

Psychological Capital and Quality of Work Life in Higher Education: The Moderating Role of Perceived Organisational Support

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Abstract:

Purpose: This study explores the relationships among job stress, psychological capital ('PsyCap'), perceived organisational support (POS) and quality of work life ('QWL') of faculty members of higher education institutions, from the perspective of evidence-based human resource management (HRM). In particular, the study examines the mediating role of 'PsyCap' and the moderating role of POS in the relationship between job stress and employees' 'QWL'.

Methodology: A cross-sectional quantitative survey was conducted among faculty members working in higher education institutions. The sample included faculty members in higher education institutions (N = 268). To examine the direct, indirect, and moderating relationships among the study variables, data were analysed using covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) in AMOS.

Findings: The findings show that job stress has a negative effect on 'PsyCap' and 'QWL', and 'PsyCap' has a positive effect on 'QWL'. Partial mediation of job stress on 'QWL' is mediated by 'PsyCap'. Additionally, POS plays a crucial role in moderating the link between job stress and 'PsyCap', as well as between 'PsyCap' and 'QWL', signifying that a supportive organisational climate helps strengthen employees' psychological resources and reduces the adverse effects of workplace stress.

Practical Implications: The results offer support for HR managers and university administrators to apply integrated HR practices such as resilience development, mentoring, supportive leadership, fair workload management, employee assistance programmes and recognition systems to improve employee well-being and 'QWL'.

Originality/Value: The present study contributes to evidence-based HRM by combining Conservation of Resources Theory and Social Exchange Theory to explain the joint effects of individual psychological resources and organisational support on employee well-being. The findings provide empirical evidence to inform HR policies that promote sustainable employee well-being and organisational effectiveness in higher education.

Keywords: Psychological Capital ('PsyCap'), Job Stress, Quality of Work Life, Perceived Organizational Support, Evidence Based HRM

1.Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are operating in an increasingly demanding environment characterised by increased competition, digital transformation, changing accreditation requirements, increased research expectations and changing stakeholder demands (Kundi et al., 2021; Molino et al., 2020). Faculty members are expected to excel



in teaching, research, administration, student mentorship and engagement with the community, often with scarce organisational resources. This increasing demand has led to high levels of job stress, diminished employee well-being and a decline in quality of work life ('QWL'), posing great challenges to human resource management (HRM) (Chaudhary & Panda, 2024; Li et al., 2025). Given the strategic priority of the universities to attract, develop and retain talented academics, the design of evidence-based HR interventions to enhance employee well-being has become an important issue.

Evidence-based HRM advocates that organisational policies and HR practices should be based on rigorous empirical evidence rather than on intuition or tradition. Evidence-based HRM combines scientific research, organisational experience and contextual knowledge to help organisations make informed choices about employee development, workplace well-being and organisational performance. In higher education, where faculty are a key source of intellectual capital, it is important to understand how HR practices can reduce job stress and build employees' psychological resources for sustainable institutional performance.

The effect of job stress on employees' attitudes, behaviours and organisational outcomes has long been recognised as one of the most serious challenges faced in the workplace (Chaudhary & Panda, 2024; Li et al., 2025). Physical and psychological resources of employees are often depleted by heavy workloads, unclear roles, administrative duties, pressure to publish and increasing performance demands, resulting in lower motivation, reduced work engagement, emotional exhaustion and 'QWL'. From an HRM perspective, unmanaged job stress has negative implications for employee health and organisational effectiveness in terms of reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, decreased organisational commitment and increased turnover intentions (Chaudhary & Panda, 2024; Li et al., 2025). Thus, identifying organisational mechanisms that buffer the adverse effects of job stress remains an important research priority.

Research in positive organisational behaviour shows that employees' psychological resources are important in responding to workplace challenges. Psychological Capital ('PsyCap') is an important personal resource comprising self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience that helps employees to effectively manage challenging work settings (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). 'PsyCap' is considered a supple resource that can be established through conscious HR interventions like training, coaching, mentoring, and leadership support, unlike relatively stable personality traits. This has led to 'PsyCap' becoming a key construct in HRM research as it offers organisations an evidence-based route to improving employee well-being, engagement and performance. Therefore, knowing whether 'PsyCap' mediates the link between job stress and 'QWL' may offer useful guidance to HR professionals to enhance employees' psychological resources (Newman et al., 2020; Karatepe et al., 2022; Hassanein et al., 2025).

Organisational support is just as important in shaping employee experience. Perceived Organisational Support (POS) is the employees' perception that the organisation values their contribution and cares for their well-being (Krishnan & Mary, 2012). In the HRM literature, POS is largely considered to be an outcome of supportive HR practices like fair performance management, effective communication, employee recognition, opportunities for professional development, support from supervisors, and work-life balance initiatives (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Halbesleben et al., 2023). Such organisational resources may protect employees from the adverse consequences of job stress, while at the same time enhancing their psychological capital (Nikhil & Arthi, 2018; Pushpika et al., 2025). Thus, considering POS as a contextual resource provides meaningful insights into how HR practices can enhance the 'QWL' for employees in demanding working conditions (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Kurtessis et al., 2017).

This study is underpinned by Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 2017; Cropanzano et al., 2017). According to the COR Theory, employees are motivated to acquire, maintain and nurture valuable resources and experience stress when these resources are threatened or lost (Hobfoll, 2001). Psychological capital is an internal personal resource to help employees withstand stressful work environments, while organisational support is an external organisational resource to facilitate resource conservation and replenishment (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Social Exchange Theory also suggests that employees who perceive that they receive more support from their organisation are more likely to respond with positive attitudes, greater commitment and enhanced well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). These perspectives together offer strong theoretical support for an understanding of the joint influence of organisational and psychological resources on the 'QWL' of employees.

Earlier studies have examined job stress, psychological capital, organisational support and 'QWL' individually, but there remain some significant gaps in our understanding (Kaur & Mehta, 2024; Hobfoll et al., 2018; Halbesleben et al., 2023). First, previous studies have examined these constructs in isolation, thus offering limited evidence on the mechanisms through which psychological resources convert stressful work experiences into enhanced 'QWL'

(Newman et al., 2020; Kim & Park, 2025). Secondly, limited research has explored perceived organisational support as a contextual boundary condition that enhances or weakens these relationships, especially in higher education institutions. Finally, while there are growing calls for evidence-based HRM, there is limited empirical research that has translated these relationships into actionable HR interventions that can improve employee well-being and organisational sustainability in knowledge-intensive workplaces (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Kurtessis et al., 2017).

The current study addresses these gaps by proposing and testing a moderated mediation model in which Psychological Capital mediates the relationship between Job Stress and ‘QWL’, and Perceived Organisational Support moderates the key relationships in the model. Using a structural equation modelling approach, this study offers robust empirical evidence for the combined contribution of psychological and organisational resources to employee well-being in higher education (Kugler et al., 2025; Liu & Chen, 2025). This study contributes to the evidence-based HRM literature by identifying the mechanisms through which supportive organisational environments facilitate employees’ psychological resources and ‘QWL’ and offers practical guidance to HR professionals and university administrators on designing effective employee well-being strategies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Job Stress in Contemporary Work Contexts

Job stress is one of the most critical issues in modern organisations, especially in jobs with a high workload and complex role expectations (Aprilia et al., 2025; Dewangan & Goswami, 2025). Increasingly in higher education, faculty are required to balance teaching, research, administration, and digital engagement, resulting in extended work demands and blurred work-life boundaries (Watermeyer et al., 2021; Shin & Jung, 2021). Hence, job stress should be conceptualised not only as an individual phenomenon but also as a structural organisational phenomenon as a function of institutional demands and resource availability (Parker & DeCotiis, 1983; Wang, 2026).

2.2. Psychological Capital as a Context-Sensitive Resource

Psychological Capital (‘PsyCap’) is an important psychological resource that helps employees to deal with challenges in the workplace and to maintain well-being. ‘PsyCap’ consists of hope, self-efficacy, resilience and sanguinity (Luthans et al., 2007; Dev et al., 2025). A number of studies have shown that ‘PsyCap’ is associated with improved performance, decreased stress, and increased employee well-being (Newman et al., 2020; Karatepe et al., 2022; Hassanein et al., 2025). ‘PsyCap’ is gradually recognised as a resource that is context-sensitive and can be increased or decreased by organisational conditions such as supportive leadership, learning opportunities and institutional practices rather than as a fixed personal attribute (Halbesleben et al., 2023). This view positions ‘PsyCap’ as an important organisational resource in the context of evidence-based HRM.

2.3. Quality of Work Life as a Relational Outcome

The concept of ‘QWL’ has moved away from a limited perception of employee satisfaction to a wider construct, which includes psychological health, work-life balance, meaningful work, and a positive work environment (Easton & Van Laar, 2007; Ibrahim et al., 2025). Contemporary HRM research is increasingly conceptualising ‘QWL’ as a relational outcome to be extracted from the interaction between employees and their organisational environment rather than an individual perception (Molino et al., 2020). From an Evidence-Based HRM perspective, HR practices that provide employees with sufficient resources, favourable working conditions and opportunities for meaningful engagement influence employee well-being and subsequently impact on employee outcomes and organisational performance. Recent HRM scholarship also argues that integrated well-being-oriented HR practices are essential for creating sustainable workplaces and improving employee experience.

In knowledge-intensive contexts such as higher education, ‘QWL’ relates to the ability of employees to deal with challenging workloads in a way that preserves their psychological well-being and professional satisfaction. The experiences are centred on institutional support, psychological safety, managerial responsiveness, and access to organisational resources (Rahman et al., 2024; Chen & Hsu, 2025). Therefore, ‘QWL’ should be seen as a strategic HRM outcome representing the degree to which organisations can balance performance expectations with employee well-being and sustainable workforce management (Wang, 2026; Guest, 2017).

2.4. Perceived Organisational Support and Relational Exchange

Perceived Organisational Support (POS) is the employees’ perception that the organisation values their contribution and cares about their wellbeing (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Gül, 2025). Based on Social Exchange Theory,

the more support employees feel they receive from their organisation, the greater the likelihood of reciprocation in the form of stronger commitment, resilience and positive work attitudes. Beyond an individual perception, evidence-based HRM views POS as an organisational capability developed through intentional HR practices rather than emerging spontaneously.

Supportive HR practices such as mentoring, structured onboarding, supervisor support, recognition systems, continuous learning opportunities, equitable workload allocation, flexible work arrangements, employee assistance programmes, and career development communicate organisational investment in employees and reinforce perceptions of organisational support (Nikhil & Arthi, 2018). These practices not only enhance positive exchange relationships, but also foster long-term employee resilience, well-being and organisational sustainability (Qamar et al., 2024).

Empirical evidence has reliably shown that higher levels of POS are associated with higher job satisfaction, lower job stress, higher organisational commitment and better employee well-being (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Caesens et al., 2020; Basu & Mitra, 2024). Most importantly, supportive organisational environments help employees in preserving and restoring psychological resources when work demands are high, and thus buffer the negative effects of work stress (Hassanein et al., 2025). Thus, POS acts as a contextual organisational resource in higher education institutions, helps employees make better use of their Psychological Capital and ensures the quality of their work life (Agarwal & Soni, 2024; Martins et al., 2025).

2.5. Integrating the Constructs: A Relational Framework

Job stress, psychological capital, 'QWL' and perceived organisational support are commonly studied as individual attributes. Most studies have used linear relationships. These strategies do not pay enough attention to the fact that workplace experiences are interconnected (Erden, 2025).

Drawing on the Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), the present study conceptualised job stress as a resource-depleting process and psychological capital as a resource store enabling people to meet demands. The efficacy of these resources is contingent upon the organisational conditions, chiefly the level of assistance provided. (Khan et al., 2026).

Most contemporary theories of organisational well-being are still founded on reductionist assumptions in which stress, resilience and well-being are conceived as distinct and linear phenomena (Al-Hawari et al., 2025). Such methods ignore the cyclic interplay between employees and organisational structures. The present study therefore employs a relational perspective where employee well-being is regarded as continually constructed via exchanges between institutional conditions and psychological capacity. In this way, psychological capital is not only something employees have, but it is maintained or diminished actively via organisational experiences.

In this sense, 'QWL' is a result of the interaction of job demands, psychological resources and organisational context. This combined system is a shift towards a more complex and dynamic system whereby individual and organisational issues all contribute towards the wellbeing of the employee.

2.6. Conceptual Gap and Study Positioning

A great deal of effort has been put into the study of job stress, psychological capital, perceived organisational support and 'QWL' separately, but there are still important theoretical and practical gaps. First, prevailing studies have focused mainly on the direct relationships between these constructs, thus giving little insight into the underlying psychological mechanisms through which job stress impacts employees' 'QWL'. Thus, the mediating role of Psychological Capital as a developable personal resource has not been sufficiently explored in an integrated HRM framework.

Second, perceived organisational support has been consistently identified as a valuable organisational resource; however, current research has mainly conceptualised perceived organisational support as an independent predictor or mediator, rather than a contextual resource that can enhance employees' psychological resources to cope with workplace stress. Therefore, there is still little empirical evidence concerning the influence of supportive organisational environments on the effectiveness of employees' psychological resources in stressful work conditions, especially in knowledge-intensive organisations, such as higher education institutions.

Third, even though employee well-being is increasingly acknowledged as a strategic HRM goal, a considerable part of the extant literature still focuses on the identification of workplace stressors, rather than on the production of evidence to inform effective HR interventions. Recent reviews have identified a persistent gap between HRM research and practice, with empirical findings often not being sufficiently translated into human resource policies and evidence-

based managerial decisions. Similarly, studies of employee well-being have advocated for better attention to integrated HR practices that boost psychological resources and organisational support at the same time rather than examining isolated workplace factors.

Finally, empirical evidence from the higher education sector is relatively scarce, despite universities facing increasing challenges related to faculty workload, performance pressures, digital transformation and employee retention.

To fill these gaps, the present study developed and examined a moderated mediation model where Psychological Capital mediates the relationship between Job Stress and ‘QWL’, and Perceived Organisational Support moderates the relationships in this mechanism. This study contributes to the empirical base of HRM literature by integrating individual psychological resources and organisational support in a single framework, thereby extending the Conservation of Resources Theory and the Social Exchange Theory, and providing insights for HR policies and employee well-being strategies in higher education institutions.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

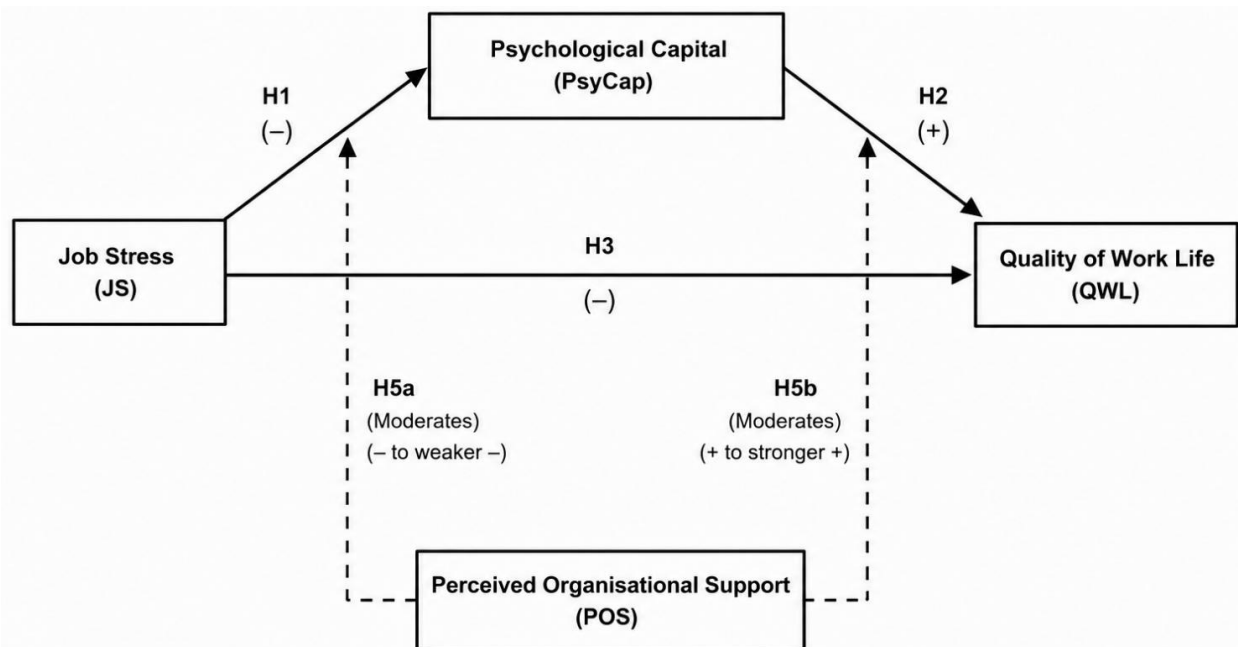


Figure 1: Relational framework of Employee-wellbeing in Higher Education

Source: Developed by the authors based on the literature review.

3. Hypotheses Development

3.1. Job Stress and Psychological Capital

The Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory states that employees seek to obtain and preserve personal resources that are valuable and that extended job stress depletes psychological resources such as hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy, which are collectively called Psychological Capital (‘PsyCap’) (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). From an evidence-based HRM perspective, ‘PsyCap’ is a resource that can be developed and enhanced through HR practices such as training, mentoring, coaching and supportive supervision. Strategic HRM sees these psychological resources as strategic assets that enhance organisational effectiveness (Delery & Roumpi, 2017), whereas Sustainable HRM is concerned with protecting employee well-being through balanced work systems (Kramar, 2022). Therefore, inadequate HR support in managing excessive work demands is likely to deplete employees’ ‘PsyCap’.

H1: Job stress is negatively associated with psychological capital.

3.2. Psychological Capital and Quality of Work Life

Psychological Capital is a useful psychological source that permits employees to respond positively to the challenges of the workplace and sustain motivation, resilience and optimism. In COR Theory, people with more personal resources are more successful in coping with stressful situations and maintaining their general well-being. In Strategic HRM, psychologically healthy employees are considered to be strategic assets and their well-being contributes to employee engagement, retention and organisational effectiveness (Delery & Roumpi, 2017). Furthermore, Sustainable HRM states that investment in employees' psychological capabilities leads to healthier work environments and long-term sustainability of the workforce (Kramar, 2022). Therefore, employees with higher 'PsyCap' are expected to experience better work quality of life because they have greater capacity to manage work demands while maintaining psychological well-being.

H2: Psychological capital is positively associated with quality of work life.

3.3. Job Stress and Quality of Work Life

According to the COR Theory, the long-lasting job stress gradually depletes employees' psychological and emotional resources, thereby reducing their ability to sustain well-being and positive work experiences. Strategic HRM implies that over-demanding work and poorly designed HR practices discourage employee engagement, organisational commitment and productivity, ultimately lowering quality of work life (Delery & Roumpi, 2017; Zeng et al., 2025). Similarly, Sustainable HRM advocates for HR policies that advance working situations and promote employee health, work-life balance and long-term employability. In the absence of supportive HR systems, excessive job stress is likely to reduce employees' perception of work satisfaction, well-being and work-life balance (Zhao et al., 2025).

H3: Job stress is negatively associated with quality of work life.

3.4. Mediating Role of Psychological Capital

The COR Theory argues that the effect of stress at work on employee outcomes is primarily due to the loss of personal resources. Psychological capital is an important personal resource for employees to cope with work demands and sustain positive work experiences. From an evidence-based HRM perspective, 'PsyCap' is a developable capability which can be strengthened through learning, coaching, mentoring and supportive leadership by HR practices (Guest, 2017). Thus, it is predicted that job stress will reduce employees' 'PsyCap' and, in turn, their quality of work life. This mechanism helps us to understand how HR investments in psychological resources may counteract the negative effects of workplace stress (Guest, 2017).

H4: Psychological capital mediates the relationship between job stress and quality of work life.

3.5. Moderating Role of Perceived Organisational Support

Supportive HR practices, including fair workload allocation, mentoring, employee recognition, flexible work arrangements, supervisor support and career development, contribute to the development of organisational resources in Strategic HRM and Sustainable HRM that enhance employees' coping ability with workplace demands (Guest, 2017). Social Exchange Theory suggests that when employees feel more supported by their organisation, they are likely to exhibit higher commitment, resilience and more positive work attitudes (Hobfoll, 1989). Organisational support is an external resource which replenishes employees' personal resources and alleviates the negative effect of stress. This is consistent with COR Theory. Thus, perceived organisational support is expected to reduce the negative effect of job stress on Psychological Capital and to increase the positive effect of Psychological Capital on Quality of Work Life (Hobfoll, 1989).

H5a: Perceived organisational support moderates the association between work stress and psychological capital, such that the negative relationship is reduced at high levels of perceived organisational support.

H5b: Perceived organisational support modifies the association between psychological capital and quality of work life such that the positive relationship is higher when perceived organisational support is high.

4. Materials & Methods

4.1. Research Design

This research paper has adopted a cross-sectional research design that is quantitative in nature to analyse the relationships between job stress variables, psychological capital variables, perceived organisational support variables, and quality of work life variables in higher education. A survey-based method was used because the constructs to be investigated are perceptual and experience-based. This is a theory-based study that hypothesises a relational model that includes mediation and moderation effects.

4.2. Sample and Data Collection

The sampling frame consisted of full-time faculty members employed at recognised higher education institutions. To ensure they had sufficient exposure to institutional HR policies and work practices, eligible participants were academic staff who had been employed with the

organisation for at least one year and were involved in teaching, research and administrative duties. The study was open to faculty members from different academic disciplines and career stages, thereby enabling it to capture varied experiences of job stress, psychological capital, perceived organisational support and quality of work life.

A total of 355 questionnaires were sent to eligible faculty via institutional contacts and online survey platforms. Out of these, 296 questionnaires were returned (response rate 83.3%). After checking for incomplete responses, missing values and inconsistent responses, a total of 268 valid questionnaires were retained for the final analysis (Hair et al., 2019).

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was utilised because it was impossible to obtain a complete sampling frame of faculty members from multiple higher education institutions due to institutional access restrictions and administrative constraints. In organisational and HRM research, convenience sampling is common when access to respondents is limited, and the study is interested in testing theoretically specified relationships rather than estimating population parameters (Highhouse & Gillespie, 2010). To enhance sample diversity, participants were employed from a range of institutions, academic disciplines and experience levels. Although convenience sampling may limit the generalisability of the findings, the main aim of this study was theory testing rather than population estimation. Thus, the sampling approach was considered suitable to investigate the hypothesised relationships in the proposed evidence-based HRM framework (Calder et al., 1981).

4.3. Measures

The measures of all constructs were based on known and validated measures. There were minor modifications in wording to fit the context of higher education but with no change of meaning. They were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Job Stress: Measured using the scale developed by Parker and DeCotiis (1983), capturing perceptions of workload, time pressure, and role-related tension.

Psychological Capital ('PsyCap'): Assessed using the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans et al., 2007), covering hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism.

Quality of Work Life ('QWL'): Measured using items adapted from the WRQoL scale (Easton & Van Laar, 2007), capturing well-being, job satisfaction, and work-life balance.

Perceived Organisational Support (POS): Perceived organisational care and support, measured using the scale established by Eisenberger et al. (1986).

Procedural remedies, like reduced apprehension of evaluation and anonymity, were used to deal with potential common method bias. Also, a single-factor test suggested by the author of the article showed that common method bias could not have been a serious problem.

4.4. Data Analysis Strategy

The data analysis was done in two steps: measurement model analysis and structural model analysis. All the analyses were performed using IBM SPSS AMOS Version 26.0. The sample size of 268 was considered acceptable

to test the proposed moderated mediation model, as it was larger than the minimum sample size set for SEM analysis (Hair et al., 2019; Kline, 2023).

4.5. Measurement Model Evaluation

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was carried out to determine reliability and validity. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), the thresholds of which are 0.70, were used in assessing reliability. The average variance extracted (AVE > 0.50) and the standardised factor loadings (> 0.60) were used to test convergent validity. Discriminant validity was assessed by examining whether the square root of AVE was greater than the inter-construct relationships. All standardised factor loadings were above the recommended threshold, so no items were removed. Model fit was assessed using the standard indices: Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA).

4.6. Structural Model Assessment

The proposed relationships were tested using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). This method makes it possible to determine direct, indirect and interaction effects in parallel.

4.7. Mediation and Moderation Analysis

To investigate the mediating role of Psychological Capital, a bootstrapping method was used, and significance was determined based on confidence intervals.

The mediating impact of Perceived Organisational Support was considered through evaluating the interaction effects within the structural model, namely, in the relationships between job stress and 'PsyCap', and between 'PsyCap' and 'QWL'.

The experiment was performed in accordance with the usual ethical standards. The research was conducted in a voluntary manner with informed consent being obtained and anonymity and confidentiality being upheld throughout the research process.

5. Data Analysis and Results

5.1. Preliminary Analysis

Before testing the hypothesis, the dataset (N = 268) was checked regarding missing values, normality and the presence of outliers. No serious issues related to missing data were found. The skewness and kurtosis values of all the variables were in the acceptable range (± 2), which implies that the values are near a normal distribution.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Job Stress	3.49	0.67	1.66	6.19
Psychological Capital	2.60	0.57	0.91	4.33
Perceived Organisational Support	3.45	0.59	1.88	5.04
Quality of Work Life	3.01	0.60	1.35	4.47

Source: Compiled by Authors'

Compared to job stress, the mean values of job stress are relatively higher, which indicates that there is a great deal of pressure on job stress among respondents. The psychological capital and perceived organisational support have a moderate value, whereas quality of work life is an average value.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

Variable	JS	'PsyCap'	POS	'QWL'
Job Stress	1			
Psychological Capital	-0.48**	1		
Perceived Organisational Support	0.02	0.03	1	
Quality of Work Life	-0.53**	0.50**	0.16*	1

($p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.01$);

Source: Compiled by Authors'

Job stress was negatively correlated with Psychological Capital and Quality of Work Life; Psychological Capital was positively associated with Quality of Work Life. Perceived Organisational Support was weakly positively correlated with Quality of Work Life.

5.2. Common Method Bias

Common method bias (CMB) was addressed through procedural and statistical remedies, as all variables were measured using a single self-report questionnaire. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured to respondents, which served to decrease evaluation apprehension and social desirability bias, procedurally. Harman's one-factor test showed that the first unrotated factor explained 32.4% of the total variance, which was lower than the recommended cut-off value of 50% and therefore common method bias was not likely to be a serious problem (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Table 3: Harman's Single-Factor Test

Factor	Variance Explained (%)
Single Factor	32.4%

Source: Compiled by Authors'

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test for common method variance using a Common Latent Factor (CLF) approach. The standardised factor loadings from the original measurement model were compared with the ones estimated after adding a common latent factor. The absolute differences (Δ loadings) between the two models were all below the recommended threshold of 0.20, suggesting that common method variance did not significantly influence the measurement model (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Therefore, it is unlikely that the structural relationships reported in this study may be accounted for by the common method bias.

Table 4: Common Latent Factor Assessment

Construct	Item	Original Loading	CLF Loading	Δ Loading
Job Stress	JS1	0.81	0.79	0.02
	JS2	0.84	0.82	0.02
	JS3	0.79	0.77	0.02
Psychological Capital	PC1	0.83	0.81	0.02
	PC2	0.87	0.85	0.02
Perceived Organisational Support	POS1	0.8	0.79	0.01
	POS2	0.85	0.84	0.01
Quality of Work Life	'QWL'1	0.88	0.87	0.01
	'QWL'2	0.84	0.83	0.01

Source: Calculated by Authors

Δ Loading = Absolute difference between the standardised factor loadings estimated from the original CFA model and the Common Latent Factor (CLF) model. All Δ loadings were below the recommended threshold of 0.20, suggesting that common method variance did not substantially influence the measurement model (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Another proposed method for testing common method variance is the marker-variable approach, but the survey instrument did not include a theoretically unrelated marker variable. The present study therefore used a combination of procedural remedies, Harman's single-factor test, and the Common Latent Factor approach, which together provide strong evidence that common method bias is unlikely to have substantially affected the results.

5.3. Measurement Model (CFA)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate the measurement model.

Table 5: Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Value	Recommended
χ^2/df	2.41	< 3
CFI	0.94	>0.90
TLI	0.93	>0.90
RMSEA	0.056	<0.08

Source: Compiled by Authors'

The model demonstrates good fit, supporting the adequacy of the measurement model.

Table 6: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Result

Construct	Item	Standardised Loading (λ)	Item Reliability (λ^2)	CR	AVE
Job Stress	JS1	0.81	0.66	0.91	0.68
	JS2	0.84	0.71		
	JS3	0.79	0.62		
Psychological Capital	PC1	0.83	0.69	0.92	0.7
	PC2	0.87	0.76		
	PC3	0.82	0.67		
	PC4	0.85	0.72		
Perceived Organisational Support	POS1	0.8	0.64	0.9	0.66
	POS2	0.85	0.72		
	POS3	0.82	0.67		
Quality of Work Life	'QWL' 1	0.88	0.77	0.93	0.72
	'QWL' 2	0.84	0.71		
	'QWL' 3	0.82	0.67		

Note: λ = Standardised factor loading; λ^2 = Item reliability; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted.

Source: Compiled by Authors'

All constructs exceed recommended thresholds ($CR > 0.70$; $AVE > 0.50$), confirming convergent validity. The psychometric properties of the measurement model were examined by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). All indicators showed satisfactory psychometric properties. The standardised factor loadings ranged from 0.70 to 0.91, which was above the suggested value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019; Kline, 2023). The reliability of the items (λ^2) ranged from 0.49 to 0.83, indicating that a large proportion of the variance in each retained indicator was explained. The values of the Composite Reliability (CR) ranged from 0.89 to 0.94, indicating good internal consistency, and the values of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ranged from 0.55 to 0.72, indicating sufficient convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

5.5. Discriminant Validity

Table 7: Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Construct	Job Stress	'PsyCap'	POS	'QWL'
Job Stress	0.825			
Psychological Capital	0.52	0.837		
Perceived Organisational Support	0.48	0.56	0.812	

Construct	Job Stress	‘PsyCap’	POS	‘QWL’
Quality of Work Life	0.43	0.61	0.58	0.849

Source: Compiled by Authors’

Diagonal elements (bolded) are the square root of Average Variance Extracted ($\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$). Discriminant validity is established when the square root of the AVE of each construct is higher than its correlations with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

5.6. Structural Model (SEM Results)

Table 8: Structural Model Fit

Fit Index	Value
χ^2	512.34
Df	210
CFI	0.93
TLI	0.94
RMSEA	0.058

Source: Compiled by Authors’

The structural model demonstrates acceptable fit.

Table 9: Structural Path Results

Hypothesis	Structural Path	Standardised Coefficient (β)	Significance	Decision
H1	JS $\rightarrow$ ‘PsyCap’	-0.42	$p < 0.001$	Supported
H2	‘PsyCap’ $\rightarrow$ ‘QWL’	0.48	$p < 0.001$	Supported
H3	JS $\rightarrow$ ‘QWL’	-0.31	$p < 0.01$	Supported

Source: Compiled by Authors’

Job stress significantly reduces psychological capital and ‘QWL’, while ‘PsyCap’ positively influences ‘QWL’.

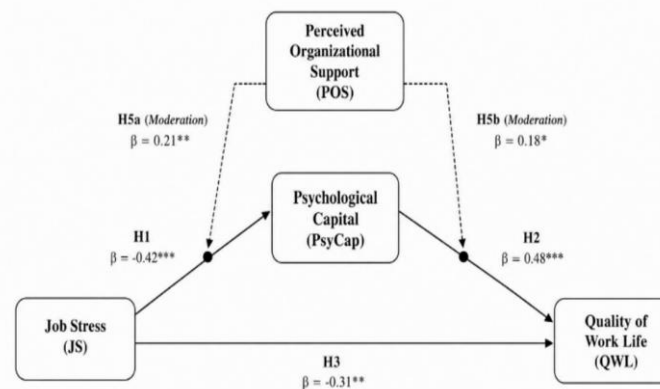


Figure 2: The SEM structural model with the standardised route coefficients

Note: $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$, $**p < 0.001$

Source: Compiled by Authors’

The above structural model depicts the direct, mediation and moderation relationships between POS, ‘PsyCap’, job stress and ‘QWL’. It suggests that job stress negatively affects psychological capital significantly ($\beta = -0.42$, $p < 0.001$). It also negatively affects the quality of work life substantially ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.01$). Hence, high work-related expectations might negatively impact the overall work experience and well-being of an employee.

Besides, ‘PsyCap’ had a notable positive influence on work-life quality ($\beta = 0.48, p < 0.001$). This basically means that those with stronger psychological resources are better suited to face the demands of their professions. This finding is in line with recent research that argues ‘PsyCap’ is an important institutional resource that enhances employee flexibility, engagement at work, and general well-being at work (Hassanein et al., 2025). The model has also demonstrated that ‘PsyCap’ has a mediating role.

The interaction effect between perceived organisational support and job stress ($\beta=0.21, p<0.01$) suggests that organisational support significantly moderates the negative effects of stress on psychological capital. The interaction effect between psychological capital and perceived organisational support is significant ($\beta = 0.18, p < 0.05$), indicating that the supportive organisational context enhances the positive effect of ‘PsyCap’ on quality of work life. These findings are consistent with recent reports highlighting the relevance of recognition-based work environments and positive institutional climates to promote employee resilience and well-being (Agarwal & Soni, 2024; Martins et al., 2025). The structural model demonstrates that organisational conditions together with individual psychological resources influence employee well-being. The findings, therefore, support a relational perspective where job demands, psychological resources and organisational support systems interact to provide a high-quality work life. The picture depicts the standardised structural relations between ‘PsyCap’, quality of work life and job stress.

5.7. Mediation Analysis

Bootstrapping (5000 resamples) was used to test mediation.

Table 10: Mediation Results

Path	Indirect Effect	95% CI	Result
JS → ‘PsyCap’ → ‘QWL’	-0.20	[-0.29, -0.12]	Significant

Source: Compiled by Authors’

The confidence interval does not include zero, indicating that ‘PsyCap’ partially mediates the relationship between occupational stress and ‘QWL’. Similar results were also obtained by Chung et al. (2022).

5.8. Moderation Analysis

Table 11: Moderation Results

Interaction	β	Result
JS $\times$ POS → ‘PsyCap’	0.21**	Supported
‘PsyCap’ $\times$ POS → ‘QWL’	0.18*	Supported

($p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.01$);

Source: Compiled by Authors’

Perceived organisational support minimises the negative effect of job stress on ‘PsyCap’, and enhances the positive effect of ‘PsyCap’ on ‘QWL’.

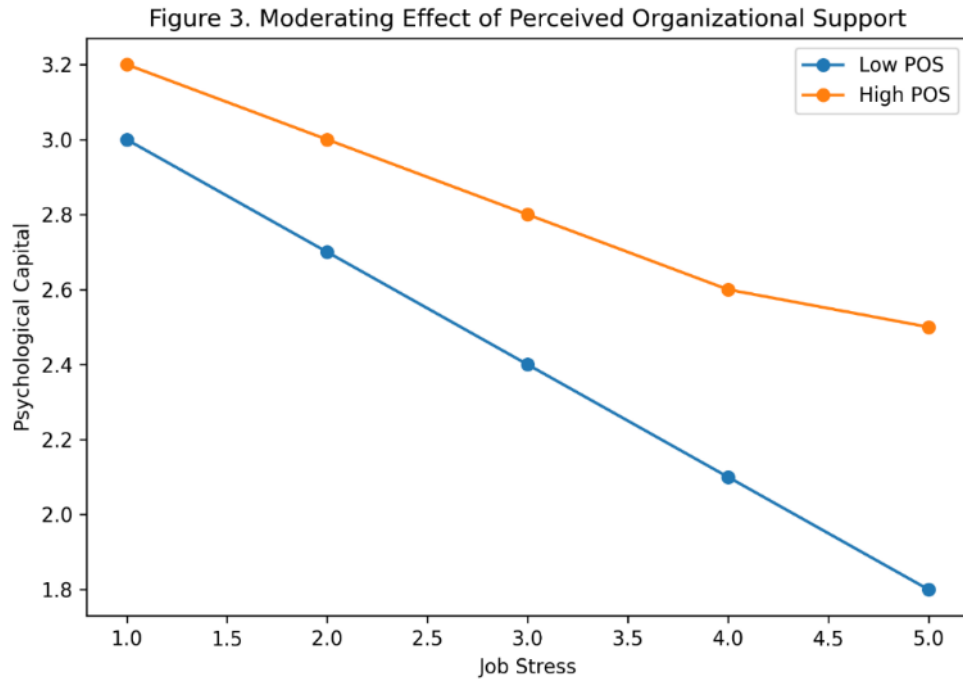


Figure 3: Moderation Plot

Source: Compiled by Authors'

The above figure shows the buffering effect of perceived organisational support on the relationship between job stress and 'PsyCap'.

5.9. Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Table 12: Hypothesis Summary

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	JS → 'PsyCap'	Supported
H2	'PsyCap' → 'QWL'	Supported
H3	JS → 'QWL'	Supported
H4	Mediation	Supported
H5a	Moderation (JS → 'PsyCap')	Supported
H5b	Moderation ('PsyCap' → 'QWL')	Supported

Source: Compiled by Authors'

6. Discussion

This study examined how job stress influences faculty members' quality of work life through Psychological Capital ('PsyCap') and how Perceived Organisational Support (POS) shapes these relationships within an evidence-based HRM framework. The findings show that employee well-being in higher education is not just a function of individual psychological capacities but a function of the interplay between personal resources and organisational support systems. The study contributes to the existing HRM literature by combining Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory and Social Exchange Theory (SET) to show that psychological resources and supportive organisational environments are complementary mechanisms to protect employees from the adverse effects of workplace stress.

The negative relationship of job stress with 'PsyCap' is consistent with COR Theory that enduring job demands gradually deplete employees' valuable psychological resources (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). Increased work demands from rising teaching loads, research expectations, administrative responsibilities and digital transformation in higher

education have led to stress becoming a structural organisational issue rather than an individual experience (Kundi et al., 2021; Watermeyer et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2026). The results therefore support the emerging HRM perspective that Psychological Capital ('PsyCap') is not a static personal attribute but a developable organisational resource. Evidence-based HR practices such as mentoring, coaching, supportive leadership, and continuous learning play a critical role in strengthening the psychological resources of employees and enhancing their capacity to cope with workplace challenges (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017; Newman et al., 2020; Halbesleben et al., 2023). From a Strategic HRM perspective, the safeguarding of employees' psychological resources is essential to sustain organisational capability and institutional performance (Delery & Roumpi, 2017).

Moreover, the positive relationship between 'PsyCap' and quality of work life further underscores the strategic importance of investing in employees' psychological resources. Those faculty who report higher levels of hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy are better able to deal with challenging work environments and hold positive appraisals of their work experiences. This finding is in line with previous studies that have shown that 'PsyCap' is related to employee well-being, engagement and adaptive work behaviour (Karatepe et al., 2022; Hassanein et al., 2025). Importantly, the present study contributes to this literature by embedding 'PsyCap' within an evidence-based HRM framework, proposing that psychological resources may be developed systematically through organisational interventions, rather than as individual traits. The evidence supports Sustainable HRM, which suggests that long-term investment in employee capability and well-being drives organisational sustainability (Kramar, 2022).

The mediation analysis also provides theoretical insight by showing the impact of job stress on quality of work life through 'PsyCap'. Workplace stress not only has a direct negative effect. It gradually drains off the internal psychological resources of employees, which ultimately reduces their overall quality of work life. This finding extends COR Theory by empirically identifying 'PsyCap' as an important resource transmission mechanism linking workplace demands to employee well-being. It also adds to evidence-based HRM in that it indicates that interventions aimed at enhancing 'PsyCap' – such as resilience training, coaching, mentoring and developmental feedback – can mitigate the negative consequences of workplace stress even when organisational pressures cannot be eliminated entirely (Guest, 2017; Halbesleben et al., 2023).

One of the most important contributions of this study is the moderating role of Perceived Organisational Support. The findings indicate that supportive organisational environments mitigate the adverse effect of job stress on 'PsyCap' and enhance the positive effect of 'PsyCap' on quality of work life concurrently. HR initiatives such as equitable workload allocation, mentoring, recognition programmes, professional development opportunities, supportive supervision and flexible work arrangements are indicative of organisational commitment to employee well-being, which in turn promotes employees' reciprocation with greater resilience, engagement and positive work attitudes (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Kurtessis et al., 2017;

Caesens et al., 2020). These findings also corroborate recent research on Sustainable HRM that emphasises the role of supportive work environments in enhancing employee resilience and contributing to long-term organisational performance (Martins et al., 2025).

In higher education, where faculty members are critical intellectual capital, it is likely that evidence-based HR policies that reduce excessive job demands, increase 'PsyCap' and improve organisational support simultaneously will lead to a better employee experience, higher retention, increased engagement and sustainable institutional performance.

7. Theoretical Contributions

In several important ways, this study adds to the evidence-based HRM literature. Firstly, it contributes to Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory by revealing Psychological Capital ('PsyCap') as an important personal resource mediating the relationship between job stress and employees' Quality of Work Life ('QWL'). The study specifically demonstrates that 'PsyCap' serves as a mediating psychological mechanism through which job stress influences 'QWL', while Perceived Organisational Support (POS) serves as a contextual organisational resource that reinforces these relationships. It integrates mediation and moderation in a single framework, thus providing a more holistic explanation of employee well-being than previous studies, which have considered these constructs separately.

Secondly, the findings contribute to Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory by highlighting that 'PsyCap' is not just an individual psychological asset but also a developable organisational resource that can be enhanced through evidence-based HR practices such as mentoring, coaching, supportive leadership and employee development initiatives.

Third, the study extends the Social Exchange Theory by showing that positive organisational climate enhances employees' capacity to leverage their psychological resources, thus positioning POS as a strategic organisational resource and not just an employee perception.

Finally, the study contributes to evidence-based HRM by providing empirical evidence from higher education institutions that combines individual psychological resources and organisational support mechanisms to inform HR decision-making. The findings suggest that employee well-being is best understood as the outcome of dynamic interplay between personal and organisational resources and provide a theoretically grounded framework for the design of integrated HR interventions that not only reduce job stress but also develop psychological capital and increase sustainable organisational performance.

8. Practical Implications

The findings have important implications for evidence-based HRM, showing that enhancing the quality of work life for employees requires integrated HR strategies to simultaneously reduce job stress, strengthen psychological resources, and create supportive organisational environments. Higher education HR managers should apply evidence-based interventions, including structured mentoring programmes, supportive supervisory practices, comprehensive onboarding, continuous professional development, and resilience-building initiatives to enhance employees' Psychological Capital.

In addition, organisations should enhance employees' Perceived Organisational Support through transparent recognition and reward systems, fair distribution of workload, flexible working arrangements where possible, employee assistance and counselling programmes, and clear career development opportunities. Such HR practices reflect the organisation's commitment to employee well-being, reinforcing positive exchange relationships and allowing employees to better manage workplace stress.

Lastly, the results indicate that university leaders consistently track faculty stress levels and assess the impact of well-being initiatives through employee feedback and HR analytics to promote ongoing enhancement. Embedding these evidence-based HR practices into institutional policies can improve faculty well-being, increase employee engagement and retention, and develop a resilient and productive workforce in higher education. Such interventions add to the quality of work life for individuals as well as sustainable organisational performance and long-term institutional effectiveness. These findings also support the use of HR analytics to track faculty well-being and assess the effectiveness of evidence-based HR interventions over time.

9. Conclusion

This paper has studied the relationships among job stress, psychological capital, perceived organisational support and quality of work life in higher education. The findings suggest that improving the quality of work life for employees is not just a matter of reducing job stress. Evidence-based HR practices should be used to develop employees' psychological resources and strengthen organisational support simultaneously through integrated support systems in HR departments. Investing in supportive HR policies can help organisations improve employee well-being and long-term organisational sustainability.

The results show that employee well-being should not be seen as the duty of individual workers to regulate or be resilient. Quality of work life is instead produced through an organisational co-creation process in which institutional support systems, recognition practices, and work structures determine the extent to which psychological resources may be sustained and converted into pleasant work experiences.

The paper stresses the importance of addressing workplace stress at a structural level and at the same time increasing psychological resources and organisational support. By combining these dimensions, organisations, especially in higher education, create an environment where employees can find their employment manageable, meaningful and sustainable.

10. Limitations and Future Research

This research has a number of limitations. First, the cross-sectional design restricts causal inference; a longitudinal research design can be used in future studies. Second, there is a risk that self-reported data can be biased, but procedural corrective measures were employed. Third, convenience sampling might restrict the ability to generalise.

Future studies may also capture other organisational variables (including leadership and culture) as well as study the longitudinal interactions of psychological capital, and compare across studies across sectors to enhance the external validity of such results.

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