

Does Job-related Affective Wellbeing Differ Across Bio-characteristic Determinants in the Congolese Higher Education Sector

Kenshune J. Mfiri, *Lutete C. Ayikwa

Protestant University of the Congo, Kinshasa, Dem. Rep. of the Congo

Email: jonathan.mfiri@upc.ac.cd, *christiana@upc.ac.cd

Corresponding Author: Lutete C. Ayikwa

Abstract: Psychological and emotional health are believed to impact employees' productivity and well-being. Hence, promoting the latter within workplaces by implementing proper policies, whilst adapting to the nature and strength of its relationship with bio-characteristic determinants, as well as profile groups' disparities, guarantees both employee wellness and organisational performance. A total of 948 higher education employees, representing three socio-professional categories, completed a Job-related Affective Wellbeing Scale (JAWS), which included a profile section for those who volunteered to participate in the study. In addition to descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation, *t-test*, and ANOVA were also used to answer the research study's questions. The study revealed that Congolese higher education staff were in good mental and psychological health. Gender correlated positively with depression and anxiety. Likewise, age correlated positively with depression but associated negatively with enthusiasm. Women appeared to be more likely than men to experience depression and anxiety disorders. Younger participants reported significantly higher mean levels of depression than older participants, who displayed more enthusiasm. Master's degree holders were more enthusiastic than those who held a bachelor's degree. Higher education staff who live alone are more depressive and more anxious than those who are legally married and also appeared to experience less comfort at work than those who are legally married. Those staff member participants who are legally married were less enthusiastic than those who live with a partner without any legal matrimonial bond. Academic staff appeared to be more anxious than both administrative staff and scientific staff participants. Proper well-being policies must be implemented that adapt to staff members' gender, age, marital status, level of education, and socio-professional categories, as correlation disparities were observed in this regard.

Keywords: *Job-related Affective Wellbeing scale, Well-being, Depression, Anxiety, Comfort, Enthusiasm, Congolese higher education*

1. Introduction

It is common knowledge that employee well-being determines their overall health, impacted by aspects that include emotional health (Kraljević, Doan, Demou, Craig, & Kromydas, 2025). Workplace well-being affects productivity and work engagement in addition to mental and physical health (Arevin, Rustam, Widaningsih, Saryanti, & Wulandari, 2024). It also fosters organisational culture by enhancing employees' personal growth, as well as social relationship improvement at work (Putra, Kusumawati, Kartikasari, & Dewi, 2024). Thus, beyond being perceived as a moral obligation, well-being at work is a business strategy, mitigating risks, reducing medical expenses and improving bottom-line results that offer a strategic advantage to organisations (Pandey, Maheshwari, & Malik, 2025).

The crucial character of employee well-being is a concern for all; however, little systematic research has examined the issue in sub-Saharan Africa (Wolf, Torrente, McCoy, Rasheed, & Aber, 2015), not to mention the widely under-researched DR Congo and, specifically, its higher education sector. A search from Scielo, Scopus and Google Scholar databases provided only one article on job-related well-being (Kamenga, Ngongo, Moba, & Mbuyi, 2021); however, this study used an economic index to assess well-being. Consequently, one may question if, in such an environment, organisations can implement effectively tailored prevention programmes and design related policies that foster workplace well-being.

The aforementioned calls for trained leadership, capable of detecting early signs of stress to engage in promptly supportive and empathetic conversations (Winters, 2020). Also, effective well-being policies in organisations need to be tailored according to field data, which includes the socio-demographic characteristics of the targeted groups (Pandey, Maheshwari, & Malik, 2025). Hence, the present study is significant, as it investigated the

differences between and within socio-demographic groups, as well as their relationships with workplace well-being in the context of the Congolese higher education sector.

Besides providing insightful analyses that would guide the design of holistic well-being programmes, this study also sought to enrich the limited available literature for the Congolese context, in general, and of the country's higher education sector, in particular.

2. Literature Review

Employee well-being, which refers to a multidimensional construct that manifests through positive and negative effects that determine the overall quality of their experience at work (Pandey, Maheshwari, & Malik, 2025), features among the few issues that correlate with mental health, attracting attention from both general and governmental debates worldwide. Factors that affect an individual's well-being are multiple, originating from both home and work (Badri, 2019). Thus, while addressing their employees' well-being and related mental health, leaders should holistically consider the phenomenon, because what happens at home influences emotions that they feel while at work, and vice versa. Indeed, the lack of consistent social and emotional support would contribute to feelings of isolation and poor mental health that were enhanced during the COVID-19 pandemic, as noted in the academic sector during that period (Yong, Chikwa, & Rehman, 2026).

Strategies that promote workplace well-being must address multiple health dimensions such as schedule flexibility and employee control over their performed daily tasks (Biggart, Cook, & Carder, 2020). The stigmas associated with mental health challenges should be addressed through dedicated training programmes company-wide that offer psychological assistance for both personal and occupational challenges, whilst well-being conversations should be normalised (Spilg, et al., 2022). In addition, employers should ensure that office spaces and remote workstations are ergonomic to prevent physical strain, whilst encouraging physical activity, particularly through subsidised gym memberships, scheduling dedicated meditation time, and promoting the taking of breaks either for lunch or merely to step away from their desktops; these are valuable activities, which would promote workplace well-being (Griffin, et al., 2019).

In their quest to address mental health and well-being at work through the design of effective intervention programmes and policies, organisations should measure workers' well-being levels. It is worth noting that Jarden *et al.*'s (2023) systematic and methodical review of existing instruments revealed that from 18 newly developed scales, only three had the greatest number of positively rated measurement properties. This concerns the Personal Growth and Development Scale, the University of Tokyo's Occupational Mental Health well-being 24 scale, and the Employee Well-being scale; however, none of them met the criteria for adequate instrument design. Hence, they relied on the well-known Job-related Affective Wellbeing Scale (JAWS), based on Warr's model of affective well-being at work, which measures an individual's specific emotions and moods, as experienced directly as a result of their work (Looti, 2025). The present study opted for its shortest form, which assessed negative effects, depression and anxiety, positive effects, and enthusiasm and comfort, using 20 items that were evenly distributed in order of five for each component.

The use of JAWS indicates that the theoretical perspectives of this research are basically anchored in the Circumplex Model of Affect - CMA, first developed by James Russell, and the Job Stress Model - JSM, often associated with Paul Spector and Suzy Fox (Laguna, Mielniczuk, & Razmus, 2019). Among both frameworks, CMA is the one that posits clearly the non-discrete and interrelated nature of human emotions, which it believes are systematically interconnected along a circular continuum based on two independent neurophysiological dimensions: pleasure/valence (unpleasant to pleasant) and arousal/activation (low to high) (Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector, & Kelloway, 2000). JSM, also labelled the Stress-Strain-Emotion model, assumes that an individual's emotional states mediate the effects between objective or perceived job stressors (e.g., heavy workload, interpersonal conflict) and negative behavioural or health outcomes (e.g., burnout, counterproductive behaviour) (Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector, & Kelloway, 2000). Under this framework, causal relationships between specific workplace characteristics and emotional "strains" are measured through JAWS, whose negative emotions often track stress and burnout processes, whereas positive emotions capture engagement and motivation (Jarden, Siebert, Koziol-McLain, Bujalka, & Sandham, 2023). Thus, both CMA and JSM justify the

relevance of the adopted approach of this study based on the JAWS model in its quest to improve mental health for a more productive work environment for the Congolese higher education staff.

Platforms used to report results from workplace well-being studies devoted to higher education staff across the African continent revealed that the issue is under-researched. However, studies conducted in South Africa by Abraham *et al.* (2025) and Van Niekerk *et al.* (2021) found that over a quarter of university staff members reported severe psychological distress strongly correlated with mental well-being and high levels of burnout. Female staff members, staff members with comorbidities, and workers in the administration and service sections were significantly more likely to report psychological distress. Age was inversely correlated with psychological distress and positively correlated with mental well-being. Both studies concluded that the mental health and well-being of university staff were at an increased risk, justifying their expressed dissatisfaction with their institutional support, hence the appeal for strategies, policies and practices that are culturally and contextually tailored to promote mental health. It is worth noting that both studies arrived at quite similar conclusions, though they have been conducted in different contexts, as Van Niekerk *et al.* (2021) investigation took place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Job-related depression, anxiety, enthusiasm, and comfort differed from clinical corresponding mental health characteristics, as these captured specific transient and stable emotional states that are tied directly to the workplace (Laguna, Chilimoniuk, Purc, & Kulczycka, 2022). Feelings that display depression, discouragement, or gloom were generally indicative of negative high-arousal, while anxiety, fright, or tension demonstrated negative-low arousal anxiety (Laguna, Mielniczuk, & Razmus, 2019). Conversely, enthusiasm captured positive high-arousal, expressed through workers' feelings of being enthusiastic, excited, inspired, energetic, and elated, while emotions of being at ease, calm, or relaxed depicted positive low-arousal comfort.

To achieve its objectives, the present study sought to answer the research questions presented below.

- Do Congolese higher education staff members' depression, anxiety, comfort and enthusiasm levels correlate significantly with their bio-characteristics (gender, age, level of education, marital status, socio-professional category and area of residence)?
- What is the nature and strengths of these correlations?
- Do the expressed levels of Congolese higher education staff members' depression, anxiety, comfort and enthusiasm differ owing to their respective bio-characteristics?
- Which bio-characteristic elements differ from one another?
- What are the implications for management to implement prevention strategies and well-being policies within Congolese higher education institutions?

3. Research Design and Methodology

This study is epistemologically empirical and is best described as following a positivist paradigm that appeals to applying a quantitative method (Irwan, 2024). A job-related affective wellbeing scale (JAWS) was distributed to individuals who volunteered to participate in the survey, and they were all guaranteed anonymity in respect of their identity and survey responses. In addition to the 20 JAWS items, a closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect the respondents' biographical data.

Sampling method and size

The study targeted individuals who were affiliated to at least one of the 17 private and public higher education institutions, located in Kinshasa, and who were all selected randomly to form the research setting. The individuals that comprised the study's sample were included for their occupational status, regardless of the type of their organisational contract, their length of work tenure, and their position. No exclusion was applied based on any of the socio-demographic characteristics. To ensure representativeness across the selected higher education institutions, proportional stratified sampling was applied to afford staff members an equal opportunity to participate, allowing for generalisation of the findings (Makwana, Engineer, Dabhi, & Chudasama, 2023).

Firstly, the 65 private and 17 public higher education institutions were separated into two strata, and secondly, 20 percent of the higher education institutions within each constituted pool were selected randomly to reflect

their proportional weight of the 82 institutions in Kinshasa (Akilimali, 2021). Finally, trained interviewers were deployed to administer the questionnaire randomly to higher education staff members willing to participate in the study. After 10 working days of data collection, 948 completed questionnaires were encoded on an Excel spreadsheet and imported to SPSS 31 for statistical analysis.

The research study's participants' biographical characteristics, as captured in the completed questionnaires indicated that the majority of the sample comprised men (65.1%), staff who were over the age of 35 (57.9%), scientific staff members (39.8%), staff who held a master's degree (48.1%), those who are married (55.3%), and those who live in the Lukunga district (42.3%). Further details concerning the respondents' respective profiles are provided below in Table 1.

Table 1: Biographical characteristics of the respondents (n = 948)

<i>Bio-characteristics</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Bio-characteristics</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Gender			Marital status		
Male	617	65.1	Single	246	25.9
Female	331	34.9	Married	524	55.3
Total	948	100.0	Live-in Partner	68	7.2
Age			Divorced	36	3.8
≤ 35 yrs old	399	42.1	Separated	36	3.8
> 35 yrs old	549	57.9	Widow[er]	38	4.0
Total	948	100.0	Total	948	100.0
Level of education			Area of residence		
Some primary schooling	2	0.2	Funa	177	18,7%
Standard 6/Grade 8	5	0.5	Lukunga	401	42,3%
Standard 8/Grade 10	18	1.9	Mont-Amba	243	25,6%
Matric	12	1.3	Tshangu	127	13,4%
Undergraduate degree	35	3.7	Total	948	100.0
Bachelor's degree	122	12.9	Socio-professional category		
Master's degree	456	48.1	Administrative staff	338	35.6
Doctoral degree	168	17.7	Scientific staff	377	39.8
Total	948	100.0	Academic staff	233	24.6
			Total	948	100.0

Instrumentation and data collection

This study used a closed-ended questionnaire, which comprised two sections to collect the data. The first section captured biographical characteristics that included age, area of residence, gender, level of education, marital status, and socio-professional category. The second section focused on the respondents' perceived well-being at work towards the 20 JAWS items, which were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "never" to "extremely often" or "always".

JAWS refers to a psychometric instrument that was designed to measure employees' emotional reactions to their work environment, available in either a long or short version of 30 and 20 specific emotions, respectively (Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector, & Kelloway, 2000). Regardless of its version, it assesses specific positive and negative emotions, which employees experience frequently in their workplaces rather than focusing on general job satisfaction (Laguna, Mielniczuk, & Razmus, Test of the Bifactor Model of Job-Related Affective Well-Being, 2019). According to JAWS, emotions are grouped into four distinct affective quadrants in line with the factor structure that supports its theoretical foundation, translating into employees' enthusiasm, comfort, anxiety, and depression levels (Laguna, Chilimoniuk, Purc, & Kulczycka, 2022). The present study opted to use the short version of JAWS, whose reliability tests across identified primary subscales exhibited high levels of internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha coefficient, ranging from .80 to .90 (Looti, 2025).

Psychometric properties of JAWS in the context of the present study were tested, and estimates are shown in Table 2 below. Internal consistency reliability estimated in terms of composite reliability (CR) for the four constructs ranged from 0.73 to 0.78, well above the recommended 0.6 (Hair Jr, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2018). However, though none of the AVEs reached the 0.5 cut-off, they were above the sometimes accepted 0.4,

confirming convergent validity. Finally, discriminant validity was determined using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which demonstrated that all square roots of the AVE of constructs were greater than the correlations with the others (De Jager, Ayikwa, & Wannenburg, 2022).

Table 2: Reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity - Fornell-Larcker criterion

	Reliability and convergent validity		Discriminant validity			
	CR	AVE	NHA	NLA	PHA	PLA
NHA	0.78	0.46	(0.68)			
NLA	0.74	0.47	0.24	(0.69)		
PHA	0.76	0.44	0.28	0.63	(0.66)	
PLA	0.77	0.47	0.61	0.20	0.21	(0.69)

NHA = Negative-High arousal; NLA = Negative-Low arousal; PHA = Positive-High arousal; PLA = Positive-Low arousal; CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted.

The square root of the AVE is shown diagonally in parentheses.

Analysis and reporting

The collected data were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 31. Relationship analyses were conducted using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, often called Pearson's r . The latter measured the strength and direction of the association between biographical characteristics and workplace well-being subscales (Faizi & Alvi, 2023). The statistical significance of the differences between the two groups was determined by the t -Test (Xu, et al., 2017), whereas ANOVA was applied to more than two groups (Kim, 2017).

Ethical considerations

The conduct and reporting of this study adhered to ethical principles, ensuring professional integrity, whilst duly signed informed consent was obtained, confirming the anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants' responses. The Protestant University of the Congo's Research Ethics Committee granted ethical clearance, allowing the survey to be conducted.

4. Empirical Findings

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics for the four-dimensional job-related affective well-being elements are presented in Table 3 below. Higher education staff members reported relatively low levels of negative affect, with depression having a mean of 2.43 (SD = 0.71) and anxiety averaging 2.45 (SD = 0.77), indicating relatively infrequent negative emotional responses to the job. These results rule out the possibility of an ongoing psychological or emotional issue at the workplace. (Basińska, Gruszczyńska, & Schaufeli, 2014). Positive affect was moderate, with enthusiasm scoring an average of 3.32 (SD = 0.86) and comfort an average of 3.27 (SD = 0.80). Although these results do not show that higher education staff consider themselves to be performing in a healthy and fulfilling work environment, as they were rather indecisive (Looti, 2025), it nevertheless describes a psychologically stable cohort.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Negative-High arousal	2.43	0.71	1.00	5.00
Negative-Low arousal	2.45	0.77	1.00	5.00
Positive-High arousal	3.32	0.86	1.00	5.00
Positive-Low arousal	3.27	0.80	1.00	5.00

Correlational relationships analysis

A Pearson correlation revealed a highly statistically significant and low positive association between gender and the relatively low levels of depression ($r = .10, p < .01$) and anxiety ($r = .11, p < .01$), unveiling that men were more likely to express relatively low negative affect than women. Likewise, age was statistically significant, correlating weakly and positively with lower reported depression ($r = .06, p < .05$), suggesting that elderliness

is slightly associated with lower depression. Contrarily, age was highly statistically significant and correlated weakly and negatively with moderate enthusiasm ($r = -.09, p < .01$), indicating that lower enthusiasm was slightly associated with youthfulness. All other Pearson correlation coefficients were insignificant, as shown below in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlation

		Negative-High arousal	Negative-Low arousal	Positive-High arousal	Positive-Low arousal
Gender	<i>r</i>	.103**	.106**	-0.041	-0.058
	Sig.	0.002	0.001	0.212	0.076
Age	<i>r</i>	.064*	0.041	-.092**	0.026
	Sig.	0.048	0.204	0.005	0.416
Level of study	<i>r</i>	-0.029	-0.014	0.052	0.029
	Sig.	0.370	0.656	0.112	0.377
Marital status	<i>r</i>	-0.041	-0.039	0.000	0.033
	Sig.	0.204	0.232	0.995	0.312
Socio-professional category	<i>r</i>	0.033	0.057	-0.017	-0.015
	Sig.	0.310	0.082	0.595	0.636
Area of residence	<i>r</i>	0.037	-0.008	0.025	0.020
	Sig.	0.257	0.800	0.434	0.535

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Group differences

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the four job-related well-being dimensional effects between women and men. A significant difference was reported between the two genders in this regard: relatively low depression for men ($M = 2.38, SD = 0.69$); and for women ($M = 2.53, SD = 0.74$), $t(946) = -0.63, p = 0.002$. Likewise, there was a difference between men ($M = 2.39, SD = 0.77$) and women ($M = 2.56, SD = 0.76$) in terms of the relatively low level of anxiety, which was significant, $t(946) = -0.65, p = 0.001$. These results suggest that women expressed more frequent negative emotional responses to the job than men. There was no significant difference in the reported moderate levels of enthusiasm between men ($M = 3.34, SD = 0.86$) and women ($M = 3.27, SD = 0.85$), $t(946) = 0.25, p = 0.212$. Similarly, the difference between men ($M = 3.30, SD = 0.81$) and women ($M = 3.21, SD = 0.78$) was insignificant, $t(946) = 0.36, p = 0.080$. Further, Cohen's *d* effect size confirmed the small effect size of the significant relationship between gender groups and considered well-being dimensional effects. Details of both descriptive group statistics and the *t*-Test results are provided below in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: Descriptive Gender Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Negative-High arousal	Male	617	2.38	0.69	0.03
	Female	331	2.53	0.74	0.04
Negative-Low arousal	Male	617	2.39	0.77	0.03
	Female	331	2.56	0.76	0.04
Positive-High arousal	Male	617	3.34	0.86	0.03
	Female	331	3.27	0.85	0.05
Positive-Low arousal	Male	617	3.30	0.81	0.03
	Female	331	3.21	0.78	0.04

Table 6: t-Test Independent Samples Test/ Gender

		t-test for Equality of Means							
		Cohen d	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Negative-High arousal	EVA	-0.22	-	946	0.002	-0.15	0.05	-0.25	-0.06
			0.63						
	EVNA		-	630.9 6	0.002	-0.15	0.05	-0.25	-0.06
Negative-Low arousal	EVA	-0.22	-	946	0.001	-0.17	0.05	-0.272	-0.07
			0.65						
	EVNA		-	683.2 6	0.001	-0.17	0.05	-0.272	-0.07
Positive-High arousal	EVA	0.09	0.25	946	0.212	0.07	0.05	-0.042	0.19
			0.25						
	EVNA		0.25	680.2 6	0.211	0.07	0.05	-0.042	0.19
Positive-Low arousal	EVA	0.12	0.36	946	0.080	0.10	0.05	-0.01	0.20
			0.36						
	EVNA		0.36	694.2 3	0.070	0.10	0.05	-0.008	0.20

EVA: Equal variances assumed; EVNA: Equal variances not assumed

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the four job-related well-being dimensions between higher education staff, aged 35 years or younger, and those aged over 35 years. A significant difference was reported, as follows: relatively low depression for staff aged over 35 years ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 0.73$) and those aged 35 years or younger ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 0.74$), $t(946) = -0.40$, $p = 0.048$. These results suggest that higher education staff, aged 35 years or younger, expressed more frequent depressive emotional responses to the job than those who were over 35 years old. Likewise, there was a difference between staff who were over 35 years old ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.85$) and those who were 35 years old or younger ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.85$), where moderate levels of enthusiasm were reported to be significant, namely $t(946) = 0.57$, $p = 0.005$. These results indicate that higher education staff, who were over 35 years old, expressed more frequent enthusiastic emotional responses to the job than those who were 35 years old or younger. Further, Cohen's d effect size confirmed the small effect size of the significant relationship between age groups and considered well-being dimensional effects. There was no significant difference between the two age groups in terms of anxiety and comfort, as shown in Tables 7 and 8 below.

Table 7: Descriptive Age group Statistics

	Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Negative-High arousal	> 35 yrs old	549	2.40	0.73	0.03
	≤ 35 yrs old	399	2.50	0.67	0.04
Negative-Low arousal	> 35 yrs old	549	2.42	0.78	0.03
	≤ 35 yrs old	399	2.49	0.74	0.04
Positive-High arousal	> 35 yrs old	549	3.37	0.85	0.03
	≤ 35 yrs old	399	3.20	0.85	0.05
Positive-Low arousal	> 35 yrs old	549	3.26	0.80	0.03
	≤ 35 yrs old	399	3.30	0.81	0.05

Table 8: t-Test Independent Samples Test/ Age

		t-test for Equality of Means							
		Cohen d	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Negative-High arousal	EVA	-0.14	-	946	0.048	-0.10	0.05	-0.19	0.00
			0.40						
	EVNA		-	658.1 4	0.042	-0.10	0.05	-0.19	0.00
Negative-Low arousal	EVA	-0.09	-	946	0.204	-0.07	0.05	-0.17	0.04
			0.25						
	EVNA		-	636.8 9	0.196	-0.07	0.05	-0.17	0.04
Positive-High arousal	EVA	-0.20	0.57	946	0.005	0.17	0.06	0.05	0.28
			0.57						
	EVNA		0.57	607.1 4	0.005	0.17	0.06	0.05	0.28
Positive-Low arousal	EVA	-0.7	-	946	0.416	-0.05	0.06	-0.15	0.06
			0.16						
	EVNA		-	602.7 7	0.418	-0.05	0.06	-0.15	0.06

EVA: Equal variances assumed; EVNA: Equal variances not assumed

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to examine whether the four job-related well-being dimensions differed in terms of higher education staff members' level of education. The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in the reported moderate enthusiasm of staff in relation to their level of education, namely $F(3, 944) = 1.18, p = .004$, as shown in Table 9 below. No statistically significant differences were observed between the reported relatively low negative affect elements, depression and anxiety, and the moderate positive affect, comfort.

Table 9: ANOVA/ Level of education

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Negative-High arousal	Between groups	44.57	3	14.86	1.18	0.316
	Within groups	11873.75	944	12.58		
	Total	11918.32	947			
Negative-Low arousal	Between groups	16.22	3	5.41	0.36	0.779
	Within groups	14028.19	944	14.86		
	Total	14044.41	947			
Positive-High arousal	Between groups	238.40	3	79.47	4.39	0.004
	Within groups	17102.83	944	18.12		
	Total	17341.22	947			
Positive-Low arousal	Between groups	92.45	3	30.82	1.92	0.125
	Within groups	15153.87	944	16.05		
	Total	15246.33	947			

To determine which specific group means differed, post-hoc comparisons, using the Tukey HSD test, revealed that higher education staff who held a master's degree were more enthusiastic than those who had a bachelor's degree ($p = .002$). No statistically significant differences were observed between the remaining groups, as shown below in Table 10.

Table 10: Post-hoc Tests Tukey HSD/ Multiple comparisons (Level of study)

Dependent Variable	(I) Level of study	(J) Level of study	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Positive-High arousal	Undergraduate ⁺	Bachelor's	0.20	0.49	0.180	-0.054	0.448
		Master's	-0.11	0.36	0.406	-0.296	0.074
		Doctorate	-0.03	0.44	0.980	-0.264	0.194
	Bachelor's	Undergraduate ⁺	-0.20	0.49	0.180	-0.448	0.054
		Master's	-0.31*	0.43	0.002	-0.532	-0.086
		Doctorate	-0.23	0.51	0.101	-0.492	0.028
	Master's	Undergraduate ⁺	0.11	0.36	0.406	-0.074	0.296
		Bachelor's	0.31*	0.43	0.002	0.086	0.532
		Doctorate	0.08	0.38	0.744	-0.12	0.276
	Doctorate	Undergraduate ⁺	0.03	0.44	0.980	-0.194	0.264
		Bachelor's	0.23	0.51	0.101	-0.028	0.492
		Master's	-0.08	0.38	0.744	-0.276	0.12

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level;
Undergraduate⁺: individuals with, at most, an undergraduate degree.

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to examine whether the four job-related well-being dimensional affects differed in respect of higher education staff members' marital status. The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in all four well-being affective dimensions, as displayed below in Table 11. The relatively low negative affect differed respectively for depression, $F(2, 945) = 3.99, p = .019$, and anxiety, $F(2, 945) = 3.74, p = .024$. Conversely, the moderate positive affect differed respectively for enthusiasm, $F(2, 945) = 6.46, p = .002$, and comfort, $F(2, 945) = 4.55, p = .011$.

Table 11: ANOVA/ Marital status

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Negative-High arousal	Between groups	99.77	2	49.89	3.99	0.019
	Within groups	11818.55	945	12.51		
	Total	11918.32	947			
Negative-Low arousal	Between groups	110.37	2	55.19	3.74	0.024
	Within groups	13934.04	945	14.75		
	Total	14044.41	947			
Positive-High arousal	Between groups	233.87	2	116.94	6.46	0.002
	Within groups	17107.35	945	18.10		
	Total	17341.22	947			

Positive-Low arousal	Between groups	145.33	2	72.66	4.55	0.011
	Within groups	15101.00	945	15.98		
	Total	15246.33	947			

To determine which specific group means differed, post-hoc comparisons were made, using the Tukey HSD test, revealing that higher education staff members who live alone were more depressed ($p = .030$) and more anxious ($p = .039$) than those who were legally married. Similarly, married staff reported that they felt more comfortable at work than those who lived alone ($p = .031$), while they were less enthusiastic compared to those who lived with a partner but who were not legally married ($p = .003$), as shown below in Table 12.

Table 12: Post-hoc Tests Tukey HSD/ Multiple comparisons (Marital status)

Dependent Variable	(I) Level of study	(J) Level of study	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Negative-High arousal	Single+	Married	.62*	0.24	0.030	0.05	1.19
		Live-in partner	-0.18	0.47	0.925	-1.28	0.92
	Married	Single+	-.62*	0.24	0.030	-1.19	-0.05
		Live-in partner	-0.79	0.46	0.190	-1.86	0.28
	Live-in partner	Single+	0.18	0.47	0.925	-0.92	1.28
		Married	0.79	0.46	0.190	-0.28	1.86
Negative-Low arousal	Single+	Married	.65*	0.26	0.039	0.03	1.26
		Live-in partner	-0.21	0.51	0.913	-1.40	0.99
	Married	Single+	-.65*	0.26	0.039	-1.26	-0.03
		Live-in partner	-0.85	0.49	0.198	-2.01	0.31
	Live-in partner	Single+	0.21	0.51	0.913	-0.99	1.40
		Married	0.85	0.49	0.198	-0.31	2.01
Positive-High arousal	Single+	Married	-0.64	0.29	0.073	-1.33	0.05
		Live-in partner	1.14	0.56	0.105	-0.18	2.47
	Married	Single+	0.64	0.29	0.073	-0.05	1.33
		Live-in partner	1.78*	0.55	0.003	0.50	3.07
	Live-in partner	Single+	-1.14	0.56	0.105	-2.47	0.18
		Married	-1.78*	0.55	0.003	-3.07	-0.50
Positive-Low arousal	Single+	Married	-.70*	0.27	0.031	-1.34	-0.05
		Live-in partner	0.41	0.53	0.720	-0.83	1.65
	Married	Single+	.70*	0.27	0.031	0.05	1.34
		Live-in partner	1.10	0.52	0.082	-0.11	2.31
	Live-in partner	Single+	-0.41	0.53	0.720	-1.65	0.83
		Married	-1.10	0.52	0.082	-2.31	0.11

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level;

Single+: groups together all individuals who do not share a common dwelling with a partner.

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to examine whether the four job-related well-being dimensions differed in terms of higher education staff's socio-professional category. The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in the reported relatively low anxiety of staff in relation to their socio-professional category, namely $F(2, 945) = 6.21, p = .002$. No statistically significant differences were observed in the reported relatively low depression and the moderate positive affect elements, namely comfort and enthusiasm, as shown below in Table 13.

Table 13: ANOVA/ Socio-professional category

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Negative-High arousal	Between groups	69.08	2	34.54	2.76	0.064
	Within groups	11849.24	945	12.54		
	Total	11918.32	947			
Negative-Low arousal	Between groups	182.23	2	91.11	6.21	0.002
	Within groups	13862.18	945	14.67		
	Total	14044.41	947			
Positive-High arousal	Between groups	63.12	2	31.56	1.73	0.179
	Within groups	17278.11	945	18.28		
	Total	17341.22	947			
Positive-Low arousal	Between groups	7.06	2	3.53	0.22	0.803
	Within groups	15239.26	945	16.13		
	Total	15246.33	947			

To determine which specific group means differ, post-hoc comparisons were made, using the Tukey HSD test, which revealed that academic staff members were more anxious than both administrative staff ($p = .003$) and scientific staff ($p = .009$). No statistically significant differences were observed between the administrative staff and scientific staff, as shown below in Table 14.

Table 14: Post-hoc Tests Tukey HSD/ Multiple comparisons (Socio-professional category)

Dependent Variable	(I) Level of study	(J) Level of study	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Negative-Low arousal	Administrative staff	Scientific staff	-0.14	0.29	0.874	-0.82	0.53
		Academic staff	-1.08*	0.33	0.003	-1.85	-0.32
	Scientific staff	Administrative staff	0.14	0.29	0.874	-0.53	0.82
		Academic staff	-.94*	0.32	0.009	-1.69	-0.19
	Academic staff	Administrative staff	1.08*	0.33	0.003	0.32	1.85
		Scientific staff	.94*	0.32	0.009	0.19	1.69

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to examine whether the four job-related well-being dimensions differed in terms of higher education staff's area of residence. No statistically significant differences were observed in both reported relatively low negative and positive affect elements, as shown in Table 15 below.

Table 15: ANOVA/ Area of residence

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Negative-High arousal	Between groups	23.43	3	7.81	0.62	0.602
	Within groups	11894.89	944	12.60		
	Total	11918.32	947			
Negative-Low arousal	Between groups	1.58	3	0.53	0.04	0.991
	Within groups	14042.83	944	14.88		
	Total	14044.41	947			
Positive-High arousal	Between groups	20.13	3	6.71	0.37	0.778
	Within groups	17321.09	944	18.35		
	Total	17341.22	947			
Positive-Low arousal	Between groups	18.94	3	6.32	0.39	0.759
	Within groups	15227.38	944	16.13		
	Total	15246.33	947			

Discussion

The objective of this study was to investigate the existence and extent of correlational relationships between biographical characteristics and the four-dimensional job-related affective well-being elements, and to compare differences between the respective groups to promote a policy design for workplace well-being.

Before conducting inferential analysis, descriptive statistics revealed that the participants scored relatively low in the negative affect elements of depression and anxiety, displaying a lower burden of mental health in the workplace and the respondents' psychological resilience (Malebari, et al., 2024). Their assessment regarding the positive affect indicated moderate levels for enthusiasm and comfort, suggesting a healthy psychological reserve, as reported by Xie *et al.* (2025) and Kandasamy *et al.* (2025).

The correlation results indicated low Pearson coefficients for depression ($r = .10$) and anxiety ($r = .11$) despite being highly statistically significant ($p < .01$), revealing that men were slightly more likely than women to report the lower negative affect. These findings aligned with global general observations in broader psychological research (Gkouletsa, et al., 2025) such as studies on Sex Differences in Anxiety and Depression (McHenry, Carrier, Hull, & Kabbaj, 2014), where men frequently reported or expressed lower baseline levels of the negative affect (Gibeau, et al., 2023).

The statistically significant and positive correlation ($r = 0.06$, $p < 0.05$) indicated that as age increases, reported depression decreases slightly, though the strength of this relationship is weak. In short, older adults reported marginally lower levels of depression, as noted by Fiske *et al.* (2009), Economou *et al.* (2024) and Chao *et al.* (2025), though age alone explains little about this difference. Contrarily, the highly statistically significant and negative correlation ($r = -0.09$, $p < 0.01$) means that as age increased, enthusiasm tended to drop. Being younger is associated with higher moderate enthusiasm, as observed by Choi *et al.* (2023), while the effect size remains quite small.

The statistically significant difference between the two genders in terms of depression ($t(946) = -0.63$; $p = 0.002$) and anxiety ($t(946) = -0.65$; $p = 0.001$), as revealed by the t -Test results, was consistent with the large number of epidemiological and clinical research studies, which confirmed that women are twice as likely as men to experience depression and anxiety disorders, as found by Shawon *et al.* (2024) and Lkr *et al.* (2025). Although the difference between the older and younger groups was significant for depression ($t(946) = -0.40$; $p = 0.048$), suggesting that younger staff generally reported significantly higher mean levels of depression than older staff, as observed by Collier Villaume *et al.* (2023). Unlike studies that revealed that older staff experienced less high-arousal excitement (enthusiasm) than younger staff, as pointed out by Choi *et al.* (2023), the present study found the contrary.

A broader investigation of published papers on differences in enthusiasm regarding level of education was unfruitful. However, the present study results indicating that higher education staff holding a master's degree are more enthusiastic than those with a bachelor's degree ($p = .002$) can be understood by the fact that this category is composed of people aspiring to become academic staff. Thus, obtaining a master's degree serves as a bridge, opening the doors to authoring their theses, which prove to be their key to becoming academic staff. The study's findings indicate that higher education staff who live alone are more depressed ($p = .030$) and more anxious ($p = .039$) than those who are legally married, aligning with other research studies in the field (Serapinas & Narbekovas, 2022). However, these results should be interpreted with caution, as the differences between married couples and those who live with a partner were not significant, unlike in other studies. Similarly, legally married staff reported that they felt more comfortable at work than those who live alone ($p = .031$), while those who live with a partner, unmarried, were more enthusiastic. Finally, the results demonstrate that academic staff were more anxious than both administrative staff ($p = .003$) and scientific staff ($p = .009$).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Managerial Implications

A training programme is required for higher education leaders to empower management with sufficient skills to recognise mental distress. Gender-responsive policies should be enforced to lower depression and anxiety among female employees by creating women-focused Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). Further actions include struggling intimidations and harassment at work, supporting life-stage challenges such as menopause, and flexible work arrangements for caregiving (Meng & Yang, 2023). Likewise, age-inclusive mental health policies should be implemented and tailored for younger employees who thrive on transparent communication and autonomy, whilst expecting their employers to view mental health as a core workforce strategy (El-Qebaisi, 2025). Actionable policies could include prohibiting after-hours messaging, offering hybrid setups to help employees navigate personal commitments, therapy appointments, and burnout recovery (Çemberci, Civelek, Ertemel, & Cömert, 2022). Conversely, older employees need to feel valued, where they share their institutional knowledge with younger employees, whilst performing in an ergonomic workspace to reduce physical strain and improve daily comfort to enhance their enthusiasm at work (Jarden, Siegert, Koziol-McLain, Bujalka, & Sandham, 2023). Phased retirement and reskilling programmes that reduce their working hours and enable them to gravitate towards roles that they are passionate about would reduce burnout, providing a smoother, more enthusiastic transition towards retirement (Caponecchia, Neto, O'Neill, & C, 2023). Employees with lower educational levels require clear communication and to be listened to so that they perceive themselves to be valued. Congolese higher education institutions should implement guidelines to ensure that all employees receive equal career opportunities, unbiased compensation, and supportive benefits regardless of their marital status (Viernes & Velasco, 2025). Therefore, they must commit to fostering work-life balance and pay equity while prohibiting unlawful discrimination, often oriented towards single, divorced, and widowed staff (Çemberci, Civelek, Ertemel, & Cömert, 2022). Finally, Congolese higher education institutions should implement proper policies that address distinct occupational risks, whilst accommodating different socio-professional categories by encompassing the health's five pillars of modern well-being programmes comprising physical, emotional, financial, social and occupational health (El-Qebaisi, 2025).

Conclusion

Overall, despite the descriptive statistics above, it is premature to assert that Congolese higher education staff perform in a conducive and wellness-oriented environment. In need, the relatively low negative affect showed a situation of fragile well-being, given that the mean scores tended to be closer to moderate. Furthermore,

deeper investigation through correlation, the *t-test*, and the ANOVA tests unveiled disparities that should be addressed to promote well-being within these organisations by implementing policies that will sustain a conducive and ergonomic environment that promotes mental health in the workplace. Thus, managerial leaders within Congolese higher education should design contextualised well-being-oriented policies that consider the present study's findings. In addition, other researchers should extend the study beyond Kinshasa and replicate it over time, as its cross-sectional design prevents causal conclusions.

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