psychometric properties hence its usage (Atitsogbe et al., 2021; Sanhokwe & Takawira, 2022). Secondly, the mental health scale has been used with success within a similar context of this study, the South African public service (Mathibe & Chinyamurindi, 2021) and internationally (Bessaha, 2017). Finally, the organisational climate has been used with similar success (Berberoglu, 2018; Prieto-Díez et al., 2022).

Respondents

The data were collected through a convenience sampling technique relying on a sample of public service employees in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The use of convenience sampling can make it difficult to generalise results to a greater population; therefore, to reduce the chances of sampling error, a large sample size was used.

Ethical consideration

The research team applied for ethical clearance through the participating institution, the University of Fort Hare. From this process, an institutional ethical clearance certificate was issued (Reference number: CHI151SHAR01). The research was also funded through a grant provided by the South African Medical Research Council.

Data analysis steps

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 and the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013) were used for the data analysis. The underlying premise was the use of a regression-based approach to mediation as a basis for the analyses. Before running the analysis, we examined the theoretical variables to determine if mediation was appropriate. The variables under study were decent work, organisational climate and employee mental health, all measured on a Likert-type scale. In addition, for mediation analysis to be possible, we assessed the data to see whether the assumptions for linearity, homoscedasticity, normality of estimation error and independence of observations were met. For linearity, the relationship between X and Y should be linear to minimise error (Hayes, 2013). To assess this assumption, we plotted residuals against predicted values in regressions: X predicting Y_1 , X predicting M, M predicting Y_1 and X and M predicting Y_1 .

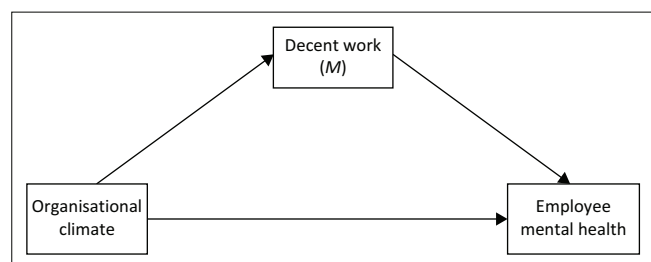


FIGURE 1: Research model.

For homoscedasticity, it is required that the estimation error be equal across all predicted Y values (Hayes, 2013). To check homoscedasticity, we used the same plots created to examine linearity, but looking for consistency in a vertical range across the X axis to see whether the data spread on the Y axis consistently and equally throughout the plot, thus resembling a rectangle. To examine normality, Q-Q plots were used, and lastly, given that we sampled our participants from a participant pool, it is unlikely that we had underlying common characteristics that would compromise the independence of our estimation error. After assessing all the necessary assumptions, a descriptive analysis was then used to describe the study's demographic features and theoretical variables.

For inferential analysis, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess the reliability of the study's theoretical variables and constructs. The Hayes PROCESS macro was then used to address the hypothesised frameworks. Following MacKinnon et al. (2007), the strength of the indirect and the direct effects was used to determine the result of the mediation analysis. If the indirect effect is significant, then it is a successful mediation. When this occurs, the direct effect may disappear or remain significant: if it disappears, then there is complete mediation (i.e. the effect of X on Y is entirely due to M), whereas if it remains, then there is partial mediation (i.e. M does account for part of the relationship between X and Y, but X still predicts Y even when taking M into account). Adopting these guidelines, a simple mediation analysis was conducted for the hypothesised conceptual model. The next section presents the results of the study.

Results

Descriptive and reliability analysis

Table 1 shows a description of theoretical variables for the variables used in this study.

Table 1 also shows the descriptive statistics of the established theoretical variables and constructs. Measured on a 5-point Likert scale, all variables and constructs reported moderate mean levels. However, employee mental health had a slightly lower mean rating (Mean = 2.61, SD = 0.46) from the sampled participants.

TABLE 1: Descriptive analysis of theoretical variables ($n = 289$).

Main theoretical variables	Mean	SD	Items used
Organisational climate	2.99	0.59	35
Employee mental health	2.61	0.46	6
Decent work:	3.33	0.40	15
1. Safe working conditions	3.28	0.70	3
2. Access to health care	3.32	0.75	3
3. Adequate compensation	3.01	0.51	3
4. Free time and rest	4.14	0.85	3
5. Complementary values	2.90	0.77	3

Note: Organisational climate and Decent work were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 - Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Neutral, 4 - Agree and 5 - Strongly Agree). Employee Mental health were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 - All the time, 2 - Most of the time, 3 - Some of the time, 4 - A little of the time, 5 - None of the time).
SD, Standard deviation.

Confirmatory factor analysis and reliability analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) followed by a reliability analysis were conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the study's measurement scales. Literature was used as a guide on the empirical factors for these tools. For the CFA, some model fit indices and their criteria were used to examine the goodness-of-fit of the measurement models. These model fit indices include the chi-square value degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df , abbreviated as CMIN/DF), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The criteria for a good fit were CFI, and TLI values ≥ 0.95 (Hu and Bentler, 1998; West et al., 2012); CMIN/DF values ≤ 3 (Kline, 1998) and SRMR as well as RMSEA values ≤ 0.05 (MacCallum et al., 1996; Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2000). In case the model does not meet the criteria for a good fit, we used the criteria for an acceptable model fit. Thus, the criteria for acceptable model fit were CFI, and TLI values $0.90 \leq CFI$ or $TLI < 0.95$ (Daire Hooper, et al., 2008; West et al., 2012); CMIN/DF values $3 < CMIN/DF \leq 5$ (Marsh and Hocevar, 1985); SRMR values $0.05 < SRMR \leq 0.09$ (Hu and Bentler, 1998) and, RMSEA values $0.05 < RMSEA \leq 0.10$ (Schermelleh and Moosbrugger, 2003).

In terms of reliability, a Cronbach's α coefficient larger than 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994) indicated acceptable internal consistency and according to Pallant (2001) an alpha Cronbach's value above 0.6 is considered an acceptable index. To measure composite/construct reliability (CR), the Joreskog rho coefficient (Jöreskog, 1971; Fornell and Larcker, 1981) was utilized where according to Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2014) the minimum composite reliability value should exceed 0.70. Convergent validity was assessed by the average variance extracted (AVE) (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), where $AVE > 0.50$ was considered a good convergent validity (Schumacker and Lomax, 2016). A minimum cut-off point of 0.50 is recommended but < 0.50 can be accepted provided the composite reliability is higher than 0.60, but some studies in literature indicated that the AVE values < 0.50 are acceptable provided the CR values are > 0.60 (Raines-Eudy 2000; Schumacker and Lomax 2016; Qin et al. 2022). Table 2 shows these results.

Based on the results in Table 2, a CFA and reliability analysis was conducted on the 35-item organisational climate scale. The most parsimonious model was achieved with only 15 items loading on six factors. All factor loadings were above 0.65 (see Table 1). The established factor structure shows 2 items for organisational design (Factor 1), 3 items for communication (Factor 2), 3 items for leadership (Factor 3), 2 items for teamwork (Factor 4), 2 items for decision making (Factor 5) and 3 items for motivation (Factor 6). The value of the average variance extracted for the majority of the constructs is greater than the required minimum of 0.50 except for factor 5 (AVE = 0.489).

TABLE 2: The organisational climate confirmatory factor analysis and internal consistency output.

Factors and respective items	CFA loadings	Alpha if item deleted
Factor 1: Organisational design†		
Clear reporting structures have been established.	0.681	n/a
Employees at this organisation have the right skill sets to perform... functions	0.773	n/a
Factor 2: Communication‡		
I receive the information I need to perform my job well.	0.834	0.761
When I need help, I can ask others in my work group for suggestions	0.796	0.795
Our face-to-face meetings are productive.	0.786	0.799
Factor 3: Leadership§		
I am inspired by my manager	0.781	0.705
I clearly understand what my manager expects of me.	0.753	0.744
My manager's actions are consistent with the company values.	0.756	0.754
Factor 4: Teamwork¶		
People in other departments willingly share information with my...	0.715	n/a
I have confidence and trust in my co-workers.	0.847	n/a
Factor 5: Decision making††		
I feel free to tell people higher up what I really think.	0.651	n/a
We seek multiple sources of information before making important...	0.745	n/a
Factor 6: Motivation‡‡		
I am energetic and enthusiastic about my work.	0.807	0.698
I receive a great deal of encouragement and recognition.	0.747	0.752
I was appropriately rewarded for my performance.	0.742	0.747

Note: Overall Cronbach Alpha = 0.839.

n/a, not applicable.

†, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.675; Joreskog rho = 0.693; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.531.

‡, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.846; Joreskog rho = 0.847; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.649.

§, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.805; Joreskog rho = 0.807; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.583.

¶, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.749; Joreskog rho = 0.760; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.614.

††, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.642; Joreskog rho = 0.656; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.489.

‡‡, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.803; Joreskog rho = 0.810; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.587.

With a minimum cut-off point of 0.50, thus the convergent validity for the majority of these factors is deemed adequate. However, even though a minimum cut-off point of 0.50 is recommended but < 0.50 can be accepted provided the composite reliability is higher than 0.60, thus the convergent validity for factor 5 is also deemed adequate. The internal consistency of these factors is statistically acceptable since all the values are more than 0.60 for all the constructs with an overall Cronbach alpha of 0.839. Further, assessing the Joreskog rho for measuring composite reliability, the values of CR are also more than 0.60 for all the constructs. These results show that the reliability and composite reliability is adequate for the established measurement model, for the organisational climate measurement tool. Examining the fitness of the established measurement model (see Table 3), the fit indices indicate that the organisational climate model had an acceptable fit for the data. Thus, CMIN/DF is 2.661 which is < 3 and SRMR is 0.049 which is < 0.05 are both regarded as a good fit. On the other hand, CFI is 0.923, which is just below 0.95 whilst TLI is 0.901, which is just above 0.90, and RMSEA of 0.076 with 90% CI [0.063 – 0.089] indicating an acceptable model fit for the organisational climate measurement model.

The employee mental health confirmatory factor analysis and internal consistency output are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 3: The decent work confirmatory factor analysis and internal consistency output.

Factors and respective items	CFA loadings	Alpha if Item deleted
Factor 1: Safe working conditions†		
I feel emotionally safe interacting with people at work.	0.808	0.610
At work, I feel safe from emotional or verbal abuse of any kind.	0.698	0.684
I feel physically safe interacting with people at work.	0.663	0.740
Factor 2: Access to health care‡		
I get good healthcare benefits from my job.	0.861	0.592
I have a good healthcare plan at work.	0.589	0.740
My employer provides acceptable options for healthcare.	0.680	0.662
Factor 3: Adequate compensation§		
I do not feel I am paid enough based on my qualifications and...	0.980	n/a
I am rewarded adequately for my work.	0.889	n/a
Factor 4: Free time and rest¶		
I do not have enough time for non-work activities.	0.693	0.758
I have no time to rest during the work week.	0.843	0.669
I have free time during the work week.	0.727	0.740
Factor 5: Complementary values††		
The values of my organisation match my family values.	0.880	0.830
My organisation's values align with my family values.	0.789	0.914
The values of my organisation match the values within my ...	0.974	0.735

Note: Overall Cronbach Alpha = 0.713.

†, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.763; Joreskog rho = 0.768; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.527.

‡, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.749; Joreskog rho = 0.758; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.517.

§, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.931; Joreskog rho = 0.933; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.875.

¶, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.796; Joreskog rho = 0.800; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.573.

††, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.869; Joreskog rho = 0.914; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.782.

TABLE 4: The employee mental health confirmatory factor analysis and internal consistency output.

Factors and respective items	CFA loadings	Alpha if item deleted
Factor 1: Mental health		
During the past 30 days, I have often felt nervous.	0.568	0.726
During the past 30 days, I have often felt restless or fidgety.	0.653	0.699
During the past 30 days, I have often felt so depressed that nothing...	0.661	0.682
During the past 30 days, I have often felt that everything was an...	0.740	0.659

Note: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.750; Joreskog rho = 0.752; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.434.

The CFA and reliability analysis was conducted on the 6-item mental health measurement tool and the most parsimonious model was achieved with 4 items. The factor loadings were all above 0.55 for the retained items. The average variance extracted was 0.434, which indicated an acceptable level of convergent reliability since the composite reliability (CR = 0.752) is greater than 0.60. The internal consistency shows a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.750, which reveals a statistically acceptable level of reliability for the mental health tool. In Table 3, the fit indices indicate that the mental health measurement model had a good fit for the data. Thus, CMIN/DF is 2.359 which is < 3 and SRMR is 0.024 which is < 0.05 are both regarded as a good fit. In addition, CFI is 0.989, which is > 0.95 and TLI is 0.968, which is also > 0.95 indicating a good model fit for the mental health measurement model.

Lastly, CFA and reliability analysis was conducted on the 15-item decent work scale. These results are shown in Table 3.

The most parsimonious model was achieved with 14 items loading on five factors with all loadings above 0.55 (see Table 3). Assessing the items for each factor, the established factors were named safe working conditions (Factor 1), access to health care (Factor 2), adequate compensation (Factor 3), free time and rest (Factor 4), and complementary values (Factor 5). The AVE for all the factors is greater than the required minimum of 0.50, thus the convergent validity for the established factors is deemed adequate. The internal consistency of these factors is statistically acceptable since all the values are more than 0.70 for all the constructs with an overall Cronbach alpha of 0.713. Further, assessing the Joreskog rho for measuring composite reliability, the values of CR are also more than 0.70 for all the constructs.

The results in Table 3 show that the reliability and composite reliability is adequate for the established measurement model, for the decent work measurement tool. Examining the fitness of the established measurement model (see Table 3), the fit indices indicate that the decent work measurement model had a reasonably good fit for the data. Thus, CMIN/DF is 2.321, which is < 3 , SRMR, is 0.047, which is < 0.05 , and CFI is 0.955, which is > 0.95 are all regarded as a good fit. On the other hand, TLI is 0.939, which is just below 0.95 and RMSEA of 0.068 with 90% CI [0.054 – 0.082] indicating an acceptable model fit for the decent work measurement model.

In conclusion (in view of Tables 2, 3 and 4) all the measurement models have fulfilled all the model fit requirements, thus are suitable for building linkage between factors and determining contribution of constructs in measuring organisational climate, mental health and decent work within the sampled organisation. Thus, the results for the fitness indexes assessment for the measurement models of the confirmatory factor analysis shows that the established measurement models are adequate. These established variables were then used for further analysis.

Simple mediation analysis

We conducted a simple mediation analysis to investigate the hypothesis that decent work mediates the relationship between organisational climate and employee mental health as shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5: Mediation analysis to determine the mediating effect of decent work on the relationship between organisational climate and employee mental health.

Effects	Unstandardised beta coefficients		Significance of beta coefficients		95% Confidence interval	
	beta	SE	t-value	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
Direct effect(s)						
OC (X) → DW (M)	0.2270*	0.0376	6.0305	< 0.0001	0.1529	0.3011
DW (M) → MH (Y)	0.1220*	0.0513	2.3788	0.0180	0.0211	0.2230
OC (X) → MH (Y)	0.5233*	0.0347	15.0668	< 0.0001	0.4550	0.5917
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y	0.0277*	0.0116	-	-	0.0060	0.0521
Total effect(s) of X on Y	0.5511*	0.0330	16.7074	< 0.0001	0.4861	0.6160

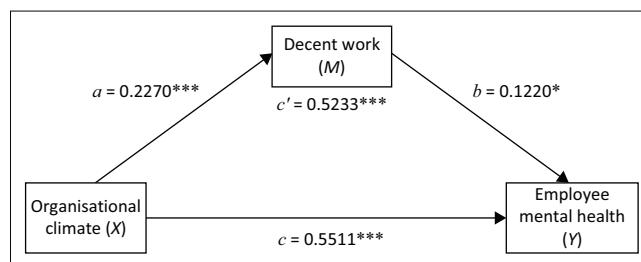
Note: Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals: 10000. Predictor/Independent variable (X): Organisational Climate (OC).

LLCI, lower level confidence interval; ULCI, upper level confidence interval; SE, standard error; X, predictor/independent variable; OC, organisational climate; Y2, outcome/dependent variable; MH, employee mental health; M, mediator variable; DW, decent work.

Outcome/Dependent variable (Y2): Employee Mental Health (MH);

Mediator variable (M): Decent Work (DW).

*, Significant effect at Alpha = 0.05.



Note: Simple mediation model for the mediating effect of decent work on the relationship between organisational climate and employee mental health. Note: a is the direct effect of organisational climate on decent work; b is the direct effect of decent work on employee mental health; c' is the direct effect of organisational climate on employee mental health; c is the total effect of organisational climate on employee mental health. All effects are unstandardised.

*, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$; ***, $p < 0.001$.

FIGURE 2: Simple mediation results.

Based on Table 5 and through a simple mediation analysis, the following conclusions are made:

Hypothesis 1: While controlling for decent work (mediator), the results of the regression path analysis indicated that organisational climate had a positive and statistically significant association with employee mental health ($\beta = 0.5233$, $t = 15.0668$, $P \leq 0.0001$). In addition, the total effect of organisational climate on employee mental health is statistically significant ($\beta = 0.5511$, $t = 16.7074$, $P \leq 0.0001$). These results suggest that organisational climate has a direct and positive association with employee mental health. Since organisational climate is a significant predictor of employee mental health after controlling for the mediator, decent work, this result is consistent with partial mediation.

Hypothesis 2: To assess hypothesis 2, we examined path b of the model in Figure 2. The results reveal that decent work had a significant direct and positive association with employee mental health ($\beta = 0.1220$, $t = 2.3788$, $P \leq 0.0001$). In addition, path a in Figure 2 also indicates that decent work had a significant direct and positive association with organisational climate ($\beta = 0.2270$, $t = 6.0305$, $P \leq 0.0001$). Thus, higher levels of reported organisational climate were found to be related to higher levels of decent work. These results support the mediational hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: The mediation effect was examined using the indirect effect. A 95% bias-corrected confidence interval based on 10000 bootstrap samples indicated that the indirect effect ($\beta = 0.0277$) was entirely above zero (with 95% CI [0.0060–0.0521]). Thus, employees reported greater employee mental health even after considering organisational climate's indirect effect through decent work. Higher levels of organisational climate were associated with employee mental health scores that were approximately 0.0277 points higher as mediated by decent work. In conclusion, decent work partially mediates the relationship between organisational climate and employee mental health.

Discussion

This research sought to investigate the determinants of mental health accounting for the role of organisational climate and decent work among public service employees in South Africa.

Based on hypothesis 1, the findings show support of the positive role that the organisational climate has on employee mental health. In essence, the rules, practices and procedures

inherent in the organisation have the potential to enact positive behaviours within the organisation (Schneider et al., 2013). This study shows that one such behaviour is employee mental health. It becomes crucial for the organisation to consistently work at re-defining itself in seeking to become better (Ali et al., 2018). Such a situation must have at its centre the employees as important stakeholders. Due to the rapid change, organisations are experiencing (Valenzuela et al., 2020) the need for a conducive organisational climate (Datta & Singh, 2018). The need for such a climate is emphasised in this study with a link being shown to employee mental health. In essence, the study, through this finding, extends to the list of organisational outcomes that can emanate from addressing the organisational climate (Al-Kurdi et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2022; Sherman et al., 2018).

Based on hypothesis 2, the findings show support of the effect of decent work on employee mental health. Through promoting decent working conditions, organisations are assisting their employees in being able to perform optimally. Further, this will promote their mental well-being. The conditions around work not only assist in how the work is done but also impact the general well-being of those doing the work (Ferraro et al., 2020). The study in essence contributes to the ongoing inquiry into the effect that the role of decent work can have both on organisations and on employees (Blustein et al., 2019; Di Fabio & Blustein, 2016). The study also magnifies the importance of addressing conditions of work in assisting employee mental well-being (Argote et al., 2021; Bawuro et al., 2019).

Based on hypothesis 3, the study found support for the mediation of decent work in the relationship between organisational climate and employee mental health. This finding shows support of the importance of addressing conditions of work as a precursor to encouraging positive work behaviours (Zhang et al., 2022). Uniquely, this study accounts for the interaction of decent work and organisational climate to influence employee mental health. In doing so, answering calls for research seeking to understand how organisational experiences and work conditions can be combined in fostering positive work behaviours (Adams et al., 2022; Blustein et al., 2019). The study, therefore, directs organisations towards the relevant employee mental health support services that can be implemented to minimise the mental health issues and its repercussions. Understanding the interaction of decent work and organisational climate and their influence on mental health can be useful in response to the challenges organisations face.

Conclusion, implications and future research

Conclusion

The findings of the study heighten the need to pay attention to two key aspects en route to promoting employee mental

health. The first is that there is a need for a concerted effort towards addressing aspects related to the organisational climate. This can be through the internal processes, rules and procedures specific to the organisation. Such an effort addresses the context of work. The second aspect of importance is to pay attention to decent working conditions. The tenets of the PWT as to the constituents of decent work can assist in showing the areas for emphasis (Duffy et al., 2017). Saliently, these include: (1) physically and interpersonally safe working conditions, (2) access to health care, (3) adequate compensation, (4) hours that allow free time and rest and finally, (5) organisational values that complement family and social values (Duffy et al., 2017). Based on the findings of this research, decent working conditions merely create a platform through which a conducive organisational climate can assist the mental health of employees.

Theoretical implications

The study shows support of theories used. Firstly, in ensuring efforts of addressing employee mental health, the organisational climate theory (Aarons et al., 2014) emphasises the existing internal order that must be existent. Secondly, for decent working conditions to assist employee mental well-being, the tenets of the PWT are considered (Duffy et al., 2016). Viewed together and through the findings, the promotion of employee mental health is an integrative work between the need to foster a conducive environment and equally paying attention to the conditions of work.

Practical implications

Based on this research, we proffer some suggestions on how employee mental health can be promoted within the workplace. Firstly, a need exists for an organisational climate conducive not just for conversations around mental well-being but also interventions to this. This can be achieved through resourcing organisations to be able to deal with the challenge of mental health. Secondly, there is a need for the HRM function to play a more meaningful and intentional role in the promotion of mental well-being. This could be achieved through advocacy around improving decent working conditions. Attention could be given to establishment of policies and organisational interventions that promote decent work such as (1) safe working conditions, (2) access to health care, (3) adequate compensation, (4) hours that allow free time and rest and finally, (5) organisational values that complement family and social values. In essence, this framing of decent work by Duffy et al. (2017) becomes a useful starting point for practical interventions to assist in promoting employee mental health. The study's findings highlight the need for organisations to consider the importance of workplace social support structures in promoting employee mental health. Organisations can put policies in place and promote a work culture that advocates for employee mental health. Such initiatives can be key in addressing issues related to stigma around mental health issues in workplaces (Greenwood, 2021). Organisations can also engage in employee assistance programmes as a way of dealing with employee mental health challenges. Understanding the employees' perception of decent work is

key for organisations in the effective implementation of policies and structures that will promote safe working conditions and create a conducive organisational climate. Based on the study's findings, paying attention to mental health issues among employees with a focus on decent work and organisational climate will aid in having employees who are better equipped to deliver better services to the public.

Limitations and avenues for future research

Some limitations can be drawn from this study. We flag some issues inherent in the research approach we used. These include common method bias and the cross-sectional design of the study. Finally, there is a need to take into consideration issues around aggregation of scores across dimensions as done in this research. Caution is needed as combined scales may undermine the model fit. Future research may be undertaken to overcome these limitations.

Further, future research angles can be proposed borrowing from this study. Firstly, future research could incorporate a qualitative research inquiry, especially into the aspects stemming from the findings. For instance, this could be conducting interviews with employees to ascertain their experience of decent work as well as the type of organisational environments they deem to be supporting of their mental health. Interviews will afford an opportunity for such an inquiry. Potentially, this expands from the findings of this study. Secondly, a comparative study could be done across different organisational formats, which could be comparing the experiences of employee well-being and mental health between the public and the private sector. Future research could also include stakeholders within the organisation other than employees as done in this study. The role of managers becomes crucial in enforcing a conducive organisational climate and decent working conditions. Future research could include varying management tiers in gauging their experience and understanding, especially of the issues investigated in this study.

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Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

V.R. was a post-doctoral fellow supervised by W.C. C.S.M. assisted with the data analysis. W.C.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of Fort Hare Research Ethics Committee (no. CHI028).

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Data availability

The data used were obtained via interviews and are represented in the manuscript in the presented tables.

Disclaimer

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