



Academic Employees' Understandings of Workplace Well-Being in Ghana: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

being a thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in the  
University of Hull

by

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## **Dedication**

To my precious and most wonderful possessions:

*Deborah and Damita*

Your self-sacrificing love and care overwhelm me and I remain thankful forever!!!

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# Publications and Conferences

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## Conference

The 2nd European Conference of Health Workforce Education & Research on 09-10 January 2019 in Dublin, Ireland. Mr. Dudley Ofori's contribution "Understanding Higher Education Academic Employees Workplace Well-being in Ghana" was presented in the context of the Session "Intercultural Education". Mr. David Smith, Director; International Network for Health Workforce Education.



### CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE

This is to certify that

**Mr. Dudley Ofori**

has attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> European Conference of Health Workforce Education & Research on 09-10 January 2019 in Dublin, Ireland.

Mr. Dudley Ofori's contribution "Understanding Higher Education Academic Employees Workplace Well-being In Ghana" was presented in the context of the Session "Intercultural Education".



**Mr. David Smith**, Director  
International Network for Health Workforce Education



# **Abstract**

## **Aim**

This study aimed to use eudaimonic theory to investigate how academic employees in Ghana understand workplace well-being, what well-being means to them and what changes have taken place over time.

## **Method**

The well-being experience, views and stories of academic employees from three public universities in Ghana were investigated using semi-structured interviews together with an interview guide involving eighteen academics. The study adopted a qualitative research approach, and the data were analysed using the Interpretative Phenomenology Approach (IPA).

## **Results**

The results suggest that academic employees understood workplace well-being from both the negative and positive perspectives of the eudaimonic theory. The sociocultural aspect of well-being together with several workplace well-being components were highlighted in the academics' stories with commonly used phrases such as *society expects us to behave in a certain way*, *our culture frowns on complaints at work* and *we are brought up not to challenge our leaders*. The results further suggest that depending on the context of work, meeting work targets, delays in promotion, inadequate resources, student progress, identities and research collaboration with colleagues can act as both negative and positive assets for well-being.

## **Conclusion**

This study indicates that the socio-cultural facet of well-being is dominant in the experience of academics and that it is important not only for a mindset change but also for a complete understanding of workplace well-being issues. Additionally, any plans to introduce workplace well-being programs and policies at the workplace in Ghana should be aligned with employees' mindset changes (cultural beliefs), the work environment and the employees themselves. The results have placed the problem in a developing country context and are grounded in the experiences of academic employees, supported by the eudaimonic theory and reflect other contextual factors, including cultural beliefs and structural needs.

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## **Abbreviations**

HEWE: Higher Education Work Environment

HEIs: Higher Education Institutions

HE: Higher Education

IPA: Interpretative Phenomenology Approach

UG: University of Ghana

UCC: University of Cape Coast

KNUST: University of Science and Technology

# Chapter 1 Introduction to the Study

## 1.1 Overview of Workplace Well-Being in Higher Education Institutions

Globally, workplace well-being in higher education institutions (HEIs, hereafter) has become a major topic of debate among academics. The reason is that the sector is characterised with work pressures, such as work overload, long working hours, the pressure to meet deadlines, research supervision and publication responsibilities. The effects of these pressures on individuals are job dissatisfaction, high levels of absenteeism and non-commitment to their institution (Tytherleigh et al., 2005, 2007; Winfield et al., 2003, 2008; Sang et al., 2015).

Also, the higher education sector has become more business-oriented, with employers paying attention to profits, work outcomes, higher student enrolment, students' progression and the quality assurance process all contributing to the pressures (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; DeShields et al., 2005; Johnson, 2019). For instance, Winfield et al. (2003) referred to the unfriendly nature of the higher education work environment, which is due to the workload and the pressure on academics to secure research funding, publish and meet work targets. Tytherleigh et al. (2005) also raised similar issues about work pressure and its impact on the quality of teaching, health and the general well-being of academics. These pressures are occasionally expressed as stressors and negative workplace well-being attributes (Tytherleigh et al., 2003, 2005). These concerns from academics demand the attention of employers, stakeholders and leaders of higher institutions through policies and strategies to reduce work stressors (Atindanbila, 2011; Sang et al., 2013; Jung & Jung, 2014).

Over the years, the higher education sector worldwide has seen many changes with related challenges. The sub-section below introduces the major changes

that have occurred in the higher education sector over the last two decades and how the changes have led to several challenges.

## **1.2 Global Changes and Challenges in Higher Education Institutions**

The global changes that have occurred in the higher education sector over the last two decades range from educational reforms, increased tuition fees, financial difficulties to support infrastructural projects, addressing students' expectations and promoting inclusive learning (Atteh, 1996; Enders, 2004; Shin & Harman, 2009; Aleixo, 2018).

The UK, for example, had its fair share of these changes and related challenges in the early part of 2010 in the area of increasing tuition fees in England, the debate about the debt that awaits graduates after their studies, and the impact it has on them and their families (Dearden et al., 2011; Rothstein and Rouse, 2011). For example, Jones (2010) conducted a study on managing student expectations and the impact of top-up tuition fees in HEIs in England using a survey. Jones found that students expect more from their university experience due to the increase in tuition fees. Also, students saw themselves as consumers and therefore expected a high value for money as they had become more outcome-focused with their studies. Jones explained that maintaining a balance between what students' needs and ensuring that they get the best experience to enable them to mature as self-directed students. This has become a challenge for HEIs because they must do so without compromising on the quality and integrity of higher education.

A report on UK university students' experiences of enhancing employability in 2007 found that 65-70% of respondents were only motivated to attend university

if their qualifications after school increased their chances of being employed (Unite, 2007). The Unite finding was reinforced by a previous study conducted by Pritchard (2006) on German and UK students, which also revealed that UK university students were more money-oriented than their German colleagues. The UK students expected their university courses to prepare them for the world of work in a way that would earn them high salaries.

Aside from the issues of high tuition fees, there has been pressure from the UK government on universities to increase participation and widen access to higher education (Scott, 2006). Similar policies on widening student participation in higher education have been implemented in countries such as Australia, South Africa and Ghana (Jones & Lau, 2010; Mkwanzani & Mukwambo, 2019). Although some progress has been made to ensure that higher education is easily accessible to students who have been regularly left out (black and minority ethnicities), widening participation is still one of the main challenges facing HEIs (Jones & Lau, 2010; Mkwanzani & Mukwambo, 2019; Younger et al., 2019). This challenge has been attributed to the lack of robust and effective policies in the UK and other countries like the USA, Australia, South Africa and Ghana.

The implementation of such policies is likely to provide university graduates with the required jobs, skills and financial stability and opens up the higher education sector for equal opportunities. Also, it provides a wide array of choices and opportunities to the underprivileged in society. Aside from equal opportunity and choice, institutions may have to go beyond in supporting the underprivileged to enter the labour market and grow economically, although this appears not to be the case (Vignoles & Murray, 2016). Similarly, with the current increase in technological development, much attention has been paid to online teaching

and support, which has again challenged lecturers and their practices in the higher education sector (Mathew & Ebelelloanya, 2016; Palvia et al., 2018; Rasheed et al., 2020). All these have led to rapid policy changes and challenges in the sector. It is, therefore, important to understand the changes in the higher education sector and the effect of these changes on the well-being of academic employees. Previous studies on the workplace well-being of academic employees concentrated solely on the work demands (meeting targets, increased productivity and work efficiency) of employees in the higher education work environment, ignoring other equally important aspects, such as individual progress at work, meaning and understanding (Gillepie et al., 2001).

Workplace well-being context and perceptions have been addressed in terms of antecedents of stress and well-being in the positive organizational behaviour (POB) and organizational psychology (OP) literature. In terms of stress, it is believed that certain occupations (the police, health professionals and teachers) have specific stressors (Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2011; Juniper et al., 2011). Findings from these studies suggest that public service sector employees experience more stress in their work. Other scholars have called for the recognition of economic, occupational, organizational, and departmental factors in exploring the phenomena of organizational behaviour and employee well-being (Bamberger, 2008; Johns, 2006; Rousseau & Fried, 2001).

Ryff (1989) incorporated the growth dimension of human needs as a component of the well-being experience in the eudaimonic well-being concept. Other components of the concepts include positive relationships at work, experiencing purpose in life, autonomy, personal growth, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1989). However, there is relatively little exploration of the growth dimension of well-being beyond stress and negative experiences (van Dick & Haslam, 2013;

Jetten et al., 2012). The growth dimension of well-being is not only likely to influence how individuals can maintain their well-being (coping through challenges) but also how people understand what well-being is and what the components of their experiences are. Based on the growth perspective of the individual well-being experience, this study set out to explore further what individual workplace well-being encompasses and how academics understand their workplace well-being with a focus on the higher education sector in Ghana.

### **1.3 Research Context**

In the Ghanaian higher education sector, concerns about work pressure and its effect on worker well-being have been raised by some academic employees. This has resulted in some academics expressing job dissatisfaction in the sector, similar to what is happening in other parts of the world (Akyeampong, 2010). However, not much is known about the support systems in terms of policies and centres to reduce the negative impact of work pressure on employees' well-being in the HEIs in Ghana. Also, how workplace well-being is understood in the Ghanaian higher education work context and the meaning the employees assign to it is unknown.

Research on workplace well-being issues (work overload, stress and other factors) which affect academic employee well-being is limited in the context of Ghanaian HEIs. Studies found in Ghana were all based on large-scale statistical analysis (Atindanbila, 2011; Agyemang & Ofei, 2013; Fatunde, 2014; Addison & Yankyera, 2015) and surveys based on different variables, and they did not clearly discuss the well-being of academic employees in the higher education work environment in Ghana; they either selected one faculty within a university or concentrated on primary and secondary school teachers' work-

related stressors and their impact on well-being. This study builds on these previous studies and attempts to bridge the gaps, methodological limitations identified and recent structural changes (a ban on academic recruitment). Qualitative studies that look at people's experiences with attention to their stories to make sense of the workplace issues have not been found in the higher education literature in Ghana. Further, studies that looked at higher education academic employees' workplace well-being issues globally were also quantitatively inspired to some extent (see more on the literature review in chapter 2: the research gap). This study recognises the studies reviewed earlier on academics' workplace well-being issues in the higher education sector in Ghana through the quantitative lens and aims to contribute qualitatively by focusing on the lived experience of academics in the Ghanaian higher education sector.

On one hand, Ghana is a country which believes in quality educational practices and compares its educational standards to the rest of the world, especially the UK and the USA, and its education system is considered one to which other neighbouring West African countries look up to (Adu-Agyem & Osei-Poku, 2012). This is important, however, the lack of attention to academic employees' workplace issues is likely to undermine the quality of education and teaching standards. Also, academic employee workplace well-being and wellness concerns have not been adequately raised in the workplace well-being literature (Delahunty & O'Shea, 2019). This gap in research calls for further exploration as to why academics' work well-being issues have not been raised in Ghana and whether employees' well-being is important to university employers.

To better understand the importance of workplace well-being to academic employees and what this means to them in Ghana, there is a need to

understand the two well-being concepts, namely hedonic, which is about individual satisfaction and happiness at work, and eudaimonic, which is a person's progress and flourishing at work. Details of the differences and similarities of these two models are provided in the literature review section in chapter 2. The focus on academic employees' workplace well-being, the choice to understand this phenomenon within the higher education sector, and the few empirical studies in this area in Ghana motivated this study.

#### **1.4 Motivation for the Study**

Almost every research is driven by the researcher's personal interest and experience as well as issues that either intrigue or trouble them (Hertz, 1997). This is very true as my interest and personal experience led me to explore how academic employees understand workplace well-being issues within higher education institutions in Ghana. This was influenced by my background in academia in the UK and my work experience in a teaching hospital in Ghana. During my working days in a hospital pharmacy in Ghana, I came across people working 48-hour shifts in an emergency unit in the hospital and I was always fascinated by how some people kept going, smiling and acting as if things could not be any better even though they had not had more than 3 hours of continuous sleep nor had sat down for a decent meal. I also saw some of the staff arrive to begin their shift clearly in dread of what lay ahead and beginning every sentence with a complaint. Some of these complaints were about work pressures and the stressful nature of their job, to the extent of others resigning because of continuous work stress and other health-related complications.

At this same hospital, I was privileged to be attending heads of department meetings, where I received first-hand information on the hospital management's

operations and strategies. During these meetings, much of the discussions centred on worker efficiency, meeting departmental targets in terms of profit, and client satisfaction (being polite to clients and reducing waiting times). Not much was heard or said about the employees, for example, their mental, emotional or physical well-being.

Having travelled to the UK and worked in higher and further education (HE and FE hereafter) institutions, I was surprised at the extent to which employee workplace well-being programs were being discussed, for example in seminars and conferences with training programs organised by some employers to support and address their employees' workplace well-being issues (Baicker et al., 2010; Goetzel et al., 2014; Shaw, 2019; Chau et al., 2019). This led me to question why employee workplace well-being issues were never on the agenda in the Ghanaian work environment and whether it was an issue which needed exploring. Whether in the setting of healthcare delivery or the person working in a shop, the teacher, the police officer, we have all seen the very satisfied and very grumpy workers. This made me wonder what workplace well-being means. Is it based on external factors (e.g. high salary, beautiful offices) or internal factors (e.g. the joy of imparting knowledge to a new generation) and what influences it? What is well-being in the first place?

Further searching on how employees understand workplace well-being in Ghana, I found a body of research on my topic that concentrated mostly on non-academic employees (administrators and the frontline staff) in HEIs. This raised the question of why workplace well-being studies found in Ghana mostly focus on frontline staff and administrators. The only study found on higher education academic employees' workplace well-being in Ghana was conducted by Addison and Yankyera, (2015) in one HEI in Ghana. This study, however,

separated male and female academics and investigated their workplace well-being issues. This raised further questions personally for me on how academic employees are classified in HEIs and how important their well-being is to their employers without separating them in terms of their roles or gender. More importantly, the work environment and conditions under which people work in Ghana characterise a typical developing country in Africa. Conducting this study in Ghana, therefore, depicts a descriptive image of the issues in a developing country context. For Ghana in particular, this first study is an opportunity to start the discourse on the importance of workplace well-being for employees in general, starting with academic employees.

There are many questions and theories which have attempted to explain the concept of workplace well-being. The motivation for this study thus comes from four perspectives. The first is to investigate the underlying problem in the higher education sector, identify its related consequences, and provide suggestions to address the problem. The second is to contribute to the debate on workplace well-being issues in higher academic institutions with experiences from Ghana. The third motivation is the intention to introduce the concept of workplace well-being in many sectors of the economy of Ghana. The fourth comes from the desire to contribute to efforts aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and productivity of workers from the micro policy level to all sectors with evidence from HEIs.

## **1.5 Statement of the Problem**

Briefly, the problem under investigation is that there are concerns among academic employees in HEIs that work pressures, such as long working hours, constant leadership changes and workload, are negatively impacting on their health and well-being. However, the extent to which workplace well-being is understood in Ghana by HE academic employees is unknown. Besides, studies on public universities in Ghana shows that work stress is on the rise among academics due to work pressure (Atindanbila, 2011; Agyemang & Ofei, 2013; Fatunde, 2014; Addison & Yankyera, 2015), yet not much has been done by university authorities and the government to investigate the impact of work stress on employees' well-being in HEIs.

The limited number of studies on employees' workplace well-being issues in Ghana, especially qualitative research which targets academic employees' views and experience and the meaning of workplace well-being, means that these have not been properly understood or addressed by employers and the government through policy. Thus, conducting this study in the field of workplace well-being in Ghana is the first bold attempt to create awareness of workplace well-being issues for higher education academic employees. This will help to demonstrate the importance of worker well-being to employers and the nation in terms of productivity, work efficiency and healthy living.

## **1.6 The Rationale for the Study**

Academics (lecturers and researchers) working in HEIs experience work-related pressures, such as work overload, long working hours, frequent leadership changes, the pressure to meet deadlines, research supervision and publication responsibilities, than their non-academic colleagues (Jung & Jung, 2013; Sang et al., 2015). These pressures are likely to impact negatively on their lives, which could lead to job dissatisfaction, high levels of absenteeism and non-commitment to their institution, as shown, for example, in Sang et al. (2013). This demonstrates the negative consequences of workload on academics in the changing higher education sector occupation (Vostal, 2015; Locke et al., 2016).

This study focuses on understanding the views and experiences of academic employees' (lecturers and researchers) workplace well-being in public higher education institutions in Ghana. Public universities are of interest in this study because they were built to train people for the human resources and economic development needs of the nation. However, the well-being of the academics who are tasked with this work is overlooked as they are overwhelmed with work overload alongside a ban on recruitment, frequent leadership changes and high student numbers. This is an important research endeavour for the following reasons: the lack of employee workplace well-being issues is likely to undermine education quality and standards, while the current gap in the well-being and organisational psychology literature is limited in exploring the growth and meaning dimension of individual workplace well-being. Also, the majority of existing research on how individuals understand and experience their well-being alongside the meaning they derive from their work is limited in Ghanaian HEIs.

## **1.7 Aim of Research**

This study aims to investigate the understanding, views and experiences of academic employees' (lecturers and researchers) on workplace well-being in public higher academic institutions in Ghana. The study focuses on three public universities in Ghana and qualitatively explores the phenomenon from theoretical, policy and practise perspectives.

## **1.8 Research Questions**

The aim of this research will be achieved through a lead research question together with two sub-research questions.

Main research question:

1. How do academic employees understand well-being in the workplace and what does that mean to them?

To answer the above question, the study examines the following sub-questions:

2. What constitutes well-being in the workplace?
3. How do changes in the higher education sector over time affect employees' well-being?

A study proposition is designed to support the research question to check whether the evidence collected for the study confirms the proposition or not.

## **1.9 Study Propositions:**

These propositions are deduced from the research questions above.

### **(1) Research question 1**

(a) Employees' understanding of workplace well-being can vary based on context and environment.

(b) The nature of work can influence what workplace well-being means to people.

### **(2) Research question 2**

(c) Individuals' identities and sense of belonging can constitute their workplace well-being.

(d) Cultural values and norms can negatively influence what constitutes a person's workplace well-being.

(e) Political interference can negatively influence employees' workplace well-being.

(f) Leadership and organisational changes can influence employees' well-being at work both positively and negatively.

This study provides a context to understand the workplace well-being issues in Ghanaian universities. It does so by looking at workplace well-being issues in HEIs and their relationship with well-being components. Knowing these provides a clearer understanding of how individuals experience workplace well-being based on their organisation and geographical location, and to make a judgment on whether the issues found in Ghana are similar to those in developed countries. It further helps to understand the impact of the issues on individual lives, performance and their relations with well-being components (Rousseau & Fried, 2001).

To develop an existing understanding of what workplace well-being means, this study uses the research questions presented earlier to investigate the important components of people's well-being by asking academics who work, i.e. lecturers and researchers, for their understanding of well-being and what it means to them. Again, it explores whether the thrive and progress dimension, which is part of the eudaimonic well-being concept, is communicated in the academic employees' explanation. Further, it explores how the academics' work context influences how they describe, explain and experience well-being. The research design is outlined in detail after the review of the current literature in the next chapter.

### **1.10 The Significance of the Study**

The rationale of this study is, first, to understand the views and experiences of academic employees (lecturers and researchers) on workplace well-being in public HEIs in Ghana. This is important because the current knowledge base in positive organisational psychology and behaviour (POP and POB) and the workplace well-being literature is limited in exploring the growth and meaning dimensions of employee workplace well-being in the developing countries context like Ghana. These dimensions are the key components of the individual workplace well-being experience (Steger & Shin, 2012; Huta, 2015).

The importance of understanding employee workplace well-being in Ghana is derived from the fact that the concept is perceived as foreign and "westernised" and that none of the various concepts has been able to explain the multifaceted nature of well-being in a developing country context. The context within which well-being concepts are explored in developing countries like Ghana calls for targeted effort towards awareness. This should be especially with regards to human, health and economic development. This study will contribute to the

body of knowledge of academic resources in this subject area since the limited research on the subject poses challenges in understanding the concept for researchers, academics and students in HEIs in Ghana.

Also, in chapter 2 section C, it is shown that studies that investigated the views and experiences of employee workplace well-being in Ghanaian HEIs are limited in the qualitative research approach. In addition, the well-being literature has also failed to recognise both the socio-cultural context and personal identity component of one's "self". Thus, to recognise the complete identity of a person at work, it is important to assess each individual using a lens that captures the resources available to them at work, their work environment and how that impacts on their "self" and work.

## **1.11 Location of the Study – Ghana**

### **1.11.1 Geography**

Ghana is a country in Africa, located along the western Atlantic coast. Ghana is not far from the north of the equator, see figure A, and shares boundaries with countries such as Togo in the east, Burkina Faso in the north, La Côte d'Ivoire in the west and the ocean (Gulf of Guinea), in the south. Previously, Ghana was called the Gold Coast because the country is rich in gold across different parts of its 239,460 km<sup>2</sup> land area. The pursuit of slaves and gold brought several European merchants, such as the Danes, the Dutch, the Swedes and the English to Ghana. However, the British conquered Ghana's territorial lands and ruled from 1897 to 1957 before Ghana gained independence as the first country in the continent of Africa.

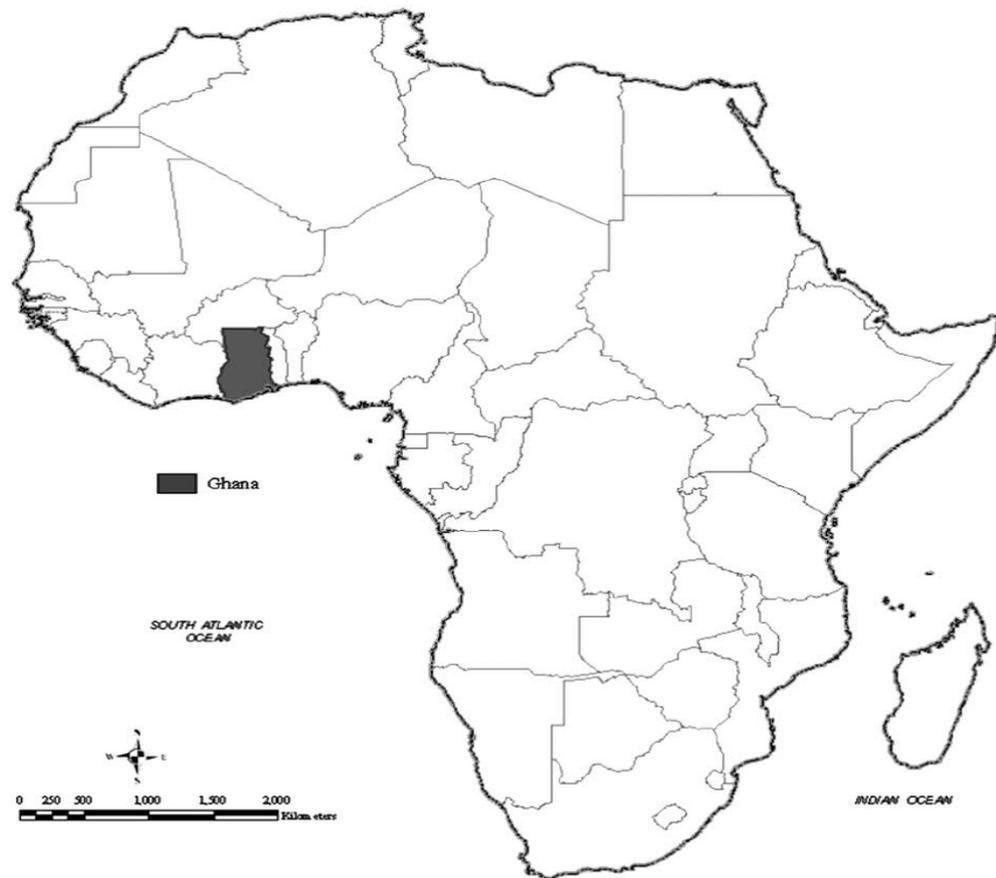


Figure A: Africa map showing the location of Ghana.  
Source: Cape Coast University Cartography Unit, 2009

### 1.11.2 Administration

Ghana is a democratic nation with a relatively stable political history, although it has previously experienced many military regimes under Gen.I.K. Acheampong (1972-1975), Lt. Gen. Fred W.K. Akuffo (1978-1979) and Flt. Lt. Jerry Rawlings (1979-1992). In the 1990s, Ghana joined the other African countries experiencing political liberalisation and started its democratic journey between 1991 and 1992 (Gyimah-Boadi, 2007). This led to the enactment of the country's constitution in 1992, which opened the door to multi-party elections based on the constitution, governed by elected administration. Since 1992, Ghanaian leaders have always been elected through the ballot box and a peaceful transfer of power. This peaceful political environment is important as it is frequently cited as the reason for attracting international students to its HEIs.

Ghana's population as of 2019 is estimated at 31 million people with different ethnicities across its 16 administrative capitals with 212 districts. These districts are further divided into 275 constituencies for electoral purposes. Previously, Ghana had 10 administrative capitals, but this was further divided into 16 in December 2018 through a referendum. The average population growth rate per annum is 2.7%, life expectancy on average is 58 years, the illiteracy rate is 43%, and there are more educated men than educated women. The reason for the low level of literacy is attributed to fewer tertiary institutions to train the needed workforce for the nation. This explains why most people depend on the educated few who are employed for a living. In terms of crime, Ghana has low levels of crime compared to most countries in Africa. This is again an added benefit as more investors prefer to do business in Ghana. The administrative capital of Ghana is Accra and it is the largest city with its first university, called the University of Ghana (UG). The other cities are Kumasi, Cape Coast, Takoradi, Sunyani, Tamale and Tema. These cities have all the facilities of modern cities, such as good hospitals, schools and universities, roads, shopping malls, and airports, and they host about a third of the nation's population. Based on these facilities and services, most of the tertiary institutions (universities and polytechnics) are located in or around these cities. Figure B shows the cities where the higher education institutions selected for this study are located.

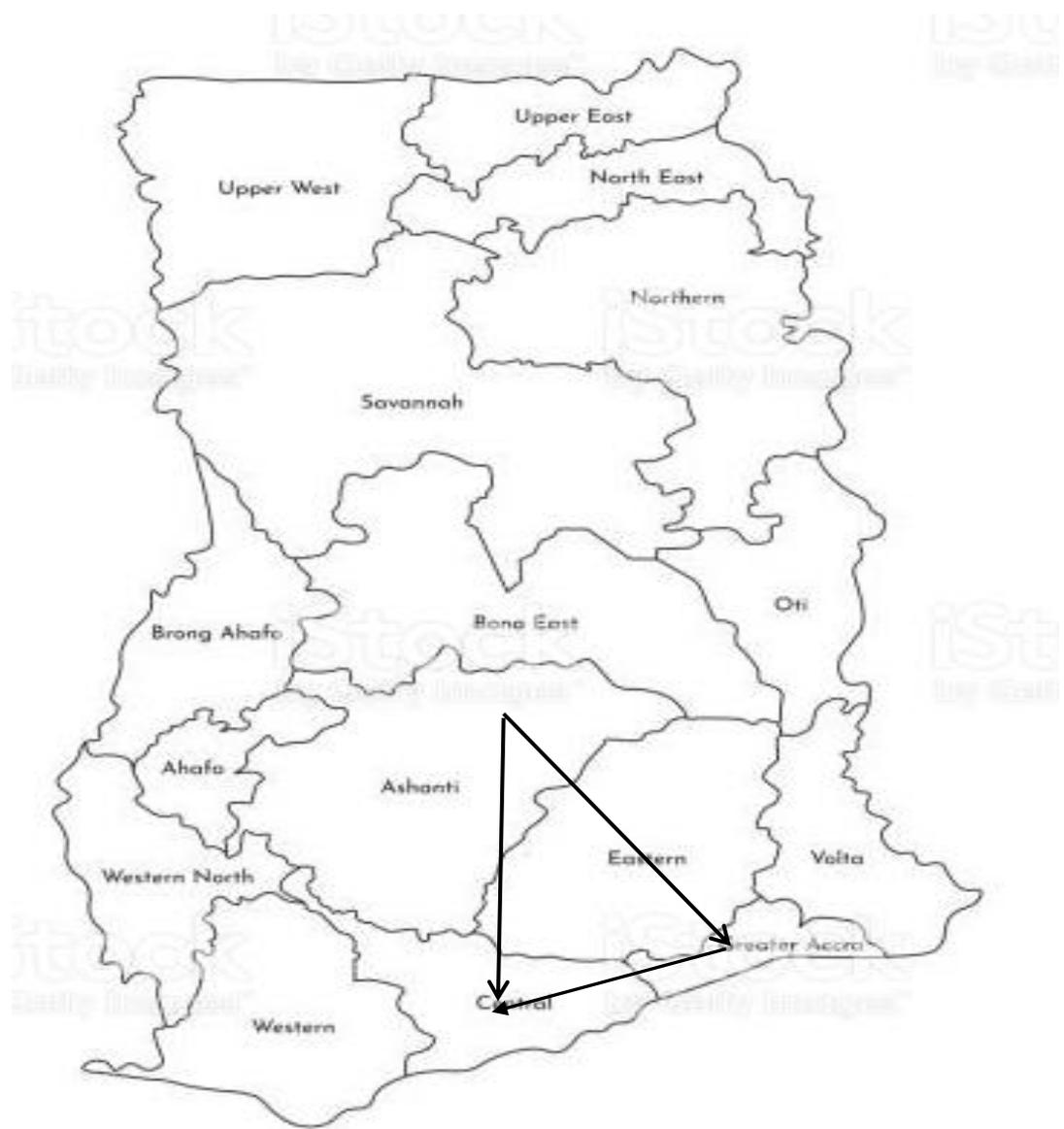


Figure **B**: Ghana map showing the three study sites.

Sources: Author

This study's interest in public universities in Ghana is because of my understanding of the sector and the culture and the desire to contribute to introducing workplace well-being to support higher academic institutions in Ghana through policy.

### **1.11.3 Higher Education Institutions – Ghana**

HEIs (tertiary institutions) in Ghana are made up of universities and university colleges, polytechnics, teacher and nursing training colleges (Yussof & Osman, 2010). The Tertiary Education Statistics Report in 2015 counted 149 accredited institutions across the administrative and municipal capitals in Ghana. Before the referendum in 2018, Ghana had 10 administrative capitals with each having a polytechnic. Ghana has three well-known public universities, namely the University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi, the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in Cape Coast and Ghana's premier university, the University of Ghana (UG) in Accra. As of 2010, the number of public universities has increased to 6, alongside mission and privately own universities.

These institutions all have good infrastructure, such as lecture halls, laboratories and campus accommodation for both local and international students. Ghana's stable political environment and status as an English speaking nation give it an added advantage in attracting international students. However, in terms of local student enrolment, there are more males than females in higher education institution even though females constitute more than 50% of Ghana's population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2005, cited in Yussof and Osman, 2010).

The reason for the low intake of females into universities is attributed to early marriage practices of the girl-child by some communities in Ghana, and where girls are told that their place is the kitchen in society. These actions contribute to the lack of motivations of young women to be educated and go on to university. This appears to suggest that not much has been done by policymakers, stakeholders and the government to close the gap between male and female enrolment. In terms of staff numbers, the higher education sector in Ghana

employs over 6500 employees, with the government spending about 10.6 million cedis (\$1.9 million) annually, representing 48% of national tax revenue in the form of wages and salaries across the various institutions (Ministry of Finance, 2018; Ofori & Antwi, 2020).

#### **1.11.4 Changes and Challenges in Higher Education Institutions – Ghana**

HEIs in Ghana are facing pressure from the government to increase access to HEIs by creating equal opportunities for students to bridge the gap between those living in cities and deprived communities (Abukari & Corner, 2010; Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013). The government has also introduced what is called the “deregulation” of the higher education sector (Johnstone et al., 1998; Johnstone, 2004). This means that individuals, churches and corporate bodies can set up universities and colleges to support public ones. The deregulation strategy, which has been in place for more than a decade, has resulted in an increase in private and mission universities together with new courses to meet demand (Poku et al., 2013; NCTE, 2014). Further, to support the government initiative, the authorities of public universities introduced a “fee-paying system for students”. This simply meant that students who met the university entry requirements but were not offered admission to their chosen courses or specific programmes could still get a place by paying fees (Atuahene, 2008; Johnstone, 2004).

However, these initiatives put forward by the government had their downsides for the management and academic employees in the public universities. These included an increase in student numbers in conjunction with wealth inequalities and resource challenges (Twene, 2014; Lau & Rosen, 2015). Further, after the introduction of the deregulation strategy, the country faced financial challenges, which made the government ask for a loan from the International Monetary

Fund (IMF). One of the key conditions of the IMF loan was for the government to freeze spending on some public sector institutions, including higher education, to save the public purse (Ministry of Finance, 2015). This caused the government to halt the recruitment of new academic employees. This situation has raised a lot of concerns among the existing academic staff as student numbers have increased without a corresponding increase in lecturers and teaching resources. This situation has resulted in some academics working longer hours, losing interest in their profession and having to cope with increased stress levels at work. Aside from the restrictions on recruitment, the HEIs also face external pressures from politicians. For example, politicians appoint their close associates and political party members to key positions in public universities. They facilitate this by introducing policies to frequently change university leaders with less involvement of the academics. This has added to the stress levels already experienced due to low staffing levels. Interestingly, the changes happening in Ghana are not different from what is happening in HEIs globally (Shin & Harman, 2009). See chapter 2, sections A and B for a detail discussion and explanation on the current debate of employee workplace well-being issues.

### **1.12 Scope of the Study**

The focus of the study is on academic employees' understanding of workplace well-being in Ghana. To investigate this phenomenon, three issues run parallel and are examined closely to provide the scope for analysis and discussion. First, current debates on workplace well-being do not address the meaning and growth dimension of employees' well-being in a developing countries context, like Ghana. This study attempts to address that gap in the literature (see chapter 2, sections B and C). Second, the higher education sector in Ghana needs an understanding of workplace well-being issues to be able to design more practical approaches to address them. This means exploring best practices from other countries through an extensive literature review. Third, this research project presents a methodology which acknowledges the incompleteness of current understanding of well-being, its components, and its mechanisms to provide an elaborate approach to addressing the problem.

### **1.13 Operational Definitions and Clarification of Terms**

**Well-being:** The term well-being is multifaceted and a broad construct (Tov, 2018; Diener, 2001; Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Royo & Velazco, 2005; Fisher, 2010; Dodge et al., 2012). The reason is that the term means different things to different people depending on what they seek to achieve in life and at work. In this study, the term is used to mean working with a sense of purpose to achieve personal growth and the desire to manage work challenges for a positive outcome. This definition resonates with the works of Jackson et al. (2007) and Ablett and Jones (2007).

**Constituents and components of well-being:** Researchers have used different constructs to describe and define the components of well-being theories. These

include terms such as pillars, constituents, element, components, subjective and objective (Ryff,1989; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Diener, 2001; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). To clarify these terms and their usage within the well-being paradigm, this study adopts the term constituents to mean components of well-being. Therefore, constituents and components of individual well-being are used interchangeably to mean the same thing.

### **1.14 Major Contributions of the Study**

The study makes contributions in several areas. Firstly, it opens up the discussion on workplace well-being by shifting the argument from perceived knowledge to the reality of knowledge on workplace well-being. The characteristics of well-being and how they impact on performance are also demonstrated in the study – a new area of evidence to inform policy. Under such a scenario, the results from the study provide empirical evidence that could be replicated in other higher academic institutions in the country. Secondly, the study contributes to the understanding of well-being within the micro policy domain of the educational sector in a developing country context. Thirdly, it deepens the understanding of the workplace well-being discourse in a developing country context and provides a framework to help improve the well-being of employees in a higher education environment.

In addition, the study makes the following specific contributions:

- From a theoretical perspective, the study introduces the perspectives of both positive and negative factors of well-being into the existing debates on the well-being nexus and theorizes on a balanced approach to well-being through the improved use of hedonic and eudaimonic frameworks.

- From the perspective of eudaimonic theory, the study introduces the concept of culture (mindset shift) as a key factor that influences workplace well-being in a developing country context. Culture beliefs have been shown as a key enabling factor that enhances workplace well-being and helps shape policy decisions at various levels in the higher educational environment.
- In terms of policy, the study provides the appropriate theoretical foundation and evidence to inform the best policy options for improving the well-being of academic employees in Ghana.
- From the perspective of practice, the study identifies the key structural components of the higher education environment in Ghana that can contribute significantly to improvements in workplace well-being when the leaders have the autonomy to implement major decisions.

### **1.15 Organisation of the Thesis**

The thesis is organized under seven chapters. The introductory chapter provides a background to the study. It covers the definition of the research problem, study objectives and study questions. It also contains a justification for the study, the scope of the study and key definitions and concepts underpinning the topic.

Chapter Two interrogates the literature with a specific focus on workplace well-being in the higher education sector. It highlights the emerging concepts of evidence-based well-being issues and reviews key theoretical arguments in the field of workplace well-being. It also reviews dominant theories and models that

clearly define the subject matter and uses synthesis to develop a conceptual framework to interpret the meaning of the data.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology, including the philosophical underpinnings of the approach to the study. It details the methodology with the justification for the research procedures, data collection mechanisms and ethical considerations.

Chapters Four, Five and Six present the results, analysis and discussion of the data collected in the context of relevant theories and thematic areas (see conceptual framework) and identify patterns of data for each research question.

Chapter Seven is the conclusion and recommendation chapter. It draws conclusions about each research question and the research problem and outlines the implications for theory, policy and practice. It also provides a conclusion and identifies areas for further study. The chapter finally provides a reflection of my PhD journey, experiences, learning and challenges (epilogue). The knowledge gained from conducting this study and engaging with different stories and experiences is described with a critical reflection of the study methodology used.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### Well-being, Higher Education and Work Stressors

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed and sequential review of the literature based on the understanding of academic employees' workplace well-being issues globally. The review consists of three sections. The first section (section A) explores relevant literature in terms of both empirical literature and theories on employee well-being, while it also explores the various aspects of well-being (meanings and components). The chapter begins by presenting the history and background of the term well-being. It then proceeds to highlight the difficulties surrounding the nature and dimensions of well-being, including the social, physical, emotional, intellectual, mental, environmental, vocational and spiritual factors associated with well-being. It examines the dominant theories on well-being from the theoretical viewpoints of Aristotle on the science of happiness (hedonic pursuit) and finding meaning in life (eudaimonic).

The second section (Section B) explores the current and past approaches to workplace well-being research. The review explores the approaches in general employment and in the context of HEIs. Further, the section explores the challenges of these approaches from both the researchers' and employers' viewpoint and provides an explanation and their application to this study. The third section (Section C) explores the key literature on the higher education work environment (hereafter, HEWE). The section explores the psychosocial issues inherent in the HEWE and its impact on academic employees. It proceeds to describe the framework of the study and how it connects with best practices and appropriate actions employed by organisations to ensure the well-being of their employees. Finally, the chapter reflects on the main issues,

identifies literature gaps and develops a conceptual framework to guide the interpretation of the study results and summarises the major arguments raised from empirical and theoretical perspectives. A broad approach to the literature review is presented below.

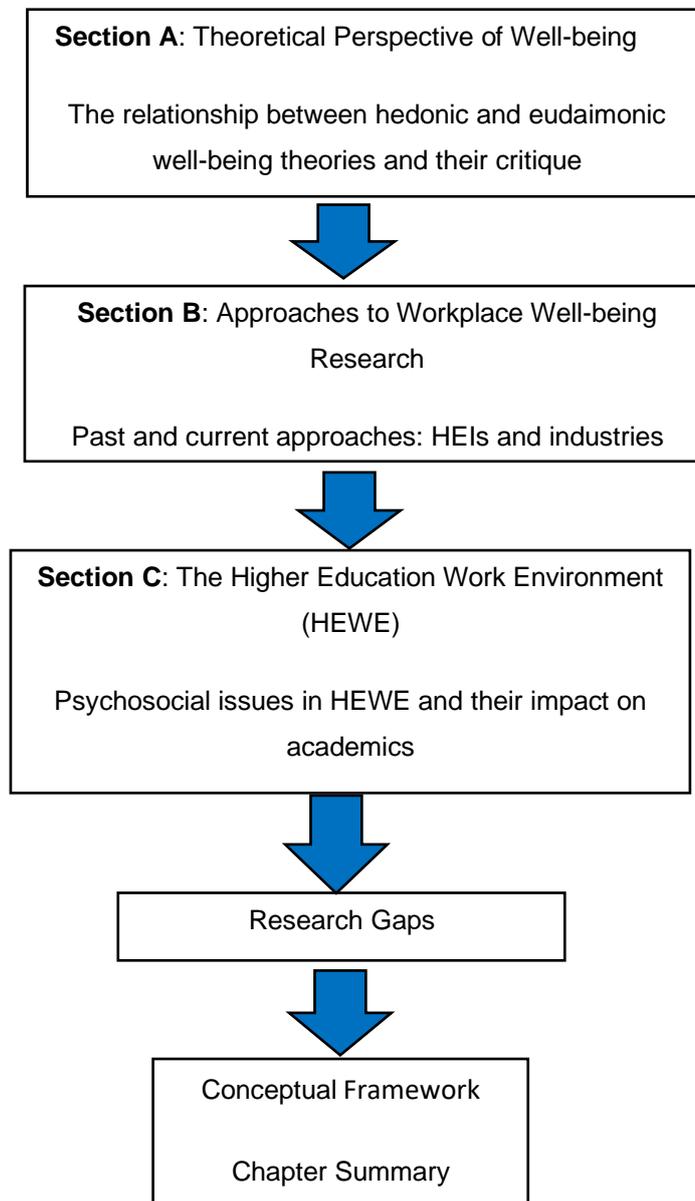


Figure C: Broad approach to the review of the literature

Source: Author

## **Section A: Theoretical Perspectives**

### **2.2 Background, Definitions, Components and Critique of Well-being to this Study**

The workplace well-being of employees in HEIs continues to dominate the attention of policymakers globally. Theories that explain the concept of workplace well-being in general have been identified in the extant literature. However, these theories are either isolated and focus on definite subjects, or the relations are inadequately explored to provide a broader perspective for its interpretation. In Ghana, most of the studies on workplace well-being of employees in HEIs have focused on non-academic employees (administrators and the frontline staff), offering little knowledge on academic employees, as explained in chapter one of this thesis. This study, therefore, aims to explore the knowledge and understanding of the concept, namely workplace well-being among employees (academic and researches) of HEIs in Ghana.

#### **2.2.1 Definitions of well-being: A long theoretical history**

Academics and researchers have adopted different styles for writing the term well-being without changing its meaning (Seligman et al., 2011). While some present it as “well-being”, others write it as “wellbeing”. However, the two styles mean the same. For the sake of consistency, this thesis adopts the writing style “well-being” as a standard way of presentation to ensure clarity and focus.

The term well-being is an old concept that goes back to Ancient Greece. The term has been a topical issue of debate for at least the past 2500 years, starting with philosophical texts by psychologists and psychoanalysts and on-going in the writings of humanists (Huta, 2016). The original Greek concept of eudaimonia is often translated as “happiness”, but “well-being” or “flourishing” is a more accurate translation. The term is accredited to Aristotle in the 4th

century BCE, who was the first philosopher to write about the concept of eudaimonic-hedonic well-being in his book titled *The Nicomachean Ethics* (The Basic Works of Aristotle, 2001). Other philosophers who followed Aristotle's concepts are Butler and Plato (Collard, 2006; Nussbaum, 2004; Davies, 2015; Atkinson et al., 2012). Another philosopher who lived in the same century as Aristotle, called Aristippus, disagreed with the idea of flourishing to define a person's well-being, as proposed by Aristotle, and said the "only good in life is pleasure and the only evil is pain", regardless of how the pain or pleasure is produced (Huta, 2016:3). However, most philosophers from their time until now side with Aristotle.

Over the years, researchers and philosophers have struggled to develop a clear definition of the meaning and components of the term. The reason is that the term has wide-ranging concepts (happiness, the fulfilment of a need, reaching a goal, good health and free exercise of individual capabilities), and means different things to different individuals (Royo & Velazco, 2005; Hawkins, 2019). For example, to the economists, well-being is based on an individual's ability to make free financial choices about his/her household income, consumption and wealth with present and future security (ONS, 2014). Meanwhile, to the psychologists, it is about the negative and positive effects of human lives, i.e., happiness, life satisfaction and sadness (Diener & Suh, 1997:200).

On the other hand, health professionals define well-being more broadly to cover the physical, mental and social aspects of life and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 2014), while health and safety practitioners and those working in factories also see well-being as how a person's work is organised and managed at work (HSE, 2014; SHP, 2015). Bentham, a known hedonist, in his book titled *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and*

*Legislation*', attempted to answer the question of what well-being consists of. Bentham stated that human beings are placed under the control of two domains, namely pleasure and pain, and that it is the responsibility of the individual to find a balance between the two (Bentham, 1996). Bentham's concept of well-being was influenced by his conception of human nature. According to Bentham, "Man" is essentially a "rational actor" who seeks to maximise pleasure and minimise pain. The term "balance" used in Bentham's definition means creating harmony between our work responsibilities as humans while finding time to do things that brings us personal fulfilment, pleasures and rejuvenation daily. However, the earlier researchers mentioned above only considered well-being in terms of pleasure and not pain (Diener, 2001).

Aside from the broad domains and the differences in the meaning of the term well-being, there is also an issue with the philosophical usage. For example, how an individual experiences both positive and negative life has provided divergent views on well-being in the organisational scholarship literature. This suggests that the well-being of an individual should only be seen through pleasurable moments to be considered positive.

However, Csikszentmihalyi (2002) disagrees with this assertion and cautions researchers about possible confusion in using the terms well-being and welfare. According to Csikszentmihalyi, issues of poor health can be closely related to the term welfare, which covers how an individual is faring in general and does not necessarily concern well-being. This point was supported by Easthope and White (2006), who said that the term well-being is related to health and is difficult to use as a standalone term in most of the health literature. They argue that the term health explicitly emphasises a person's illness, while well-being allows a full investigation into a person's health-related issues, such as a

person's state of mind due to anxieties and other factors such as housing crises and joblessness. Easthope and White (2006) further point out that, irrespective of the usefulness of the term well-being in the socio-cultural context of human life, it is often used with health-determining indicators that focus on risk, i.e., death, life expectancy, maternal mortality and protective factors, such as individual coping strategies and support, resources and skills in terms of sickness. This shows that the terms health and well-being overlap in most cases and are both difficult to understand as standalone terms (Al-Yaman et al., 2003). This study, therefore, seeks to answer specific questions that relate to the participants' well-being and not that of their health to overcome the challenges mentioned above.

The differences in definition enable views and opinions from many perspectives to be examined in this study considering the context being investigated. From the perspective of the psychology and organisational literature, psychologists' views on well-being are mostly based on the pleasant and unpleasant experiences of an individual, which are usually based on self-reported measures (Daniels & Harris, 2000; Page et al., 2009).

However, they argue that although self-reported measures, such as job and life satisfaction or stress reaction and personality measures, are valid, the overreliance on a single self-reported measure by organisations to determine a person's well-being can lead to potential risk. This can result in the same or similar statistical relationships being produced. For example, by using only life satisfaction measures, other different individualistic measures such as stress reaction or personality measures are excluded, creating a deficiency in assessing the overall well-being of an individual. Organisational psychologists also contend that a more comprehensive approach that will incorporate all the

well-being components to extensively and fully evaluate an individual's well-being is needed. This is expected to help predict individual's readiness for work, both mentally and physically, for ultimate performance to be achieved (Daniels & Harris, 2000; Page et al., 2009; Fisher, 2010).

Nevertheless, most workplace well-being measures traditionally only focus on a single aspect of the concept of well-being. For example, the works of Spector (1987) on job satisfaction, Warr (2003) on effective workplace well-being, and Shirom (2011) on vigour at work all assert that well-being can only be measured using a single life satisfaction factor, which is arguably not the case. Their views are aligned with the hedonic understanding that well-being is about experiencing happiness, life satisfaction and the avoidance of pain (Kahnemann et al., 1999; Page et al., 2009; Fisher, 2010).

Furthermore, Bourke and Geldens (2007) investigated the perspective of how young people and youth workers in rural Victoria in Australia define well-being. Bourke and Geldens found that most young people consider the term well-being as comprising several dimensions. The young people were more concerned about their physical health, having supportive relationships with friends and family, psychological needs such as autonomy and competence, and environmental factors such as good schools, houses, food and water. They emphasised that once they have a healthy relationship with others and a good attitude and can look after these aspects of life, their well-being is defined.

The youth workers also agreed that the term has multiple dimensions and that it is difficult to understand and define. However, they were more concerned with their social environments, emotions, and mental and physical health. They talked about having "a goal in life", "a positive attitude", "being happy" and

“feeling good about oneself” as their definition of well-being. Bourke and Geldens argued that the difference in defining well-being between these two groups means that each group is likely to work towards different, but not contradictory, goals in terms of their well-being. The differences presented in this study support the challenges in defining the term well-being, even when individuals of similar age groups are asked the same questions.

However, another definition of well-being – eudaimonic well-being – has emerged in organisational research in the fields of positive organisational scholarship and positive organisational behaviour (Luthans, 2002; Cameron et al., 2003). The concept goes beyond the hedonic well-being concept previously explained and uses a combination of concepts (hedonic and eudaimonic) to define well-being. This idea was introduced by Danna and Griffin (1999) in their work to measure an individual’s health and well-being in the workplace.

According to Danna and Griffin, “well-being includes life/non-work satisfaction factors enjoyed by individuals (i.e. satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction with social life, family life, recreation and spirituality). They also define well-being to include “work/job-related satisfaction (i.e. satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction with pay, promotion opportunities, the job itself and co-workers relationship), and general health” (Danna & Griffin, 1999: 359). Danna and Griffin found that two out of every six workplace well-being measures used to evaluate individuals’ well-being contain both eudaimonic features (personal growth or meaning in life) and hedonic aspects (happiness and satisfaction). Hence, a single hedonic approach cannot be used to measure an individual’s well-being to obtain a perfect outcome. The reason is that the individual may be missing out on his/her eudaimonic component of well-being, which equally contributes to a person’s overall well-being – a view supported by Page et al. (2009) and Cartwright and

Cooper (2009). As a result, several researchers use a multi-measured approach to well-being that contains a range of eudaimonic features.

Currently, there is an increased interest in the eudaimonic features of workplace well-being concepts among researchers and organisations for the following reasons:

- First, the concept is unique in addressing individual well-being issues as a distinct concept, although it can integrate some hedonic ideas as well (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Huta, 2016).
- Second, the concept conveys additional features such as flourishing; individuals working hard to become better in their field of discipline and personal life; the meaning of work; doing things that bring self-fulfilment and serving others in society and striving; and acquiring the skills needed to do one's work effectively for personal growth and development. The deviation is that the earlier hedonic concept did not have these features as well-being components (Vitterso & Søholt, 2008; Rosso et al., 2010; Ménard & Brunet, 2011).
- Third, organisations have realised how work engagement and individual growth at work contributes to a person's eudaimonic well-being and have taken steps to apply the concept to their workplace well-being programs on work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Bakker et al., 2006) and workflow (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Workflow as a concept is about experiencing learning with a high positive affect as an individual and covers three dimensions of well-being. The first dimension is dedication, which is being enthusiastic, inspiring, involved in one's work, having pride and enduring the challenges of work to achieve results. The

second is absorption, which is being occupied with work and concentrating on one's task, and the third is vigour, which is having good levels of energy while performing a task at work (Csíkszentmihályi, 1993). Work development, on the other hand, is about immersing oneself in a task that matches one's skills to achieve self-development and also improves the cognitive state of the individual at work (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Csíkszentmihályi, 1993, 2002). The most important of all is that the individual with eudaimonic attributes cooperates well with others on projects at work, appreciates issues from a different perspective and supports others to improve at work. This has made the concept an area of interest for organisations to develop their employees' knowledge and skills at work (Huta, 2016).

However, these experiences are not always pleasant as they come with different challenges, such as a lack of resources at work and sacrificing one's pleasurable moments to make others happy by refusing to give up work and on people. For example, individuals who make progress through the eudaimonic concept are happy to support others to flourish in their work and life (Huta, 2015; Steger & Shin, 2012). On the other hand, one may argue that happiness in supporting others leads to happiness in supporting oneself. Yet, in the context of work, an individual with eudaimonic characteristics goes the extra mile to make sure that others thrive irrespective of the challenges they may face in the process.

In another study, Dodge et al. (2012) reviewed various literature on the concept of well-being and highlighted the difficulties that researchers, philosophers and professional bodies have with defining not only well-being but also its various dimensions. These difficulties include researchers not agreeing on a standard definition, not agreeing on a common mode to assess well-being, and

professional bodies defining the term based on their professional lines. The divergence in the definition suggests that the concept of well-being is multi-faceted and although a single approach is valid, its description and application can sometimes be problematic because both overlap at a niche and can be difficult to explain, describe and separate (Huta, 2015).

Dodge and colleagues came up with a definition which they believed “conveys the multi-faceted nature of well-being and can help individuals and policymakers move forward in their understanding of this popular term” (Dodge et al., 2012:222). Dodge and colleagues defined well-being as “the balance point between an individual resource pool and the challenges faced” (p, 230). The resources and the challenges in their definitions are the social, physical and psychological needs of an individual. Both individual resources and their challenges are placed side by side in the form of a “see-saw”, with their well-being at the centre as a pivotal point; see the diagram below:



Adopted from Dodge et al. (2012)

They argue that each time an individual meets a challenge, the system and resources come into a state of imbalance as the individual is forced to adopt his or her resources to meet that particular challenge. In effect, an individual is said to achieve stable well-being when his or her physical, social and psychological resources meet a specific social, psychological and physical challenge. Again,

when a person has more challenges than resources, the equilibrium moves away from their well-being towards their resources and vice-versa. The centre represents the determination for a person to return to a fixed point of well-being and also achieve stable homeostasis or equilibrium (Brickman & Campbell, 1971; Headey & Wearing 1989, 1991, 1992). Their concept of well-being suggests that a holistic approach to resolving the difficulties, as stated earlier for both concepts, could be the best way to avoid a “broad definition” in favour of a precise one (Herzlich, 1973; Cummins, 2010).

Moreover, Lilienfeld (2012) also argues that the term well-being has become a layperson’s term and is being used “loosely” by society without being specific or going into a lot of details about its context. To Lilienfeld, this has added to the difficulties in understanding the term. Lilienfeld further argued that earlier researchers failed to communicate clearly what well-being means. A clear understanding of the term will help organisations to apply it effectively for their benefit and that of their employees (Lilienfeld, 2012). The differences in the meaning, definitions and views on well-being highlighted above have clearly shown how professional bodies and philosophers define and interpret the term well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Keyes & Annas, 2009; Huta, 2013, 2015). Additionally, the definitions of well-being and its relationship to this study as well as the components of well-being, such as subjective and objective well-being, are stated and explained below.

### **2.2.2 Definitions of well-being and this study**

The literature has so far provided diverse views on the meaning of well-being from a single approach. This study, however, attempts to fill this gap in the literature by providing meanings to the stories, views and experiences of participants. This is to help explore a comprehensive approach to the diverse meanings of workplace well-being. This is likely to lead to a clearer understanding of well-being from the perspectives of participants' experience and stories, thereby providing a much broader dimension for policy recommendations within the existing structures of HEIs in Ghana.

Drawing from all the definitions and their interpretations presented in section 2.1.1, this study argues that the term well-being is indeed populous and difficult to define, measure and apply. Therefore, well-being could mean different things to different people based on context and application. Interestingly, within the Ghana higher education context, the definition has not been adequately explored to provide a benchmark. As a result, this study has adopted the definition provided by Dodge et al. (2012), namely that well-being is "the balance point between an individual's resource pool and the challenges faced" (p, 230). This definition appears as the most appropriately suited to this study.

The reasons are:

- First, the meaning is relevant in an academic environment which demands a high level of competences coupled with a culture of regular interactions with specific students' needs and policymakers. From this perspective, this study maintains that every individual goes through both high and low moments in their lives, both at work and through interactions with others in society – a common feature within the higher academic environment in Ghana.

- Second, the high moments can be attributed to the hedonic concept, which is about more pleasure and less pain, and the low moments to the eudaimonic concepts, which are about perseverance through challenges to become victorious. Again, this is an important characteristic which could be observed among workers in higher academic institutions within the Ghana context.
- Third, Dodge et al.'s (2012) definition of well-being goes beyond focusing solely on one component of well-being, such as pleasurable moments, to others, including flourishing and overcoming challenges. This definition presents a framework beyond components to include challenges of employee well-being within the academic environment.
- Fourth, the definition provides a balanced view of well-being. For example, "the balance point between an individual resource pool and the challenges faced" used in the definition relate to the eudaimonic standpoint, which is missing in the hedonic viewpoint.

Dodge et al. (2012) argue that attention is being shifted by researchers from the challenges that individuals face at work to the pleasurable moments, implying that resources and challenges are the lenses through which individual well-being should be seen and assessed. From this perspective, their notion of well-being can be applied to this study to explore how the participants understand workplace well-being and what it means to their lives. Understanding the balanced viewpoint of well-being in this study provides a clear relationship between resources and their effect on lecturers' well-being. In conclusion, the definition provided by Dodge et al. gives a clearer perspective to description and interpretation, which constitute the main goals of this study.

## 2.3 The Components of Well-Being

Aside from the complexities of the dimensions and descriptions surrounding the term well-being, as reviewed in the earlier sections, there is also an issue with its components (Tov, 2018). The reason is that well-being components are related to the quality of the life traits of an individual, such that if an individual experiences a high level of well-being, it is believed that this individual has good quality life attributes (Rees et al., 2010; Stratham & Chase, 2010). These components also help in assessing correctly where a person fits under the two well-being traditions (hedonic or eudaimonic) based on their well-being traits. For example, Tov (2018) argues that there are two commonly known components of well-being, namely subjective and objective well-being.

These two components have several categorisations. For example, from the eudaimonic viewpoint, which is considered the objective component of well-being, individuals have to attain certain qualities to achieve their development and psychological growth; the fulfilment of these qualities allows the individual to reach their full potential (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Ryff's (1989) concept of well-being, which draws on the theories of Maslow, Jung and Erickson, is a good example of the eudaimonic components. Ryff stated six important components which can be used to assess individuals who are doing well in life. These include:

- **Autonomy:** the individual should demonstrate maturity guided by internal standards
- **Positive relations:** the individual loves and trusts others around them
- **Environmental mastery:** the individual's ability to manage external stressors and leverage opportunities

- Self-acceptance: an individual having a positive attitude toward themselves
- Purpose in life: an individual having important goals and aims
- Personal growth: the individual's ability to accept new challenges in life as advancing their growth (Ryff, 1989)

Other eudaimonic well-being researchers emphasised key components such as living up to one's own personal potential – a view which supports Aristotle's concept of eudaimonia, i.e., living in accordance with a person's true self. From this understanding, eudaimonic well-being and its components or constituents are rooted in the search for events and goals that are closer to a person's identity and values (Waterman, 1993; McGregor & Little, 1998).

Diener and Biswas-Diener (2008) added to Ryff's (1989) work on the components of well-being and pointed out that the components also include life satisfaction (LS) indicators, such as being happy with one's self in areas of marriage, work, leisure, and housing as well as having a positive feeling (pleasant emotions and moods), experiencing infrequent feelings of negative affect (such as depression, stress and anger) and judging one's life to be fulfilling and meaningful (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008).

However, Dodge et al.'s (2012) study on the definitions and components of well-being previously reviewed grouped the various well-being components stated by Ryff (1989), Diener and Biswas-Diener (2008) and others under the hedonic and eudaimonic constructs. Dodge et al. (2012) believed that it is the focus of the research and the participant's responses that determine the specific well-being construct, i.e. either the hedonic or eudaimonic construct, and not just the theoretical framework. Therefore, researchers should focus more on the

participant's responses and the context of the study to choose their well-being concept to reduce the qualms surrounding the term well-being and its components.

### **2.3.1 Subjective and objective well-being**

Other dimensions to well-being components that have emerged in the literature and have informed social policy reforms in many countries include subjective and objective well-being components. Research on these dimensions of well-being components emphasises human strengths and positive psychological outcomes (for example, see Diener et al., 1999; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The reason is that subjective well-being components are important factors in monitoring the domains of the health-related quality of life of an individual (Diener & Seligman, 2004; Kahneman & Krueger, 2006). Also, the measures are beneficial in assessing policy interventions of a nation as they provide information to leaders about the citizens' concerns for their well-being. For example, an initiative to explore the individual life satisfaction level of a particular nation often takes a subjective approach (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005).

In advanced societies, social participation may be closely linked to an individual's subjective well-being and being part of the wider social structure is an important contributory factor for a person's well-being. The reason is that social participation increases access to communities, enhances networking, and creates opportunities for information and resources sharing and important roles (Portes, 2000; Brissette & Seeman, 2000). Again, Dolana et al. (2008) reviewed the factors associated with subjective well-being in the economic literature and found that joblessness, a lack of social contact, poor health and family separation were components of subjective well-being. Dolana and colleagues argued that subjective well-being components are based on varying individual

feelings and beliefs rather than facts. They argue that it is sometimes difficult to separate individual beliefs from feelings when people respond to a subjective well-being questionnaire in a study. Their study concluded that subjective factors of well-being are more comprehensive than what researchers earlier suggested and that an agreed approach to identifying factors that relate to a specific context, e.g. work, health or family separation, is needed among researchers for the effective outcome to be realised in well-being studies.

Camfield (2006) concurred with the position of Dolana and colleagues that well-being measures are indeed inseparable from their outcomes and that an all-inclusive and dynamic approach that incorporates the cognitive-affective dimension of people's lives, beliefs, material needs, and family relations would help realise the meaning and importance of individual overall well-being. Camfield further stated that subjective well-being components include the creation of meaning and the forming of standards, which are not processes that are distinct from individual lives (Camfield, 2006). These components enable the understanding of people's lives in their terms, as individuals are the best judges of their well-being based on their quality of lives and peculiar circumstances (Bentham, 1996; Hsieh, 2016). However, people do not only base their behaviour on what is available to them as their decisions are not fixed. Rather, they consider how they feel about the different options or constraints they face in life and the changes in their environment to make decisions as social beings (Clark, 2015). Moreover, these constraints, options and environments are not uniform. They vary and are culturally specific.

The studies mentioned above on the subjective well-being components indicate that the quality of life of an individual and their relations depends on the resources available to them and their capacity to convert such resources to

benefit their well-being (Morris & Lamontagne, 2004). However, resources alone are not adequate to forecast quality of life, as the quality of life measures (i.e. health indices, employment opportunities and environmental indicators) go beyond wealth, income and expenditure consumption needs. It is, therefore, important for researchers to consider a wider range of individual interests and circumstances to provide a broader measure of well-being for individuals (Stiglitz et al., 2009).

On the other hand, some researchers have adopted a community perspective of well-being rather than an individualistic one. Existing studies on objective well-being components are grounded in the perspective of facts (hard data) based on human lives (economic development and living conditions), whereas life experiences (positive or negative) are measured or quantified by statistical indicators. Researchers who adopt this approach usually view individual well-being attributes as containing social attributes and material resources. Social attributes, in this case, refer to individual access to health care, education, having a strong social network and connections with a political voice in society, whereas material resources refer to access to food, housing and income. Their goal is to assess the objective component of a good life and believe that individuals should have these attributes to lead fulfilling lives (Western & Tomaszewski, 2016).

Objective well-being viewpoints are important because they provide an understanding of a range of non-economic and economic indicators that represent the objective of health observed over time in society. However, researchers such as Diener and Seligman (2004), Kahneman and Krueger (2006), and Dolana et al. (2008) opined that subjective and objective well-being components overlap in most cases and should be used together rather than as

single components. For example, to define the well-being of a community one would have to assess whether the economic development in that community meets the needs of all the people in the community. Such an assessment is seen in the objective dimension of well-being. The resulting constructive insight of individuals to their appropriate stage in the community, such as their quality of life, is the view in the subjective dimension of well-being as it is based on their opinion and moods. This implies that, in evaluating the well-being of people in a community, it is important to measure both subjective and objective indicators. The theoretical dimensions have provided two perspectives on the components of workplace well-being (hedonic and eudaimonic), and this study adopts the eudaimonic theoretical approach because it embeds both the subjective and objective well-being components and focuses more on individual growth and achievement rather than enjoyment (Ryff, 1989). Figure **D** below summarises the well-being approaches reviewed above.

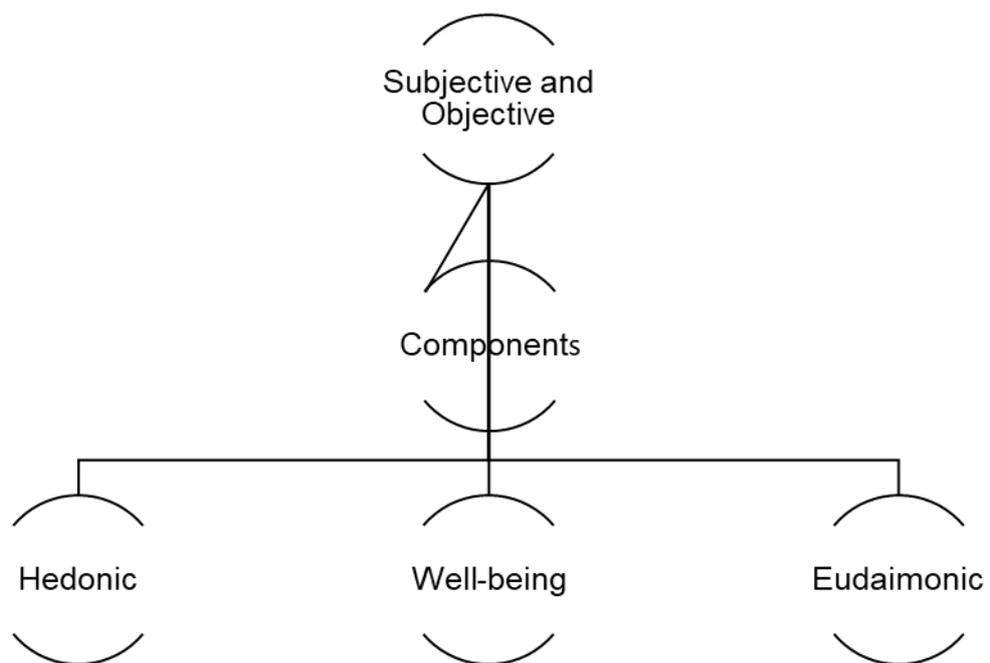


Figure **D**: The well-being paradigm base on the review above.

Sources: Author.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed has shown a lack of agreement concerning the conceptualisation, components and definitions of the term well-being among researchers and philosophers. It has been demonstrated how the concept and approaches overlap in assessing the overall well-being of an individual. However, earlier researchers – mostly psychologists – sided with one approach, although they believed that both approaches are important (Huta, 2015). This has increased the uncertainties surrounding the use of the term, either as a single concept, an umbrella term or both.

However, current well-being researchers and philosophers have possibly failed to address the uncertainties surrounding the various components and definitions of well-being proposed by the earlier philosophers. It has been asserted that the uncertainty surrounding the terms is not only about its multiple components, definition and dimensions. Rather it is about the way researchers design and ask their study participants questions, as it has been claimed in some of the psychology literature that asking people directly about what they see as part of their well-being concerning their work, experience and life will help to position the concept contextually to avoid the current controversies surrounding the concept (Huta, 2013, 2015).

In reviewing the literature surrounding the term well-being and its meaning in the context of work, it is clear that the term is multifaceted, with some researchers constantly positioning it as pleasure-seeking (hedonic) and others as flourishing (eudaimonic). This study, therefore, explores academic employees' understanding, stories and experiences of well-being in the context of their work using the eudaimonic well-being lens. In terms of the components and constituents of individuals' well-being, this study aligns with the conceptualisations of Ryff (1998) and Ryan and Deci (2001) reviewed earlier in

section 2.2 to analyse what constitutes individual well-being at work in a Ghanaian context. The sections below detail the various empirical literature on the current state of the two well-being traditions (hedonic and eudaimonic). These sections outline, critique and justify the two well-being traditions and their application in this study.

## **2.4 The Two Research Traditions of Well-Being (Hedonic and Eudaimonic)**

The recent research on well-being originated from two general viewpoints: the eudaimonic approach, which highlights human development and positive psychological functioning (Rogers, 1961; Ryff, 1989a; 1989b; Waterman, 1993), and the hedonic approach, which emphasises low negative affect, positive affect, happiness and satisfaction with life (Bradburn, 1969; Diener, 1984; Kahneman et al., 1999; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). These two traditions appear distinct but overlap in their application and approach due to the similarities in their facets such as happiness and low and high effects of life (Peterson et al., 2005; Huta & Ryan, 2010).

From the hedonic viewpoint, well-being is about fun, joyfulness and personal pleasure (Diener & Emmons, 1984). For example, an individual with a hedonic experience seeks happiness at work by seeking flexible work and engaging in activities that ensure fun at work. Meanwhile, from the eudaimonic perspective of well-being, pleasure or happiness is not at the centre of optimal functioning; rather it is personal growth (Ryff & Singer, 2008). For example, for an individual to experience eudaimonic well-being, he/she should be able to attain growth through learning new skills at work, supporting others to achieve their purpose in life and having positive thoughts about others in society at the expense of their own life (Huta, 2013; Huta & Ryan, 2010).

Again, in an attempt to determine the factors that contribute to the psychological well-being of individuals based on the eudaimonic tradition, Ryff (1989) developed the six-factor model. This model consists of 54 to 84 questions on a scale of 1-6, in which a high score has to be scored on most of the factors to determine a person's psychological well-being. These factors are first autonomy, which is having control over a person's behaviour and is independent of social pressures. The second is personal growth, which is welcoming new experiences and recognising improvement in one's behaviours and self over time. The third is self-acceptance, which is having a positive attitude about one's self and personality. The fourth is positive relations with others, which is the willingness to share with others and be seen as the "giving person", among others. The fifth is purpose in life, which is having strong beliefs, goals and meaning in life. The sixth is environmental mastery, which is making use of the day-to-day opportunities and challenges in life as well as creating situations that meet individual needs. Ryff found that these factors have been overlooked in the hedonic viewpoint, creating a logical flaw and reasoning in the determination of a person's overall well-being using the hedonic approach (Ryff, 1989). Interestingly, researchers in the field of well-being are evaluating both the eudaimonic and hedonic concepts for different reasons (Huta, 2016). Thus, the reason for the increased interest in the hedonic approach to workplace well-being is discussed in detail below.

### **2.4.1 The hedonic concept of well-being**

As stated earlier, the foundations of hedonic psychology started with Aristotle, who suggested that the term well-being and hedonism (pleasure-seeking) are essentially equivalent (Diener & Emmons, 1984; Waterman, 1993; Diener et al., 1999). By defining well-being in terms of pleasure versus pain, a hedonic psychologist positions themselves for a distinctive research and intervention target, namely satisfaction, happiness and the avoidance of pain (Kahnemann et al., 1999). According to Diener (1984), hedonism has emotional and cognitive components and can be considered in terms of the levels of life satisfaction and (long-term) affect. Therefore, individual experiences should be observed and appraised over a period of positive incidents in a person's life, and not on present experiences, for hedonic well-being to be achieved. For example, from the hedonic understanding, individuals may associate happiness with spending time socialising with friends, going to nightclubs and having material wealth. For this group of people, their happiness is achieved by the level of fun they had compared to engaging in less painful or stressful activities.

However, in the context of work, Busseri and Sadava (2011) disagree with the hedonic approach/reasoning and argue that there are flaws in the approach. They argue that a true hedonic approach does not always contribute to a person's overall well-being as there are challenges that the hedonic ideas have overlooked. For example, for an individual to experience hedonic well-being at work, there should be activities that create happiness for the work they do (Heathwood, 2006). However, where there is less support from employers to their employees or limited resources for employees to function properly, then hedonic well-being is less likely to be achieved. For example, Brief and Weiss (2002) conducted a study on the factors that contribute to a person's job

satisfaction and well-being and found universal, extrinsic and intrinsic factors. They argued that intrinsic job satisfaction factors comprise inherent features connected to the way the work is directed, such as the number of different tasks allocated to an individual at one time, while extrinsic satisfaction is built on the context of the work, for example, satisfaction with salary and frequent increases in wages.

This suggests that for hedonic workplace well-being to be achieved, there should be high extrinsic job satisfaction factors (some sort of reward) with low intrinsic factors. In support of Brief and Weiss' (2002) argument, Diener (1994) suggested that it would be more appropriate for researchers to use the general hedonic well-being measure to assess individual job satisfaction at work because it asked more pleasurable questions instead of posing challenges. Yet, Diener's suggestion may not be exclusive at all levels. For example, within the higher academic context in Ghana, the use of hedonic well-being as posited by Diener may not be the most appropriate measure because of inherent challenges (limited teaching resources, high student numbers and workload) perceived to be existing. Again, a method to measure the extent to which people feel positive, energised, experience a low negative affect and are satisfied at work will exclusively capture their hedonic well-being (Ruch et al., 2010).

The hedonic concept is more applicable in the human context because it satisfies individuals with enjoyable memories and experiences and allows them to take short breaks from continuing worries and return with a renewed view; it is also essential to self-care (Huta, 2016). Meanwhile, if humans were to focus wholly on the eudaimonic concept and always make others happy, this would likely lead to tiredness and boredom, a loss of social connections with things

that matter, and a loss of perspective. Humans need a bit of hedonic liveliness in their lives as well as more direct emotional levels of connections (Huta, 2015, 2016).

- **Critique of the hedonic theory**

The hedonic concept has contributed to the understanding that there exist general ways through which individual well-being can be measured and defined to achieve a specific outcome. The hedonic well-being concept was the first developed by Aristotle to promote the science of happiness, which most philosophers supported; hence, the concept is well known and appreciated in many circles. However, even though pleasurable moments can be defined using the hedonic approach, the limitations are based on the context of the study and how the questions are framed to measure and define individual well-being (Huta, 2013, 2015).

Despite the strengths of the hedonic approach and its usefulness to well-being in other areas, it does not apply to this study. This is because first, hedonic experiences and views are less likely to provide a framework for the interpretation of the workplace well-being of academic employees in low-resource settings with political interferences and fewer opportunities for professional growth. Second, the overall outcome on individual well-being is less likely to be hedonic, especially where experiences such as happiness or excitement and challenges are expressed. Third, issues such as happy moments are short-lived due to the constant challenges faced by individuals and using hedonism is unlikely to address the challenges associated with the well-being of academic employees. This means that understanding workplace well-being in HEIs in a low-resource setting like Ghana is mostly situated beyond the hedonic theoretical framework and provides a strong justification for

the review of the eudaimonic concept. The eudaimonic concept and its relationship to workplace well-being are explained in the next section of this chapter.

#### **2.4.2 The eudaimonic concept of well-being**

The eudaimonic approach defines well-being in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning, and it emphasises self-realization and meaning (Ryan & Deci, 2001), as indicated previously. This concept emerged when Aristippus detected a logical flaw in the hedonic well-being approach put forward by Aristotle. Aristippus was of the view that an individual can only achieve real happiness if they can identify and develop their virtues and live by them (Charles & Scott, 1999; Franklin, 2010).

His idea has been used by other researchers to build models that resonate with the eudaimonic notion, such as self-determination theory (hereafter SDT) by Ryan and Deci (2000). SDT can also be used to discover factors associated with eudaimonic well-being and it believes that every individual possesses three psychological needs that motivate their behaviour, called the antecedents to well-being. These antecedents are (1) autonomy, to take charge of one's life and act in agreement with self but not ignoring others; (2) competence, to experience mastery and control outcomes; and (3) empathy, to connect, interact and care for others (Ryan et al., 2008). Other supporting theories found within the discipline of humanistic psychology include "self-actualisation" by Maslow (1954), which covers a person's growth towards the realisation of their highest need for meaning in life. Similarly, the "fully-functioning person" by Rogers (1961) covers attributes such as allowing an individual to grow in an environment that provides them with sincerity, genuineness, freedom of choice and creativity, increasing the presence of a lifestyle with a full rich life.

Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie (2012) conducted a quantitative study using a five-dimension questionnaire with 1,080 workers. They used a scale questionnaire to gather information on employees' psychological well-being at work with a focus on their feelings over four weeks. They found that the questionnaire displayed a reasonable uniformity with the workers' hedonic and eudaimonic well-being but leaned more towards their eudaimonic well-being. Again, individuals agreed more to questions that described their eudaimonic aspect of well-being, i.e. getting jobs that would develop their competencies and growth that supports their goals and purpose in life, which resonates with the idea of Ryan and Deci (2001). They concluded that based on the framework of the questionnaire and the work context, eudaimonic well-being measures are likely to generate valid and reliable data, inferring that a specific work context and the nature of questions asked also allow specific workplace well-being measures to be appreciated. However, what this study failed to address was asking the workers about their happiest moments at work and what generated those happy moments; this could have led to another interpretation. Equally, examples of studies that have used both eudaimonic and hedonic well-being measures based on the workplace are by Ryff (1998), Keyes (2002), Seligman (2002), Fredrickson (2004) and Ménard and Brunet (2011). The section below critiques the eudaimonic theory and its connection to workplace well-being in general and in the context of this study (HEIs) in Ghana specifically.

- **Critique of eudaimonic theory**

The critics of eudaimonic theory have provided the basis for questioning the validity of the theory and their criticisms are a reflection of its popularity and content value. In terms of popularity, ironically, the number of studies that have used eudaimonic well-being measures at work as a single concept is smaller than expected. This may be due to the context-specific nature and the fact that humans enjoy more pleasure than pain and will talk more readily about their pleasurable moments when asked to describe their well-being (Fisher, 2010; Arnold & Reynolds, 2012). In terms of content value, there are some misgivings among researchers that the use of eudaimonic theory may not explicitly provide credible results because truthful responses from participants may be difficult to obtain. For example, some participants may be afraid to give information which could be interpreted as damaging to their organisations (Huta, 2014). Again, the eudaimonic theory has not been adequately used to examine the effect of cultural influence on the workplace well-being of employees.

Aside from these misgivings, many good reasons for the concept can be given. Amongst the important reasons suggested by Huta (2016) are first, it uplifts individuals to a greater level of functioning for them to see farther; second, it promotes learning, progress and accomplishment to enjoy better opportunities at work; third, it helps individuals to see things from multiple viewpoints and increases their ability to navigate both bigger challenges and minor nuances; fourth, it brings the public and their development together.

The eudaimonic well-being concept has contributed to well-being research just as the hedonic concept has in the context of work and individual lives as both explore human happiness and challenges in society (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Huta, 2014). The eudaimonic concept presents a framework that helps individuals to

identify and live a life in line with their “true self”, including the fulfilment of psychological needs, the experience of meaning and purpose in life, and engaging in activities that promote growth (Ryan & Deci, 2001). This includes providing community support services, teaching, offering health care services and joining the clergy without necessarily considering the monetary reward, although their qualifications may be equally good for higher-earning jobs. Again, individuals are able to give reasons why engaging in jobs that are deemed challenging with fewer resources contributes to their well-being while others do not look at the difficulties they have to endure to acquire the skills needed to improve their life and work (Ryff, 1989a, 1989b; Waterman, 1993). This makes the theory unique as it covers a broad area of human development and support strategies.

#### **2.4.3 The eudaimonic and hedonic well-being theories – application to this study**

This section presents the relationship between the two concepts from an empirical point of view. The relationship between eudaimonic and hedonic well-being theories enables a clear understanding of the concepts and their practical application, constituting the main focus of this study. Yet, both eudaimonic and hedonic well-being theories represent different research traditions, both theoretically and empirically (Waterman et al., 2008; Ryan & Huta, 2009; Mekler & Hornbæk, 2016).

Huta and Ryan (2009) conducted two correlational studies, one intervention and one experience sampling study, to explore activities driven by both hedonic and eudaimonic concepts and their outcomes. The results showed that persons with hedonic attributes pursue happiness and positive affects in life, i.e. a “fun-loving” person, while eudaimonic persons search for meaning and uplifting

experiences (i.e. respect and a sense of connection with society). Again, the study shows that persons with hedonic traits have more well-being benefits but at short intervals and requiring constant follow-up, while those with eudaimonic traits produced benefits at longer intervals. Huta and Ryan (2009) concluded that both theories overlap in separate niches within a complete well-being framework and that combining them may lead to a higher individual well-being outcome. This implies that on some key well-being attributes, such as satisfaction and vitality, both concepts connect, but they are different on wider attributes such as uplifting experience, respect and higher meaning, where the eudaimonic attributes are higher (Huta & Ryan, 2009, 2010).

Again, McMahan and Estes (2011) conducted an inductive study on the relationship between both concepts of well-being and found the following components: avoidance of negative experience, the experience of pleasure, and contribution to the development of others and self. The experience of pleasure and avoidance of negative experience components are aligned with the hedonic components of well-being, while contributing to others and self-development are within the eudaimonic notion. Their results showed two dimensions to well-being, namely eudaimonic and hedonic components, but with moderate differences – an assertion which is in line with the multifaceted idea of the concepts proposed by Ryan and Deci (2001). They also argued that a wider approach to capturing the differences in the individual well-being experience would be useful for a clearer understanding and description.

For example, when an individual goes through transitions due to work change or self-development, they may experience high eudaimonic well-being but low hedonic well-being. In trying to capture the well-being of an individual with just one concept of well-being, one is likely to conclude that the individual is

experiencing low well-being while the other aspect is missing or ignored. Truly, one could argue that such an individual might also be experiencing high well-being in a different quality of experience.

However, the review has shown that hedonic experience is “lower” when ranking a person’s overall well-being, whereas eudaimonic is “higher”. Both are like the lower and upper halves of a pyramid. Eudaimonic well-being is more of a plus than a need, but is slightly pre-determined, whereas hedonic is pre-determined, although there is adequate room for choice. Again, eudaimonic well-being is more of a “pull” force, whereas hedonic well-being is a “push” force. The pull force in eudaimonia is associated with values, growth, virtue and a vision for a better future, while the push force in hedonism is connected to fun, a carefree life and immediate pleasure with less pain, which is often short-lived (Seligman et al., 2013).

Based on the relationship between the two concepts reviewed above, it has been noticed that to a large extent, eudaimonic theory embeds the factors of hedonic theory previously stated and is dominant with longer life experiences. Drawing from this, this study deduces that eudaimonic theory provides a stronger theoretical framework to explore the academic employees’ views, experiences and understanding of workplace well-being. The reason is that in a work context, as in the case of HEIs in Ghana, where the academic employees struggle to obtain teaching resources coupled with the workload, high student numbers and frequent leadership playing a critical role, eudaimonic experiences are likely to play out. Scholars in support of the eudaimonic well-being approach believe that individuals whose behaviour reflects eudaimonic attributes are committed to personal growth, seek meaning in life and at work, have self-

identity and keep intimate personal relationships that are beneficial to them and the wider society (Kashdan et al., 2008).

Lastly, the review has shown that the eudaimonic theory embeds the factors of hedonic theory, such as happiness and life challenges (subjective validity and life satisfaction). The concept can also be applied separately, depending on the context of the study and the information gathered. The eudaimonic well-being concept has a strong theoretical underpinning with a wider real-world translation that can be used across different areas of investigation (Ryff, 2014). This study aligns with this belief that using the eudaimonic concept to examine academic employees' views and experiences of "their own" well-being, and what that means to them in the context of their work, is more relevant. In contrast, the hedonic aspect could merely generally ask participants to list activities that they like most and rate their importance to them to make sense of their well-being, which is likely to foster data reliability concerns (Huta, 2015). The reason is that when individuals are happy at the time of answering the hedonic well-being questionnaire, their response is likely to be positive, and vice versa (Huta, 2015:5).

## **Section B: Workplace Well-being Approaches and the Higher Education Work Environment**

### **2.5 Employees' Workplace Well-being Approaches**

This study recognises the meaning of workplace well-being as fundamental to the well-being of employees. Therefore, the need to advocate for policy initiatives on work-place well-being is paramount for organisational development. However, many research approaches explaining the concept have been provided in the organisational development literature. This section provides an

overview of the research approaches to understanding workplace well-being and will use the participants' stories and experience to advocate for policy initiatives that will support their well-being. It also asks that all organisational improvement programs in HEIs in Ghana include a well-being policy for employees.

A workplace is defined as a physical place (office, factory, laboratory or building) where individuals are employed and perform their work (Rosso et al., 2010). However, the term workplace is not usually used in isolation; it is linked with other themes, i.e. workplace culture, workplace communication, workplace attitude, workplace health and safety, workplace health and well-being and more (May et al., 2004). The reason is that the workplace consists of people, policies, systems, and machinery that depend on each other to perform an activity termed work; hence, they are difficult to separate (Cravens et al., 2015).

Research into the meaning of work is not new and spans many disciplines. However, finding the appropriate instrument to measure the meaning of work can be challenging (Lent and Brown, 2006 in Steger et al., 2012). The reason is that this field of study arguably lacks a structure that would allow a better uniformity, understanding and integration of instruments to measure individual meanings attached to work. This has led to individual research domains being formed from both old and new studies to try and understand the meanings people attach to work (Ardichvili & Kuchinke, 2009; Rosso et al., 2010).

Over the years, the perceptions and experience of work have changed significantly as employees have begun to demand more from their workplace, and vice versa (Bichard, 2009). For example, as the pace and nature of work have changed through technological advancement with greater flexibility, work

support, and the blurring of what constitutes “work” and “home” life, so too has our understanding of the impact that work has on our emotional and mental well-being changed (Feilder & Podro, 2012). Again, the ideas of worker well-being and a healthy workplace have changed over time. As Robin (2003) pointed out, most organisations initially evaluated their health and well-being programs in terms of the “bottom line” (based on how serious the issues are and in terms of cost). Their goal was to avoid their employees being unhealthy as opposed to enhancing health. From the early 1940s, organisations started to introduce picnic and day trip programs with the hope of improving their employees’ workplace well-being. Then, in the early 1980s, this changed to fitness programs, such as regular exercise and healthy eating (Robin, 2003).

Globally, employees in organisations are now overwhelmed by a host of organisational programs developed to improve their health and well-being. About 90% of organisations with more than 60 employees provide a well-being program for their employees (Aldana, 2001). This growing interest in investment and attention to workplace well-being and health promotional activities matches the important role of work in most individuals’ lives (Harter & Keyes, 2003; Lunt et al., 2007). Additionally, employee satisfaction of work is projected to represent about a quarter of adults’ life satisfaction (Harter et al., 2003). As a result of these projections, it is now clear why many organisations are investing their resources in developing and executing workplace well-being programs. They have realised that individuals who feel valued by their organisation create a deeper connection with the organisation, which in turn positively contributes to their social, cultural and psychological well-being (Veitch, 2010; Schultz, 2015).

A review carried out by Spector (1997) found that contented individuals at the workplace are more cooperative, more helpful to their colleagues, more

punctual, show up for more days at work, and stay with the company for longer than discontented individuals. This rather obvious and non-revelatory finding implies that when the workplace meets an individual's needs at work, they become satisfied and give their best, and vice versa (Coetzee & Stoltz, 2015). In contrast, research into workplace and well-being for upcoming generations suggests that the majority of employees want greater meaning and personal development from their workplace (Avolio & Sosik, 1999; Rosso et al., 2010). For example, employees want their employers to support them with programs that will develop their skills. Also, employees in the modern era pursue flexible working hours and want a pleasing working environment. They believe this makes them happy and their work fulfilling and is beneficial to their general workplace well-being (Amabile & Kramer, 2011).

However, promoting positive workplace experiences for individuals to achieve their utmost meaning at work is not just ethical but also makes economic sense (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). For example, all that is needed sometimes is for leaders to address daily practical difficulties, such as IT issues, and foster quicker responses across departments for worker productivity to be optimised. If those in leadership positions in organisations believe that part of their role is to support their employees' daily growth, then both leaders and their employees could work together to reduce negative workplace experiences and, through that, boost employees' well-being at work, which could lead to an increase in productivity (Rosso et al., 2010).

Grawitch et al. (2006) reviewed studies in the 1990s that linked employee well-being to organisational improvement and healthy workplace practices. Five types of healthy workplace practices were found in the studies reviewed, which are employee growth and development, recognition, health and safety,

employee's involvement and work-life balance. However, earlier studies in the 1990s (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Lawler, 1991; Jaffe, 1995) proposed that the relationship between these practices identified by Grawitch and colleagues depended on the leadership factors of the organisation: First, how good leaders in organisations communicate these issues to their employees; second, how leaders align workplace well-being programs with the context of the organisation; and third, the levels at which employees are involved in sharing ideas and solving problems relating to their well-being. This implies that workplace communication and employee involvement are key to achieving employee well-being and increased work outcomes, and effective healthy workplace practices.

In support of Grawitch's findings above, Fitz-enz (2000) argued that organisations should study the specific needs of their employees to design workplace well-being and health programs. This, Fitz-enz believes, can be done through an uphill communication process, suggesting that the effective design and implementation of all employee well-being and healthy workplace programs have a degree of employee participation. However, leadership communication at work and employee involvement should not be seen as the sole healthy workplace practice, as the other factors identified above are equally important and provide key benefits, such as an increase in individual self-confidence in their work, improvement in individual performance, and well-being (Parchman & Miller, 2003).

The findings from the study of Grawitch and colleagues are striking. However, this study had some limitations. First, studies that focus on employee workplace well-being and healthy workplace practice initiatives are usually limited in scope. For example, most studies tend to investigate only one or two components,

such as health education or health care costs, while neglecting multiple health promotion components and other intrinsic factors that are key attributes of the earlier mentioned eudaimonic theory. These are encouraging active participation in training programmes, inspiring personal growth and improving the work environment, thereby gaining a complete package of employee workplace well-being and healthy workplace practices (Grawitch et al., 2006). Second, even though the study defined healthy workplace practice as covering both employee well-being and the performance of organisations, it failed to state the meaning employees derive from healthy workplace practices at work and how that impacts on their overall well-being. Only a few studies have looked at the link between employee well-being, organisational practice and organisational improvement outcomes (Harter et al., 2003), implying that employees meaning from work is therefore seen as less important in most workplace well-being research and something that should be explored in detail.

### **2.5.1 Previous approaches to employee workplace well-being: general employment.**

In the past, workplace well-being research has been driven by a desire to lower the health risk, increase employee wellness, improve productivity, increase employee retention and satisfaction, and improve workplace morale and perceived organisational support (Robin, 2000; Goetzel et al., 2014). Henry Ford conducted an experiment in 1914 titled “The Five Dollar Day” to improve employee workplace well-being with increased wages. Findings from Ford’s experiment indicated that employees were more interested in the systems of production and their interests than the increase in wages and profits for the organisation.

Ford argued that although the increase in wages is a way to motivate employees to perform at their utmost to increase productivity and worker efficiency, this did not have any impact on the employees (Ford, 1914 in Pegden, 2003). Ford concluded that a social and supportive work environment is key to improving employees' well-being, rather than a mere increase in wages. This suggests that workplace well-being programs should encompass varying components and that it is the responsibility of the employers and leaders to discover those components that meet their work context and address their employees' needs. Ford's experiment is still relevant in today's workplace research paradigm, yet employers still put profit ahead of management systems, communication and their employees' well-being (Pegden, 2003).

In another study, Black (2008) published a report on the health of Britain's population (working age). The report looked into cases of employee workplace well-being issues and the impact on employee health and productivity (Black, 2008). The review provided clear points for the government, which led to the launch of a nationwide workplace well-being program to provide advice for small business and GPs termed "Fit Note" (Department for Work and Pensions, 2014). This initiative aimed to help reduce the cost associated with employees' workplace well-being and the poor health of society. For example, the burden associated with employees' absenteeism due to illness, being at work and not being productive due to feeling unwell, and the fear of losing a job due to short-term contracts cost the UK taxpayer and employers an estimated £15 billion per year at the time of their review (Newcombe, 2013). This suggests that earlier workplace well-being initiatives by researchers and employers did not focus on improving their employees' health and well-being; instead, the issue was viewed in economic terms. For example, there is evidence that organisations that

invested in employees' well-being programs that focused on the employees, their attitude to health, management systems and employees' sense of satisfaction saved about 1.7 absent days per employee throughout the service year, making a return on investment (Rouse et al., 2012).

Baicker et al. (2010) carried out a systematic review of all workplace well-being and wellness programs implemented by different organisations in the United States of America. They aimed to determine how these programs save health care costs for employees and generate money for the employer. A total of 36 publications were found on employees' wellness and well-being programs at work, of which 6 looked at employees' absenteeism, 22 looked at healthcare costs, and 8 looked at both absenteeism and health care cost. They investigated absenteeism and health care cost separately and converted the results of employee absenteeism into financial cost using a uniform rate to estimate returns on investment for the organisations. They found that organisations saved 1.7 days per year per employee, which translates into \$ 274 per employee in financial terms, showing a moderate return on investment compared to health care cost. Again, they found that most workplace wellness and well-being programs were implemented by larger organisations with over 1000 employees, with the leading investor in wellness programs being the financial sector, followed by the manufacturing sector, and the schools and universities being the least. Well-being and wellness approaches ranging from health risk assessment, multiple factors, smoke cessation and weight loss were also found to be the highest on all the employers' agendas.

Meanwhile, other related approaches include self-help education materials, seminars and group activities, individual counselling sessions and incentives for

participation in programs. Baicker et al. (2010) concluded that organisations that invest in wellness and well-being programs see positive returns within the first few years of investing in them. Their evidence suggests that an initiative that promotes workplace well-being is beneficial to both the employer and the employee. However, employee participation is high when they understand the program being offered by the employer, in this case, programs that promote employee health and well-being and reduce risk. Yet, the major limitations of this study are that organisations that implement these programs are larger ones with good financial backing. Whether smaller organisations can also achieve some positive returns on investment through these programs is a question the study failed to address. This shows why workplace well-being and wellness programs have not been broadly adopted by all organisations, even though they have gained high attention in workplace studies.

Rouse et al. (2012) analysed employees' well-being initiatives at work that focused on health promotional activities and targeted the needs of the worker. They found that organisations were able to save between 1.1-3.6% on health care costs and reduce absenteeism if they manage their workforce well-being programs effectively. Rouse et al.'s findings are in line with previous studies by Ed-Diener et al. (2004) and Alimo-Metcalfe et al. (2008) that employers who create a culture of engaging leadership and do more to reduce absenteeism associated with work pressures, help increase employees presenteeism, and show a possible increase in productivity and worker well-being. However, previous studies investigating employee workplace well-being and worker performance only concentrated on lifestyle and health risk initiatives. They argued through their recommendations that for higher employee performance, satisfaction and well-being to occur in the workplace, leadership needs to

engage more with the employees to create systems that will support individual well-being and also meet organisational goals. Lunt et al. (2014) concur with this point. This indicates that supportive and engaging leadership in the workplace can increase employees' well-being and performance.

Further, Heron (2013) explained that organisations taking a firm stand to implement positive employee workplace well-being programmes that encourage personal development and develop the work environment are more likely to have their employees committed to their organisational goals. This is also in agreement with Lunt et al. (2014). This review has highlighted the differences in views between employers' and researchers' approaches to employees' workplace well-being. The next section will look at the current approaches with a summary of the two sections.

### **2.5.2 Recent approaches to employee workplace well-being**

Recent approaches to solving worker workplace well-being issues have seen a dramatic turn from the previous traditional approaches of health and safety, economic gains and performance outcomes to a greater focus on health-promoting activities that target the individual, influence their performance and reduce the health risk (Kossek et al., 2012; Heron, 2013 in Lunt et al., 2014). Lunt and her colleagues from the health and safety executives released a report, titled *Well-being: a Tool for Workplace Health Bears Fruit* (Lunt et al., 2014), based on their review of several workplace well-being studies in the UK in 2014. They aimed to explain the scope of workplace well-being, its purpose, and its importance to business outcomes and employee health. Lunt et al. (2014) were hopeful that their findings would support occupational health groups to move away from the notion of worker protection and workplace risk programs to more

modern programs aimed at enhancing workers' performance and well-being and reducing health risks (Heron, 2013).

In light of their findings, four areas were identified. First, an optimal approach to well-being (AOPWB) refers to the various ways in which workforce well-being is defined by organisations and researchers. AOP emphasises how organisations are run and how their values and culture dictate workforce well-being. Second is the importance of well-being (IOWB), whereby employee well-being is seen as key to productivity and organisational performance outcomes. IOWB highlights the need for employers to see employees' well-being at work as the core of their organisational strategy and not as a mechanism to increase profits. Third, current approaches (CA) draw attention to the emerging trends in workplace workforce well-being initiatives. CA emphasises the need for employers to adopt new initiatives to enhance employee workplace well-being and health.

Lastly, demystifying well-being at work (DWBW) covers the ways to solve workforce well-being issues. It emphasises an integrated approach to solving workforce well-being issues that target the worker. Lunt et al. (2014) found that approaches to employees' workplace well-being programs used by employers were mostly about supporting them to give up smoking and providing gym coupons and healthy food options. Other approaches deemed to have some aspects of subjectivity include the provision of schemes such as counselling services and private medical insurance offered to employees (Business in the Community, 2009).

Lunt et al. (2014) argued that even though these initiatives (attitude to health, management systems, leadership style and the work environment) have a genuine role in either defending or allowing the recovery of the well-being of

individuals at work, they do not accurately solve the fundamental impact on well-being at work. This suggests that employers are over-concentrating on health promotional activities instead of developing programs that focus on the employee. Plijter et al. (2014) concur with Lunt and colleagues' points and argue that unless employers can create a balance between the purposes of the business and how they can meet the needs of individual employees within the wider work environment, then supporting employees' well-being will be difficult to achieve in any work setting. This means that employers still see worker well-being in economic terms and not as a way to encourage individual growth (Heron, 2013). There is ample evidence that workplace well-being programs that support individual growth and development lead to an increase in productivity and positive human experiences. Guillen-Royo (2010) found that individuals stay longer with their organisation if they find their work meaningful. Additionally, individuals who find meaning in what they do tend to overlook their challenges and see their work as lively and rewarding (Guillen-Royo, 2010).

Dickson-Swift et al. (2014) conducted a mixed-method study to investigate workplace health promotions programs for employees in three Victorian organisations in Australia. They aimed to find out how these programs impacted on the employees' well-being at work. These three organisations all presented some sort of fitness program designed to support the behavioural change of their employees. They found that workplace flexibility, communication, personal relationships, physical space and rewards were the most common themes that emerged from all employees across the three organisations. However, in terms of their well-being, psychosocial needs such as how to deal with work and domestic issues, anxiety and depression emerged as important contributing factors to their overall well-being.

Based on these findings, Dickson and colleagues argued that although health promotional programs at work contribute to the fitness levels of employees, they do not address individual well-being needs. Instead, it is organisational culture and strategic interventions, such as the support employees get from their employers to address personal issues surrounding anxieties, domestic problems and depression, which is important to them (Moen et al., 2016). The limitation of this study is that the survey data were not provided to show the correlation between the participants' responses and the two methods used. Nevertheless, this study discovered significant issues, such as the need for employers to invest in their environment to make it attractive with interesting programs, as all contribute to the psychosocial needs and well-being of employees (Liz, 2003).

On the other hand, Pescud et al. (2015) investigated employers' views on the promotion of workplace health and well-being and the factors affecting these views from different organisations inside Western Australia. A qualitative phenomenological approach was used, with ten focus group discussions conducted to gather the data. A total of 79 participants were selected from different organisations and locations. The themes identified included employers' perception relating to the concept of workplace health and well-being, the descriptions of healthy and unhealthy workers, the importance of a healthy worker, and the role of the workplace in influencing the health and well-being views of the employers.

The results of this study revealed the following: First, the conceptualisation of workplace health and well-being came with varying explanations, particularly relating to health and safety and how to minimise risk at work. This supports the misconception by earlier researchers about what workplace health and well-

being entail if not properly put into context (Danna & Griffin,1999). However, across all the ten groups concerning the concepts of well-being, participants placed importance on stress, mental health and work-life balance. Again, this implies that worker well-being is deeply rooted in both the physical and mental well-being of individuals (Wynaden et al., 2014). Second, several comments emerged in the employers' description of healthy and unhealthy workers; however, the most noticeable one was about the mental health of a worker. A healthy worker was described as having the following attributes: being alert, having a good physical appearance, and being confident, calm and cheerful (Pescud *et al.*, 2015:10). In contrast, the unhealthy worker was described as being stressed, lacking strength and vitality, lacking self-respect, visibly unhappy and not having a support network. Again, all the group participants were undivided in that healthy workers were extremely important in the workplace. Their reasons were that healthy workers are perceived to be more proactive and positive at work and contribute to an increase in productivity and that a high level of safety is perceived to be associated with them (Pescud et al., 2015).

Lastly, occupational health and safety were constantly seen as crucial to the role of the workplace. However, on wider health and well-being topics, participants' views varied depending on individual organisations and whether health and well-being initiatives were prioritised by their organisations. This means that participants or groups that have experienced health and well-being programs and processes at their workplaces are likely to relate more to the discussion and appreciate its importance than those who have not (Moore et al., 2011; McCoy et al., 2014). Overall, a strong theme that emerges across all the groups that participated in these studies was the responsibility of the workplace

in terms of the worker's mental health. This was linked to building a relationship at the workplace and workers having a sense of responsibility to carry out their duties, which is striking. There appears to be a pyramid of responsibility, with workplace safety at the top, then mental health and lifestyle attributes such as physical activities and nutrition at the bottom. A potential limitation of Pescud et al.'s (2015) study was that the themes identified and the information gathered were not explored in terms of the impact on the participants and what that means to their well-being to advance the understanding of successful workplace and well-being pathways, policies and programs. This could help to expand the size of workplace deficiencies in implementing healthy changes as well as provide evidence that more clearly explains the drivers of workplace well-being changes.

Also, Pescud's study provided an understanding that the context of the study and the choice of participants could have an impact on the data generated. For example, a smaller organisation may struggle financially to implement workplace well-being programs, while a bigger organisation may not due to good financial backing. This is likely to create a knowledge gap in understanding workplace well-being programs between employees in smaller organisations and those of bigger ones. Nevertheless, this study, together with the data gathered, opened up discussion and at the same time provided information to help researchers, health-promoting organisations, practitioners, government departments and insurance companies to successfully create interest in and events for employers. The next section looks at workplace well-being approaches in the context of HEIs globally and in Ghana.

### **2.5.3 Approaches to employees' workplace well-being: a case in higher education institutions**

Approaches that are rooted in the higher education workplace to promote academic employees' well-being vary depending on the issues raised, but they are not entirely different from those reviewed above in other sectors/industries. This is because all workplace well-being programs share the same fundamental purpose: improving human health and reducing the health risk or the risks associated with the work they do. For example, approaches such as the provision of gym vouchers for employees to encourage them to do regular exercise to become physically fit as well as encourage healthy eating among employees to reduce health risks such as obesity heart-related sickness could be applied to all workplaces (Groeneveld et al., 2010; Thorndike, 2011). However, depending on the profession and the demands of the job, more sector-specific approaches could be used.

Fernandez et al. (2016) conducted a systematic review of the literature on mental health in the university work environment using a setting-based intervention, i.e., an approach which involves using a multi-disciplinary and holistic method to integrate actions across factors to reduce workplace stressors and prevent disease. They aimed to review all the existing evidence on the different strategies used to promote health and well-being at university workplaces, especially regarding mental health. Nineteen papers were found to match the study criteria and were reviewed. Out of these, only four were aimed at promoting academics' mental health and well-being, while the remaining were all directed towards students. They inferred that within the higher education work environment, students' well-being is considered a priority over that of academics and that academics' well-being issues are seen

as a secondary option – until “alarm bells” are raised on a person’s well-being or mental health in general.

In terms of workplace well-being approaches, they found that university workplaces mostly use social marking intervention strategies. This is a concept used to effect behavioural change to understand what people desire as well as their characters to design programs that meet their needs and those of the wider society (Serrat, 2017). These strategies include lifestyle changes such as eating healthily, quitting smoking, reducing the consumption of alcoholic drinks, becoming active through regular physical exercise and preventative measures such as knowing how to manage stress and anger in the job and seeking regular health screening (Walsh et al., 1993; Serrat, 2017). However, when suspected cases of mental health are reported concerning an academic employee, the authorities often make changes to assessment methods and the way students are taught, i.e. creating flexible teaching hours and allocating smaller groups of students to the affected lecturer, to enable them to take control of their work-life balance. The significance of this for individual well-being is that they can successfully overcome difficulties and achieve what they want out of their work and life.

Conversely, Fernandez et al. (2016) argued that the social marking interventions used had no direct impact on academic mental health compared to changing assessment and teaching strategies. They found that such an approach is dissatisfactory in addressing academics’ mental health and well-being at work. They concluded that universities should invest in programs that promote social and physical work environments for staff’s and students’ well-being as well as their mental health issues. This suggests that the current evidence on higher education workplace well-being approach is limited to only

students and that more needs to be done to obtain the best approaches that support both academic employees' and students' well-being. Also, interventions are not often aligned with the needs of the people, leading to a lack of interest and low participation in most workplace well-being programs.

Douglas (2019) surveyed UK universities and found that although improving the well-being and mental health of academic employees is important, only 11% of all UK universities have a specific well-being policy. Douglas further found that work pressure, such as increased workload and long working hours, accounted for the increase in staff mental health and well-being issues. However, the finding is not seen as important at the strategic level for HEIs as the emphasis is on students' well-being (Douglas, 2019).

Again, recently, Morrish (2020) conducted a follow-up study on the mental health and well-being of academic and professional services staff in 17 universities in the UK. Data on 10 universities spanning 2009 to 2018 were reviewed and a 155% rise in staff access to counselling due to work pressure was found. The data on all 17 universities reviewed reported a rise in occupational health referrals by 170%. The current sample of universities found an increase in both counselling and referrals to occupational health as high as 500% since 2010 (Morrish, 2019, 2020). These findings are worrying, however, the management of universities appeared reluctant to accept the findings and design intervention programs to reduce the year-on-year increase in mental health problems. These studies support earlier studies by Fernandez et al. (2016) and other scholars on the lack of attention on academics in terms of their well-being.

In summary, the review has shown a clear difference between the past and present approaches used by institutions to address employee health and well-being issues at the workplace in general employment and specifically in higher education institutions. Also, the reasons for the differences in the institutions' approaches have been demonstrated to be partly related to performance outcomes and increased productivity and profit levels for general employment, while in the HEIs work outcomes and profit levels are seen in terms of the increase in student numbers alongside the retention and progression rates. Again, the review has shown that most HEIs' workplace well-being programs are centred more on students than on employees. This again raises concerns as to why these institutions, which are known as institutions of knowledge creation and lead national debates on key human development and health issues, are now lagging in terms of their own employees' well-being. The review also demonstrated that any approach to addressing workplace well-being issues should be a collective responsibility of both the employee and the employer as working together could lead to creating a positive working relationship, which will eventually lead to an increase in productivity and growth (Spector, 1997; Pescud et al., 2015).

Further, it has been noticed through this review that there is a link between employee productivity, work efficiency and well-being; hence, organisations that invest in their employees' well-being obtain greater returns on their investment, such as long-term commitment from their employees and respect for their organisational goals (Wrzesniewski et al.1997; Pegden, 2003). What the previous and current studies have arguably failed to address, irrespective of whether from the higher education work environment or the general employment, are the fundamental questions such as the meaning employees

derive from their work, what that means to them, and how that impacts on their well-being. Also, where well-being programs are introduced in organisations, employee involvement seems to be limited, so programs are not aligned to their needs or within the context of their work to create the meaning required. Lastly, the review has shown ample evidence that workplace well-being programs are seen in economic terms, namely productivity and performance outcomes, and not in terms of the meaning individuals get from their work, growth and the impact on their lives (Lunt et al., 2014). The subsequent sections will look at the higher education work environment and issues around work demands.

## **Section C: The Higher Education Work Environment (HEWE)**

### **2.6 Psychosocial factors and Employee Well-being**

This section examines the literature on the HEWE with a focus on the psychosocial factors that impact the academic employee's work and lives. The HEWE is where teaching, learning and research take place and is usually in the context of a university or university college. These institutions train people for various professions and provide liberal education that challenges and expands our thinking. They create knowledge that contributes to the economic and social development of society through new ideas, inventions, concepts and applications (Austin & Jones, 2016). However, concerns of work complexities, together with increasing work pressures, have been raised by academics globally in their work environment, which is impacting negatively on their well-being.

Given the work that academics do, not much is known about how they understand workplace well-being, what it means to them, and who decides on changes in the HEWE, especially in Ghana, to ensure that academics feel safe and comfortable at work in terms of their well-being (Winefield et al., 2008).

These are important questions that this study needs to answer. Employee workplace well-being is, therefore, of significant importance in the HEWE as scholars have shown how happy employees contribute to high performance and positive work outcomes (Harter et al., 2003; Raiden et al., 2019). As Black (2008) noted, the work environment is made up of social and psychological factors that are considered an important social determinant of health, health inequalities and well-being. Whether the HEWE provides programmes that support academic employees in terms of the factors above to enhance their performance and support their well-being is an issue that needs exploring. Thus, the psychosocial factors that are inherent in the HEWE and which can affect academic employee well-being are reviewed, discussed and presented below.

## **2.6.1 Psychosocial factors in the higher education work environment**

### **2.6.1.1 Employees work level factors: stress and work-related stressors**

In the HEWE, work-related stress is on the rise due to research and student demands, teaching loads and pressure to meet tight deadlines (Jacobs et al., 2007; Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008; Wood, 2009). Catano et al. (2010) conducted a national stress survey in Canadian universities. They aimed to find out if the same occupational stress outcomes and stressors found in a previous study conducted by Tytherleigh et al. (2005) in UK and Australian universities applied to Canadian universities. The UK and Australian universities showed high occupational stress levels among university faculty members. They found that the participants' overall response rate, as well as the results, were similar to those in the Australian and UK studies. High psychological distress was recorded among the participants, at 13%, while physical health symptoms due to work stress were recorded at 22%. Job insecurity and work-life imbalance predicted high work displeasure, and increased psychological distress was seen in the work-life imbalance.

However, the participants were emotionally committed to their university and satisfied with their work overall. The authors suggested that although physical health, psychological distress and job imbalance were reported as high stressors, some individuals see university work as prestigious and that alone could satisfy them emotionally. These findings suggest that within the university work environment, work stresses are a concern among academic employees as they negatively impact on their health. This study again demonstrates that the higher education work environment contains stressors that affect academic employees' well-being, yet workplace well-being programs that will reduce these stressors are not implemented to support the employee as this could impact on their performance (Paton, 2013; Winefield et al., 2008; Siti et al., 2012).

In another study, Sang et al. (2013) measured the stress, job satisfaction and commitment levels of both academic and non-academic staff in Chinese universities. They found that work stress hurts employees' well-being and attitude towards work, which resulted in a deterioration of their physical health. Again, job dissatisfaction and job stressors were higher for the academic staff than the non-academic staff in the sample population. This was due to a high workload and the lack of a work-life balance among the academic staff. This suggests that within the same work environment, some individuals are more likely to experience more work stresses than others, as in the case of the academic employees in this study.

However, it could be argued that the university work environment did not have programs to check workload and work-life balance for their academics. Even if there were programs, the academics were not aware of and could therefore not take advantage of them to reduce the impact of their workload on their well-

being and physical health. Further, they argued that there is a link between an employee's work stressors and dissatisfaction, which can lead to a reduction in individual work commitment and a deterioration of their physical health. This confirms Meyer and Maltin's (2010) findings that strong affective commitment to one's organisation might have a positive effect on employee well-being. Similar findings were also reported in previous studies by Chen and Zhuang (2005) and Tenenhaus et al. (2005) on the long working hours of university lecturers in China and in a study in UK HEIs by Jacobs et al. (2007). These studies contributed to our understanding that within the university work environment, academic employees are stressed and this can impact negatively on their well-being and physical health.

In contrast, a study by Jung and Jung (2014) on selected academic employees across different countries found that Mexico had the highest job satisfaction rate (87%), while the UK had the lowest (47%). Job stress, on the other hand, varied across selected countries, with Korea having the highest (68%) and Malaysia having the lowest (20%). Jung and Jung argued that (selected) countries with strong market-driven economies are in the higher stress group, while European countries are in the high satisfaction group, except for the UK. The conflicting difference between the selected countries on job stress and satisfaction levels were attributed to working conditions, salary, workload, the pressure to publish, academic freedom and empowerment. Frequent managerial reforms and new policies were sources of academic stress, while the high social reputation of academic staff in their society, as well as their autonomy, were sources of satisfaction. In their conclusion, Jung and Jung argued that these selected countries demonstrated the inconsistent nature of current academic society, as

on one hand academics are satisfied and on the other hand their stress levels are high.

Antoniadou et al. (2015) used an interpretive approach (an approach that views reality based on experience, meaning and understanding) in the Cypriot higher education context. They focused on understanding lecturers' perceptions of workplace fear and identified issues similar to what other countries, such as the USA and the UK, were experiencing, namely increased academic work, long hours of teaching, increased scrutiny, and job uncertainty, insecurity and control. The study found that these issues were a worry for the lecturers as they impact on their well-being and health, a view supported by Dickerson and Green (2012).

Antoniadou and colleagues argued that having a good understanding of the workers' perspective of workplace issues is important for changes to occur and for strategies to be developed to promote organisational well-being. The findings indicate that when policies were put in place to address individual concerns at the workplace (through counselling and the provision of co-worker support) lecturers' sense of autonomy increased and individual fear became less rampant. This evidence is supported by Goos and Hughes (2010), who made a similar suggestion in their study. Antoniadou et al. (2015) concluded that developing programs that improve lecturers' confidence and participation could be key to positive well-being and feeling happy and satisfied at the workplace. Also, the role of management within Cypriot universities in helping lecturers to reduce their anxieties through mentoring programs and constant interaction between colleagues to determine their uncertainties and opportunities to reduce long teaching hours are important, considering the nature of the fear associated with their work (Naghieh et al., 2015).

Sifuna (2012) conducted a quantitative study on leadership changes in Kenyan universities and found a lack of infrastructure, funding and autonomy as causes of academics' workplace stress. The findings were linked to political interference in university management and leadership style in Kenya. Sifuna's study supported an earlier quantitative study conducted by Ngambi (2011) on university staff at the University of South Africa on the challenges facing universities. Ngambi explored the commitment, self-confidence, perception and satisfaction levels of staff, and found budget cuts, new leadership and performance pressure as contributing factors damping the self-confidence of the staff, leading to apprehension. This resulted in low performance and high absenteeism. Ngambi's finding resonates with other studies (Watson et al., 2009; Pihlak & Alas, 2012) showing that leadership and organisational changes impact on employees. The findings from these studies, in turn, resonate with a part of this study's results, namely that political interference impacts negatively on university management operations. However, social influence and cultural beliefs were found to be the key difference in the Ghanaian context, which this study has indicated.

### **2.6.2 High levels of workload and long working hours**

In an organisation, the concept of long hours can mean many things, including daily, weekly, monthly or yearly for an employee in either part-time or full-time employment. For example, an employee in a fulltime job may count their weekly working hours to be in line with the *working time directive/regulation* of 48 hours a week on average, especially those working in Europe (Fitzgerald & Caesar, 2012). On the other hand, those working on a part-time basis and moving from one job to another may count their working hours to include both travel and business times, which can sometimes be more than 48 hours a week. This has

made it challenging to define long working hours. Some organisations may count their employees' working hours to broadly include both on and off-site activities, while others may only count onsite activities. However, working hours which exceed the legal limit of hours expected of an employee, either daily, weekly, monthly or yearly, are considered to constitute longer working hours by employees (White & Beswick, 2003).

The workload, on the other hand, is the quantity or total amount of work assigned to or expected from an employee within a time frame or a period in an organisation (Bowling & Kirkendall, 2012:223). Several studies have shown that both work overload and long working hours can have detrimental effects on employees' physical and mental well-being, such as increased anxiety, stress, and fatigue. This situation can result in the deterioration of their health (Jacobs et al., 2007; Jung & Jung, 2014). In the HEWE, research shows that the sector is associated with high levels of stress due to work overload and long working hours and that such work overload affects academic employees' well-being (Winefield et al., 2003; Jacobs et al., 2007).

Jacobs et al. (2007) carried out secondary data analysis on the stress levels of UK universities. They found that workplace stressors had a negative linear relationship with all the performance measures (organisational commitment, health, stress levels & performance) used. The relationship between the performance measures mentioned in the above paragraph was similarly influenced by the psychological well-being, organisational commitment and physical health of the employees. This implies that performance measures at the workplace have a high possibility of influencing all aspects of an individual's life. When this happens, such an individual gets worried and their stress levels increase (Aggarwal-Gupta et al., 2010).

Other studies have also found that individuals who are less stressed at work are mentally alert and show good physical health, in comparison to those that are stressed and have a profound sense of well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2002; Wright & Cropanzano, 2004). This poor physical health and not being mentally alert can result in anxieties and eventually affect individual performance. Jacobs et al. (2007) found differences in the relationship between the stress levels and the performance of the various groups of academics. Again, they found that individual levels of responsibilities at work can also influence their stress and performance levels negatively. For example, academics who are assigned leadership roles alongside teaching in HEIs are likely to experience some levels of stress due to the many deadlines they have to meet compared to those without leadership roles. Jacobs et al. (2007) discussed and compared their findings and implications to earlier findings and the assertion by Tytherleigh et al. (2005) that UK HEIs no longer provide a stress-free work environment for academic employees. Overall, these two studies provided consistent evidence of how academic employees in HEIs are confronted with workplace stressors and the negative impact these stressors have on their employees' work and lives.

Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2008) conducted a quantitative study in six South African HEIs using a cross-sectional survey (a survey process where data is collected at the same time from individuals with similar characteristics but are diverse on key issues of interest such as location, income levels, and age) involving 595 participants. They aimed to identify the indicators of HEI stressors and analyse the differences in these stressors between the diverse groups of academics. They also aimed to examine whether job stressors imply a lack of organisational commitment and ill health. For their study, Barkhuizen and

Rothmann (2008) employed a biographical questionnaire (a questionnaire which covers a person's level of education, training, work experience, attitude and hobbies), together with ASSET (An Organisational Stress Screening Tool). The researchers identified two main HEI stressors: work overload and work-life balance. The participants described work overload as a situation where employees do not have enough time to do their work, being given unmanageable workload, and the setting of unrealistic targets by their employers. On the other hand, work-life balance implies a situation where employees are working longer than they want to or chose to and work unsocial hours such as weekends and late into the night. The results from this study suggest that within the HEIs in South Africa, there is little or no opportunity for academics to discuss their workload and the challenges they go through to get work done for their employers. This leaves them with no option but to sacrifice their family and leisure time to get work done, sometimes at the expense of their health.

It needs to be noted, however, that the cross-sectional data set used by Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2008) is limited as it only provided the pattern of the effect on all the variables. A longitudinal study would have provided much broader data to cover all the variables, including the casual ones found in this study. Nevertheless, this study contributed overall to our understanding of some of the factors that contribute to work overload in HEI in South Africa. Also, the results are similar to current findings in HEIs where academic employees are worried about the impact of work overload and long working hours on their ill health and commitment levels. The lack of control over the academic employee's workload and their inability to get support from their employer to reduce their workload was a major concern for the academics.

Abendroth and Den Dulk (2011) are of the view that organisational and instrumental support for employees has a direct impact on employees' satisfaction at the workplace. However, this was not seen in Barkhuizen and Rothmann's (2008) study. Working late at unsocial hours, especially late into the night, was a way to get their work under control, to avoid complaints from their employers for not meeting work deadlines, and also to keep their job. This is significant as studies suggest that the lack of work control and family life balance is a possible contributing factor to employees' workplaces stressors (Bell et al., 2012; Allen et al., 2013; Bezuidenhout, 2015).

In another study, Atindanbila (2011) conducted a quantitative study on the perceived stressors of lecturers at a public university in Ghana. The study involved 432 lecturers at different levels: junior lecturers, senior lecturers, and professors. The Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI), a tool for measuring work-related stress in teachers, was the method employed in this study (Borg et al., 1991). Three distinct themes were identified. The first was long working hours (lecturers regularly work more than 55 hours a week). The second was dealing with increased work demand (research supervision and attending teaching evaluation meetings, which is a requirement for promotion), while low-value work and dealing with student disputes was the third. Atindanbila (2011) found that all lecturers', irrespective of their role and rank within the university work environment, had moderately high-stress levels. The main cause of their stress was linked to the university work environment, and the least cause was their administrative role.

Atindanbila's (2011) study concluded that junior lecturers were more stressed than senior lecturers and professors. Their stressors were related to workload issues, such as a lack of preparation time, increased marking, covering a large

syllabus within a short time, and a lack of teaching resources. This made them work more than 55 hours a week, and they struggled to strike a balance between their work and family life. The senior lectures and professors indicated that their stressors were primarily related to their administrative roles. The reason for these differences was that junior lecturers were being given large classes to teach, which put greater pressure on them. They were also inexperienced in managing student behaviour in the classroom compared to the senior lectures and the professors. This may mean that besides the workload, inexperience in a persons' job role or inadequate job training could add to their stress levels (Lim et al., 2010; Cooper & Travers, 2012; Jackson, 2015). However, the study suggested that if the junior lecturers were trained and mentored by their senior colleagues, the outcome of their stress levels would have been different. Atindanbila (2011) recommended the recruitment of more lecturers, teaching assistants and support for junior lecturers during marking to help reduce the workload and its negative effect on lecturers' well-being. This suggests that lecturers were understaffed in the university, resulting in more work being allocated to the inexperienced new and junior lecturers – a situation that put pressure on them.

One would have expected the senior lecturers to take up the responsibility of mentoring the new and junior lecturers to help them gain confidence and experience on the job. However, this was not the case in this study. A clear demonstration of power play and superiority between the new and junior and senior lecturers was seen in terms of work allocation. This implies that it may be difficult for the new and junior lecturers to have the opportunity to choose subjects they feel comfortable teaching and also freely discuss their workload

and allocation due to the fear of being perceived as having a weakness (Boyd, 2010; Cooper & Travers, 2012:2; Tareef, 2013).

On the other hand, if there were adequate numbers of lecturers, their stressors would have presented a different outcome, especially those relating to the junior lecturers. Atindanbila's (2011) study targeted statistical outcomes based on the chosen methodology and failed to look at the lecturers' personal experiences and the impact of stressors on their lives. Looking at lecturers' personal experiences and the impact of stressors on their lives would have made the data-rich and robust. Atindanbila (2011) advanced the argument that all lecturers, irrespective of their rank, had different types of workload and perceived different stress levels, which in turn affected their general well-being. This view suggests that within the university work environment, the workload is a contributing factor to academic employee stress levels (Watts & Robertson, 2011).

In contrast, Kyvik (2013) conducted a survey on full-time academic staff at four Norwegian universities to explore the validity of their past and present perception of working hours and workload. A mail survey data from 1982-2008 alongside time-series data was employed for the study. A data set was used to check for variations and trends across variables over a period (e.g. daily, weekly and monthly) and recorded as data points. Kyvik (2013) found that the academic staff noticed an increase in their work and that they worked longer hours. However, when the average changes in the time of their work were measured using time-series data, no empirical evidence was found to support their claim. Instead, evidence showed that there was a small decline in their weekly average number of working hours. The Norwegian study confirms the findings of previous studies in the USA by Schuster and Finkelstein (2006), in

Australia by Coates et al. (2009) and in the UK by Tight (2010). This conclusion suggests that workload does not fully explain that academic staff work longer hours and that there may be other contributing factors in the university work environment.

Smeby (2003) concurred with this point and noted that the academics' research work in the university work environment may not be counted by managers as workload. Instead, it may be seen as individual career development, whereas the academics may see it as part of their workload due to the research demand placed on them by their institutions. Kyvik (2013) went on to conclude that there was not much of an increase in the workload of the individuals in the study. However, it is the balance of the average academic workload that has changed in an undesirable manner. This has put pressure on some aspects of the academic jobs, such as individual research, that most academics seem to like and has also made it difficult for them to focus on their teaching work (Tight, 2010:214-215). This situation implies that individual contract hours might not have changed, but other commitments within their work environment, such as academic staff being invited by students to give a talk or chair their programs, may have added to their long working hours. For example, academic employees arriving early at work outside their contracted hours or leaving late does not always translate into long working hours for their employers. This is because such an employee may be doing activities that are outside of their scheduled academic work. For this reason, some employers only count scheduled work for employees when they exceed their contracted hours, although some individuals may genuinely be working longer hours to meet tight deadlines and achieve organisational goals (El Shikieri & Musa, 2012).

Again, Kyvik (2013) found a slight decline in the academic staff responses over the period across all the studies (e.g. 79% in 1982; 69% in 1992; 60% in 2001; and 42% in 2008). This suggests that although there was an increase in the numbers of surveys carried out over time, the academic employees may have been tired of constantly being asked to answer survey questionnaires; hence, their reluctance to respond, leading to a decrease in their response rate. Kyvik (2013) found some methodological flaws in all the studies (Bentley & Kyvik, 2012). First, in earlier studies (1982-2001) the questionnaire was sent to only full-time academic staff, who were asked to estimate on average how long they had worked in the previous year (from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> of December). Again, the academic staff were also asked to include their professional activities outside the university as well as their university position duties. Further, they were asked to approximate the overall time used for predefined duties in percentages, namely for research, teaching, administrative duties and supervision of students.

However, the latest study, which was carried out in 2008, used a different approach to investigate the working hours of the academic staff. In this study, the participants were asked to approximate the number of hours they had spent on service, teaching and non-teaching activities, administration and research each week, separately. As these studies depended on individuals recollecting their working life from the past and estimating their working hours, the possibility of error in the recall is high, which is likely to have resulted in data inconsistencies. Again, some participants may have overestimated their figures to show that they were working long hours. On the other hand, others may have also underestimated their hours because they could not remember. This over and underestimation may have led to data unreliability. Nevertheless, there

were some similarities in the findings from the UK and Australia studies. For example, both studies found an undesirable increase in the administrative workload, research and teaching hours, with empirical evidence to support the academic employees' view (Tight, 2010). However, from the Norwegian study, there was only a slight indication of this. This, again, suggests a trend of varying academic workload across countries and time variations.

Consequently, a comparative survey of the academic employees' weekly administrative working hours across all the countries referred to in this study showed an increase in time spent: Norway recorded (7.1), the USA (7.4), Australia (9.7) and the UK (10.6) (Bentley & Kyvik, 2012). The highest number was recorded in the UK survey, showing why the academic employees in the UK study perceived their workload to have increased. Nevertheless, the Norway survey did not provide any evidence of increasing time spent on weekly administrative work. Therefore, it did not support Tight's (2010) account of weekly administrative workload. Overall, the various surveys showed a trend of increased workload and working hours across the selected countries in HEIs, which relates well to what is happening in the Ghanaian HEIs.

In another study, Pop-Vasileva et al. (2014) conducted a survey of 37 Australian universities involving 350 full-time academics drawn from the accounting department and another discipline. The academics were grouped into levels according to their ranks. All associate lecturers were placed at Level 1, lecturers at Level 2, senior lecturers at Level 3, associate professors at Level 4, and professors at level 5. A total of 142 academics out of the 350 invited completed the online questionnaire through the universities' websites, representing (40.6%) of the total sample. The aim of Pop-Vasileva et al.'s (2014) study was to explore the work-related attitude of accounting academics by looking specifically at the

institutional factors linked to their stress and dissatisfaction levels and the tendency of the academics to remain with their institutions. The findings from this study suggest that lecturers and associate lecturers were the least satisfied due to extreme workloads, which were due to increases in student numbers and a shortage of staff (Pop-Vasileva et al., 2014). A further finding of note was that the job satisfaction levels were low and statistically different across all the academics. While co-worker relationships, organisational support, and the nature of work were linked to high job satisfaction levels, this was found among the associate professors and the professors. This suggests that the nature of individual work has a link to job dissatisfaction levels in an organisation (Markovits et al., 2010).

Also, there is a high possibility that senior academics (professors and their associates) support each other at work more than the other academics. This difference in the satisfaction levels among the academics is an indication of the varying support systems provided in the higher education work environment, which seems to favour only those in senior positions or with high rank. However, it is also possible that the attention placed on organisational support systems by the management is a strategy used to ignore the issues (lecturer to student ratio) raised by the associate lecturers as the cause of daily job dissatisfaction experience. It is possible that ignoring the issue for a while would help management generate more income from the high student numbers to support other institutional programs. However, to the academics, the negative impact of high student numbers on their daily life is overwhelming.

On the tendency to remain with their institutions and work in academia, the study found this to be moderately high. Only a few academics expressed their desire to look for jobs outside academia and in different organisations. This

implies that although the workload was a concern to the academics, the HEI was still attractive to most academics. This finding, however, contradicts earlier studies by Tytherleigh et al. (2005) and Jacobs et al. (2007) that the HEI is no longer attractive due to workload and constant changes. Academics frequently cite their passion for supporting students and passing on knowledge when asked why they chose a career in HEI (Schellenberg & Bailis, 2015). This might explain why most of the academics in this study chose to remain with their institutions, even with the high concerns of workload and work pressure. Again, this perhaps allowed the academics to see their work as more of a nurturing role to the students rather than lecturing.

The limitation of this study is that it failed to pay attention to the varying working conditions and characteristics within disciplines across the various universities. This is likely to have provided inconsistent data, resulting in an inconclusive outcome. Even though the generalisability of their findings is limited due to the study concentrating mostly on accounting academics, they are congruent with other findings (see, Atindanbila, 2011) wherein junior lecturers in HEI expressed high work dissatisfaction due to workload.

## **2.7 The Work Environment and Employees' Well-being**

The work environment consists of two major dimensions, namely the context of the work and the work itself. The context of the work comprises the social working conditions of the employees and their physical surroundings, whereas work covers the way a task is allocated and carried out by an individual in the work environment (Spector, 1997). Work also involves activities such as training, having a sense of accomplishment from work and having control over one's work in the work environment (Gazioglu & Tanselb, 2006; Skalli et al., 2008).

Several studies have focused on job outcomes and employee satisfaction and have ignored the importance of the working environment to employees' performance and well-being (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). Noah and Steve (2012) found that organisations that overlook their working environment experience a high rate of absenteeism and low commitment from the employees, and this often results in low productivity. According to the same scholars, co-worker relationships, employees' safety, job security, recognition for doing good work and partaking in the managerial process of the organisation are things in the working environment that contribute to the employees' sense of fulfilment, satisfaction and well-being at work (Noah & Steve, 2012). Also, they explained that when employees understand that their organisation values them, they tend to show ownership and have a high level of commitment to their organisation.

In the work environment, factors such as working hours, employee autonomy, and communication between leadership and employees may affect employee's performance, happiness, and well-being negatively if not properly managed (Lane et al., 2010; Baah & Amoako, 2011). Zabrodska et al. (2014) conducted a quantitative study to determine the relationship between the well-being of academic employees in a faculty in a major Czech Republic university and their work environment. Their aim was to look at a specific variable in the faculty work environment that impacted on the well-being of the academics. A total of 236 academics from the Faculty of Arts participated in this study. The Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire II, by Kristensen et al. (2005), was used to measure the faculty's psychosocial work environment. The Organizational Climate measure (the collective employee insights into

organizational practices and processes) by Patterson et al. (2005) was used to measure the faculty's organizational climate.

Zabrodska et al. (2014) found a moderately high work engagement and job satisfaction among all the academic employees. Factors such as employee involvement in decision making, autonomy and fairly low pressure on them to publish were linked to the faculty's organisational climate, while the faculty's psychosocial work environment was associated with strong social support and community engagement. Zabrodska and colleagues compared their findings with the market governance prevalence in Anglo-American contexts and found that the faculty work environment supports academic employees' autonomy and self-attainment and that there appears to be a culture of cooperation among academics. This, they said, contributed to the academic employees' well-being (Zabrodska et al., 2014). Their finding suggests that although there are differences in academic governance in various universities when Humboldtian governance (a governance based on the principle that individuals should have autonomy and a sense of belonging to a single community in a work environment) and the market-driven governance approach are used by universities, a high level of academic employees' well-being can be achieved. This situation can then lead to an increase in academic employees' performance and satisfaction rate. Their view was supported by Shin and Jung (2013), who conducted a similar study on the changing academic work environment, work stress and work satisfaction and found that academics are happier when they have the autonomy to do their work and can take decisions freely based on their professional know-how instead of relying on external stakeholders.

The limitations of Zabrodka et al.'s (2014) study are that the cross-sectional correlation design which was used limited the possibility of a causal interpretation of the connections amongst employees' well-being and the aspect of the work environment being discussed (social support and recognition, employee engagement, and quality of leadership). Again, there were differences in the sub-categorisation of academics. For example, there were more junior lecturers than other categories of academics, but there was no discussion of the subcategories of the academics. This suggests a possible influence of the results towards the views of the junior lecturers.

Further, Zabrodka et al.'s (2014) results were based on one group of academics from one institution. To truly understand the impact of the various types of work environment and academic governance on academic employees' well-being, a comparative study with a larger sample across different universities and faculties is needed. Nevertheless, this study has contributed to our understanding that a supportive work environment and governance structure of the university environment that gives autonomy to individual academic employees could lead to a positive influence on their well-being.

Schulz (2013) conducted a study on the UK's Russell Group universities (a partnership of 20 older research-intensive universities) to explore the impact of organisational environment, job satisfaction, workplace conflicts, and role ambiguity on academic staff well-being. A total of 448 academics responded to the survey via email. The respondents were as follows: lecturers (216), senior lecturers (130), readers (65) and professors (37). The participants in this study all had both teaching and research responsibilities in their universities. On academics' job satisfaction, Schulz (2013) found that academic staff were moderately satisfied with their work overall, which is similar to the work of

Zabrodska et al. (2014). This suggests that most academic employees in these two studies found their work fulfilling and interesting intellectually. This could also be due to their dual responsibilities in their various universities. For example, an academic may derive satisfaction from interacting with students during teaching sessions but may not be satisfied with the research aspect of their responsibilities, and vice versa. However, due to the dual nature of their work, the satisfaction achieved from the teaching may compliment the dissatisfaction in the aspect of their research responsibilities. This will then increase the overall satisfaction rate, although the individual may not be truly satisfied (Schulz, 2013). On the other hand, if they had only one responsibility, such as teaching, their response rate would have been different.

In contrast to the studies in the above paragraph, Tytherleigh et al.'s (2005) study of UK universities reported that UK academic employees are demotivated, stressed, and demoralised due to lack of managerial support and the work demands. Again, both the role of conflict and ambiguity reported moderate levels of stress among academics. This situation means that although academics are overall satisfied with their work, they are also concerned about the uncertainties surrounding their work in terms of a contract extension and job security. This is a situation that has added to their moderate stress levels. Abouserie (1996) is of the view that moderate levels of stress among employees are not sustainable and may eventually increase and negatively affect academic employees' well-being if proper support systems are not in place. In comparison to other occupations, such as doctors and pilots, the academics in Schulz's (2013) study had a slightly higher response rate in terms of their ambiguity and role of conflicts in their work environment (Kinman & Jones, 2003; Naidoo, 2005). On the other hand, this could lead to a "survival of

the fittest system” as individuals who could not stand high levels of conflict and ambiguity at work may not reach some key positions, roles or even drop out of the organisation (Schulz & Auld, 2006).

Further, this study found a negative outcome from the regression analyses on the relationship between academics’ job satisfaction, stress, organisational environment, the role of ambiguity and conflict. This situation implies that high levels of workplace stressors are likely to be associated with low job satisfaction levels. In this study, the academics appear to find their organisational environment essentially satisfying. For example, a supportive work environment was associated with lower levels of stress and also linked to higher job satisfaction levels. This means that a work environment with varying support for an employee with less individual control can result in increased job satisfaction levels for individuals.

This finding is similar to the study of Gillespie et al. (2001), who found that “talking to co-workers about work, sharing one's workload with co-workers and being able to ask for help watered-down the stress levels of academics.” Again, in this study, the universities operated multiple managerial approaches (bureaucratic and adhocracy process) instead of a single approach. This may have contributed to the high satisfaction levels expressed by the academics about their work environment as the adhocracy approach in a work environment gave academics flexibility at work, which seems to decrease work stress. A strong market environment was linked to increasing levels of role conflicts and putting academics in competition with each other. This could lead to performance pressures and stress (Jenkins, 2004; Deem & Brehony, 2005).

This study was limited in its findings, as the current university work environment in general appears to use a market-driven approach, which mainly concentrates on the organisational turnover, with less attention on the human aspect of the business such as satisfaction, health and well-being. However, if the market-driven approach cannot be avoided by university managers, then their task is to ensure a balance between the support and collaborative process they provide for academics in their work environment alongside the market-driven approach. In this way, academics would feel supported, knowing that there are programs that support their well-being even if they feel pressured to work. Despite the limitations of this study, additional knowledge was gained to back the work of Zabrodska et al. (2014), which concluded that programs in the work environment that support academic employees reduce their stress levels and increase their well-being positively.

Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) carried out a quantitative study on three different institutions (telecommunication, banking and education) in the city of Quetta in Pakistan. The study aimed to explore the impact of the working environment on employee job satisfaction. A survey questionnaire was sent via email to the participants. A simple random sampling was used to gather information from 210 workers – 70 from each of the three institutions. A 5-point Likert scale was used to analyse the responses, ranging from not satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied, dissatisfied, to completely satisfied. Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) found that the work environment had an important impact on job satisfaction from all the employees across the three institutions, with a regression analysis outcome indicating  $R^2 = 13.2\%$ . This finding suggests that employees have become anxious about their work environment, especially about issues that impact on their well-being and job satisfaction negatively.

Such issues include co-worker relationships, self-esteem, job security, safety and working hours, and they expect their institutions to put measures in place that will support them.

Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) went on to emphasise that the business environment is changing with a rise in competition and demand for better output from employers. However, not much has been done by institutions, especially HEIs in a developing country like Ghana, to provide a working environment that will support their employees' well-being and work satisfaction concerns. The result of this study is an indication that employees' well-being and satisfaction have a link with their work environment and that institutions need to pay attention to this link. This will help them to get the best out of their employees in terms of their performance (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). One way institutions can help create a conducive work environment is to ask their employees what would support their work, and through that create interventions to support each employee's well-being.

While the outcome of this study supports the earlier study by Lee and Brand (2005) and Kinzl et al. (2005), which concluded that a favourable working environment supports employees' well-being and job satisfaction, it also contradicts that of Tokuda et al. (2009) and Rafiq et al. (2012), who concluded that the work environment has little or no positive link with employees' job satisfaction and well-being. In these studies, the management relationship with employees was found to be positively linked to employees' job satisfaction and well-being.

In a period where employees have become highly aware of their rights, institutions need to provide opportunities that meet their well-being. In this way,

institutional objectives can be achieved as an encouraging working environment increases employee commitment levels, effectiveness, productivity, sense of ownership and loyalty (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). This will eventually increase institutional effectiveness and also reduce dissatisfaction levels among employees. Similarly, by understanding the working environment needs of employees, institutions can equip themselves to take actions when work dissatisfaction issues arise in the work environment (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015).

In summary, the review of the psychosocial factors above has revealed the negative impact of workload, long working hours, stress and work environment on academic employees' workplace well-being. The studies reviewed in this chapter have shown a consistent trend in that work stress impedes individual performance, incurring costs for organisations in terms of absenteeism due to sickness and non-performance of employees while at work due to work stress. The review also showed that the issues identified in terms of work-related stressors are not peculiar to the higher education sector but also apply to other workplaces such as banking. However, it has been noted that in the higher education sector, workplace well-being issues are more student-focused and tend to overlook the needs of academic employees.

In the Ghanaian higher education context, no significant research has been conducted on academic employees' well-being, even though the challenges faced, as previously reviewed, are similar to those found in other countries, such as the UK, Australia and the USA, where workplace well-being issues have been explored by researchers and widely spoken about by both employees and their employers.

Regarding the work environment, the review has shown that poor working relationships characterised by inadequate co-worker support and poor human relations limit employees from giving their best and accomplishing their full potential. Therefore, the employers and managers of academic institutions need to understand the benefits of a good working environment for their employees and the impact on their effectiveness and output. Lastly, the review has shown that some managerial approaches earlier reviewed can promote unhealthy competition among academics, which can lead to work stressors in the work environment (Zabrodska et al., 2014). Therefore, HEIs must choose managerial approaches/models that promote individual growth and ensure that the individual can give their best and also feel satisfied with their work.

## **2.8 The Higher Education Work Environment in Ghana and Academics' Well-being**

The higher education work environment in Ghana is confronted with an increased number of students being admitted each year. This increase is a result of the government policy aimed at increasing the access to university education as well as the high demand from individuals who see higher education only as an investment for future earnings (Fatunde, 2014; Yusif et al., 2010; Staub, 2017); however, staff recruitment has not risen correspondingly. This is due to the government of Ghana's home-based policy on expenditure adjustment in the public sector to reduce the government spending (ActionAid Ghana, 2010:31-32; Fatunde, 2014; Ministry of Finance, 2015). This has led to the HEIs workers (academics) in Ghana experiencing what other developed countries such as the Americas and part of Europe are experiencing in terms of workload, long working hours and stressors due to work pressures (Winefield et al., 2003; Jacobs et al., 2007; Jung & Jung, 2014).

In Ghana, concerns of workplace well-being among employees in HEIs have been raised, with some academic employees complaining of work stress and burnout due to workload. However, only a few studies have been conducted on work stressors and the well-being of employees in the educational sector in general (Agyemang & Ofei, 2013; Addison & Yankyera, 2015). At the higher education level, only one quantitative study was found on academic employee's workplace well-being issues despite the important role academics play in providing quality higher education in the area of teaching, research and student support (Atindanbila, 2011; Varghese, 2004; Atuahene, 2015). There was no qualitative study found that focused on academic employees' workplace well-being experiences, their understanding, and the impact these experiences have on their work and lives. Hence, this study will make a unique contribution to existing well-being studies by providing a different lens (qualitatively) through which employees' well-being challenges can be view in the Ghanaian higher education context. Essentially, academic employees are involved in counselling students, teaching, conducting research and supervision to develop the upcoming generation for the nation; however, it appears that issues concerning their well-being have been ignored (Essiam et al., 2015).

Apart from the work that academics do in their various institutions, there is also a greater demand for them in dealing with these responsibilities, along with their need to ensure the sustenance of their families, adding to their stressors. When academic employees fail to perform their responsibilities indicated above, due to work stressors such as workload and burnout, the whole university is affected (Atindanbila, 2011). However, intervention programmes to avoid such occurrences appear to be missing in the context of the Ghanaian HEI work context. Based on the review above, not much is known about how academic

work stressors in HEIs in Ghana have impacted on their well-being. Also, the academics' views on their work environment and of their profession in Ghana have not been fully raised in the well-being and organisational literature.

## **2.9 Gaps in the Literature**

There appears to be little research on the role of well-being in HEIs in Ghana. Therefore, what well-being means to academic employees in their teaching practice, how they cope with work challenges, and how their social and cultural context of teaching in relation to their well-being all remain elusive. Apart from detecting the differences in well-being studies at the workplace, this review has unveiled areas of further research needed on the causes of issues related to workplace well-being in higher education work in general and particularly in Ghanaian HEIs. Most of the studies reviewed above (Winefield et al., 2003, 2008; Tytherleigh et al., 2005; Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005; Jacobs et al., 2007; Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008; Catano et al., 2010; Atindanbila, 2011; Sang et al., 2013; Kyvik, 2013; Jung & Jung, 2014; Zabrodska et al., 2014; Antoniadou et al., 2015) used a quantitative approach in looking at the well-being of university academic employees.

Out of these studies, only three (Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005; Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008; Atindanbila, 2011) were from Africa (Ghana and South Africa) and focused specifically on the university academics well-being. Apart from their methodological limitations, as highlighted earlier, the study from Ghana (Atindanbila, 2011) focused only on one public university's lecturers, out of the three old and well-known public universities in Ghana. Again, on individual academics and their roles in the universities, Atindanbila (2011) included both junior and senior lecturers in the study but failed to categorise them according

to their ranks, roles, and responsibilities to find the impact that their roles have on their well-being.

Atindanbila's (2011) study added to our understanding of the causes of academic employees' workplace stressors and the impact on their well-being in Ghanaian universities. However, the limitations were in the selection of the one university and the stress inventory technique used, which generalised the results instead of identifying individual unique well-being experiences. In 2012, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) imposed harsh financial conditions on Ghana to prevent further borrowing and reduce its spending. This caused structural changes as the government placed an embargo on the recruitment of academics into all public universities. This added to academics' workload as student numbers increased without a corresponding increase in lecturers (see review under section 2.7, previously provided).

This study is poised to capture the views, understandings and stories of academic employees on their roles and responsibilities across three public universities to gain an insight into their workplace well-being experiences. The stories of academics from these universities bring varying views and experiences, helping to broaden the discourse on the importance of employees' workplace well-being issues in Ghana. This will help to create workplace well-being awareness and inform policy at the micro-level.

Also, all the studies identified and reviewed above on the well-being of academic employees in higher education institutions were conducted outside Africa (United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Mexico, China and other Asian countries). No study has been conducted qualitatively to explore academic employees' understandings and experiences of workplace well-being in the

Ghanaian higher education context by specifically looking at the well-being of academic lecturers. The review has also shown that there has been limited use of the eudaimonic approach to workplace well-being studies as most researchers tend to use the hedonic approach or both. This situation means that well-being studies, in general, are westernised and quantitatively driven and that there is merit in undertaking this study (qualitatively using the eudaimonic approach) to fill the gap and also as a contribution to existing studies. Furthermore, this study will also be used as a reference point for future researchers conducting workplace well-being studies qualitatively in the Ghanaian work environment as a whole and in the higher education sector in particular. The data gathered can also be compared to other HEI workplace well-being issues for academic employees globally. Lastly, considering the above limitations of both the current and previous literature reviewed to understand the well-being of academic employees in a higher education workplace, this study is well positioned to qualitatively examine the perspective of academic employees in the Ghanaian public higher education context through their lived experience. This will provide a new understanding of how academics in an African and non-western higher education workplace understand well-being at the workplace.

## **2.10 The Conceptual Framework**

This study aims to investigate academic employees' views, understandings and experiences toward workplace well-being in higher academic institutions in Ghana to provide policy recommendations for establishing a centre for wellness and well-being for academic staff. Clearly, Dodge et al. (2012) has shown an understanding of well-being that is applicable within the context of this study. The evidence provided in the literature constitutes the theoretical foundation of

this study. Conceptually, the literature on the well-being of academic employees in HEIs grouped workplace challenges into work-related stressors, stress, workload, long working hours and work demands. The psychosocial factors of individual well-being at work as shown in figure E below.

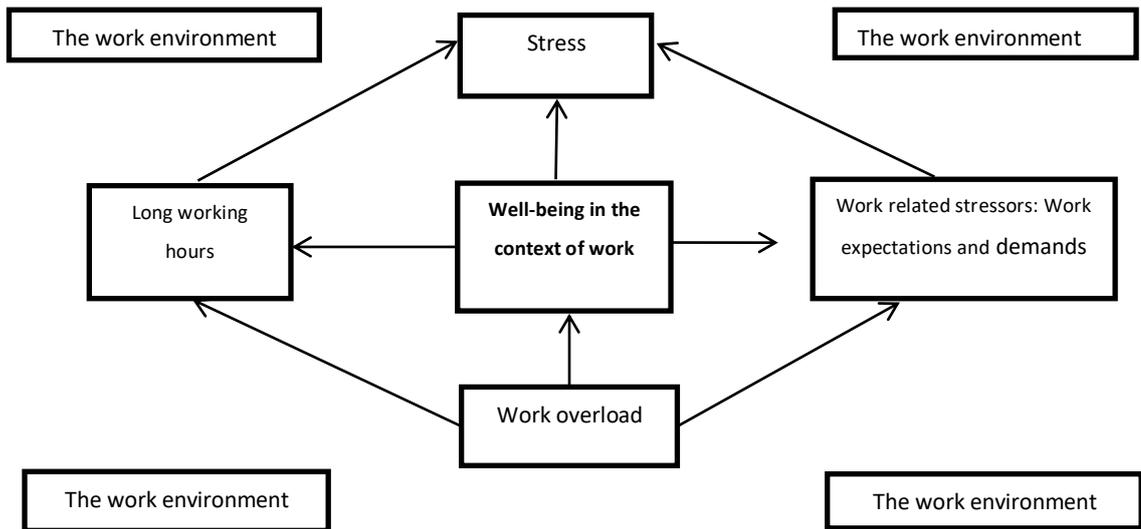


Figure E: A conceptual framework based on the literature.

Sources: Author

The conceptual framework brings together features from the dominant theory discussed in earlier sections of this chapter. The framework suggests an interwoven relationship to the problem under investigation as well as a practical solution.

## 2.11 Chapter summary

This review has provided a comprehensive understanding of what has previously been done on well-being at the workplace from the perspective of academic employees. It has also shown the different approaches (past and present) used by employers to assess employees' workplace well-being issues in both general employment and HEIs. Again, the challenges surrounding the understanding of workplace well-being among employees in general and

academic employees in HEIs presented above, the influence of the work environment on their work, the demands on the high-performance rate and quality standards have been shown.

Further, the review has also provided empirical evidence on the psychosocial factors that affect academic employees' well-being at HEIs, and the impact on academics' lives. In addition to exploring what is already known in the field of well-being studies, this review has also helped to identify the need to further explore the well-being of academic employees in the context of Ghana. This provides the rationale and justification for conducting this maiden qualitative study to create awareness of the workplace challenges academic employees are confronted within Ghana and the impact on their lives and work outcomes. In this regard, this study aims to investigate the understandings, views and experiences of workplace well-being among academic employees in Ghana and what these mean to them.

## Chapter 3 **Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The study is aimed at investigating how academic employees in HEIs in Ghana understand workplace well-being. This chapter presents the procedure and processes involved in answering the following questions earlier presented in section 1.8.

1. How do academic employees understand well-being in the workplace and what does it mean to them?
2. What constitutes well-being in the workplace?
3. How do changes in the higher education sector over time affect employees' well-being?

This chapter is divided into three parts, each covering different sections of the study. The first part covers the research process, which explains the construction of the meaning of the study. This part presents the rationale for the epistemological position adopted and how it is linked to the ontological strands and the role of the researcher. It also examines how the epistemological world view of the research is linked to the research paradigm, research approach and the justification for the study methodology (interpretative phenomenology). The second part provides details of the research process, the ethical considerations, the steps involved in identifying and gaining access to participants, the study demographics, the research sample, the data collection approach and the response to the study. The third part presents how the interpretative phenomenological approach is used to analyse the data collected.

## **3.2 Part 1: The Research Process**

### **3.2.1 The construction of meaning for the study**

Individuals hold different beliefs that shape their thoughts, how they see the world and how they carry out activities within the world (Creswell, 2009). A person's view about the way knowledge is constructed and about the nature of reality will have a deeper impact on the study process as a person's beliefs and values impact the research methodology and strategy used (Creswell, 2009). Accordingly, Turnbull (1973) is of the view that the reader is entitled to know the intentions, hopes, and expectations with which the researcher came to the field. The reason is that the researcher's position will certainly impact not only what he or she sees but what is seen as well. For this reason, the researcher needs to make his/her position clear concerning the concepts of ontology, the study methodology and epistemology. This will help the reader to relate to the aim of the study as well as to the position of the researcher in understanding how knowledge is created, the nature of reality and how the study is situated.

While a study methodology identifies the ways to situate the study topic (Silverman, 1993) and concentrate on the best means of gaining knowledge about the topic at hand (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), ontology raises the fundamental questions about the nature of reality (Silverman, 1993). Jointly, these are termed a framework of interpretation, "a set of beliefs that guides the study" or a paradigm (Guba, 1990:17). These principles help to establish beliefs and values which demonstrate how to understand the world and see reality as well as how knowledge is created to situate a particular study and also to establish the research identity.

### **3.2.2 The epistemological position**

A branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge creation which focuses on the conditions, nature, sources and prospects of knowledge is termed epistemology (Soldati, 2012). An epistemologist tries to answer questions such as what can we know and how, and this includes looking at the nature of the knowledge, its validity, its scope and the reliability of a claim to knowledge (Willig, 2008). The three main epistemological assumptions are positivism and post-positivism, although some researchers distinguish constructivism (or social constructionism in Easterby-Smith et al., 2008) and critical theory as other important paradigms.

- **Positivism**

Positivism assumes that knowledge is based on human experience and can be acquired through experimentation and observation. Crossan (2003) observes that positivism adopts a clear quantitative approach to investigating phenomena. According to Smith (1998), positivism assumes that social phenomena can be studied as hard facts and guided by scientific laws. In other words, the reality is objective and can be observed and measured empirically and there is little room for speculation and subjective views. Crossan (2003) further concludes that “exploration and examination of human behaviours such as feelings are beyond the scope of positivism”. Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) highlight the irrelevance of human interests in positivism as well as the need to demonstrate causality and be able to generalize through statistical probability. Determinism, empiricism and parsimony are some of the methodological concepts that have been described under the positivist assumption.

- **Social constructionism**

Social construction is defined as “the view that all knowledge and all meaningful reality are dependent upon human practices, which are constructed in and out of the interaction between human beings and their world, developed and communicated in an essential social construct” (Crotty, 1998:42). With social constructionism, attention is drawn to the fact that in the human view, understanding, including experience, is mediated culturally, linguistically and historically (Willig, 2008). Hence, social constructionism claims that knowledge of reality is local and specifically constructed and that what is described as knowledge and reality will differ depending on the individual, the group being researched or the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This research will adopt the social constructionist viewpoint based on the belief that meaning is constructed by human beings through their interaction with the world (Crotty, 1998).

Further, from the background of the researcher and disciplinary training, the researcher believes that knowledge is not simply found but produced and that the production of knowledge should be reviewed and studied. There is a general notion in social constructionism that knowledge embodies all aspects of human behaviour and that it cannot be unbiased as knowledge in some sense is political, ideological and infused with principles (Rouse, 1996). Again, a social constructionist maintains that a stand against taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world must be adopted to challenge the idea that knowledge is based upon unbiased observation and considers the world objectively (Andrews, 2012; Burr, 1995, 2017).

In this way, any information produced will be fair, truthful and devoid of bias and misinterpretation. Critically investigating to understand higher education

academic employees' understanding of workplace well-being in Ghana and what it means to the academic is particularly significant to this study. Adopting the social constructionist position permits a detailed approach to research, creating chances to question the notion of value-free research and the different views of understanding workplace well-being issues in the higher education work environment. This study considers the ideological assumptions that a clear and well-understood well-being concept and approaches in the higher education workplace in Ghana will lead to a positive outcome for both the employees and employers, as well-being is considered pluralistic.

Fundamental to this study is the motivation to examine in detail the academic employees' experiences of workplace well-being, how they understand the term and what it means to them. The purpose of the study is to provide the academic employees with the chance to discuss and share their workplace well-being experiences at length, and it is not intended to describe only their experiences; instead, the researcher places much importance on the stories of academic employees of HEIs in a wider theoretical context in order to analyse and contest the different interpretations surrounding the understanding of workplace well-being in the context of the higher education workplace.

- **Critical realism**

Gilson (2012) describes a third perspective, realism, as being in-between the two extremes of research paradigms. Under this perspective, the critical realist “seeks to identify the causal mechanisms underpinning social phenomena” but accepts the social influences that affect the cause and therefore shape the effect of such phenomena. For the critical realist, therefore, the task is to “generate theories that explain the social world and, in particular, to identify the mechanisms that explain the outcomes of interventions”. Causality in this sense

is complex as several interdependent causes can come together to generate “a set of often unpredictable effects”. Gilson further reiterates that while research accommodates complex causality, it is with the “understanding that an effect is not linked by a linear and predictable path to a cause, rather is multiple-interacting causes that generate a set of often unpredictable effects”.

### **3.2.3 The ontological position**

Ontology is defined as the nature of reality. Grix (2002) proposes that “ontological claims are claims and assumptions made about the nature of social reality” and identifies such claims as the starting point of research. Hall (2003) uses ontology to refer to the nature of the social and political world and the causal relationships within that world and goes on to stress its importance in the analysis and understanding of theories of the social world. Grix (2002) also points out that ontological questions are related to the nature of the social and political reality to be investigated. Furthermore, Hall (2003) indicates how crucial ontological assumptions are to the appropriateness of methodologies since they define the nature of the causal relationships. Hall concludes that for a methodology to be valid, it must be congruent with its prevailing ontology.

Two major ontological questions are asked. The first is whether reality exists only through experience and the second is whether reality exists independently of experience. These questions define the two main ontological positions of subjectivism and objectivism. Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) define the two positions as interpretive and realist ontologies, while Crowther and Lancaster (2009) classify them as deductive and inductive research approaches, respectively. Subjectivism assumes that reality is socially constructed by how people understand, interpret and experience social phenomena. Gill and Johnson (2010) conclude that what is taken as a social reality is a “creation, or

projection of our consciousness and cognition”. In other words, reality is about how people perceive social phenomena leading to different conclusions about the experience of what reality is, and, therefore, limitations in generalisation. Objectivism, on the other hand, assumes that reality is governed by laws that can only be discovered through social investigations. In other words, there is a particular effect to every cause for a particular social phenomenon. The reality, in this case, is not affected by time or social context and can be generalised. These two positions represent the extremes of ontological assumptions with subjectivism maintaining that reality is all imagination and does not exist outside oneself; it is shaped within the context of one’s experience. Objectivism, on the other hand, assumes that reality can only be discovered through observation and measurement (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). The philosophical underpinning of this study, therefore, is based on the ontological conviction that reality is socially constructed, and therefore, a subjective epistemological stance is most suited to this study.

The study also involved the “explanations of human action derived from the meaning and interpretations of those conscious actors who are being studied” (Gill & Johnson, 2010) and thus can be classified as interpretivism. The adoption of an interpretive approach is also subscribed to on the basis that the study is organizational research and requires a method that will allow for an interpretation of organization-wide issues that impinge on human experiences. The study is also one that seeks to understand the social construction of well-being. Hence, it is important to obtain a clear understanding of the issues from the perspective of the actors (Myers, 1997). Therefore, it can be said that there are “knowledges” rather than “knowledge” (Willig, 2008) as this can be seen

through the different interpretations surrounding the understanding of employees' workplace well-being issues reviewed in chapter 2.

### **3.2.4 The role of the researcher**

The role of the researcher explains the reflectivity of a study. This process may mean different things to different individuals based on their research background and the context of their study (Taylor & White, 2000). This approach is often adopted by qualitative researchers who use the interpretative phenomenology approach as their methodology and/or theory base for their study. Reflectivity helps the qualitative researchers to demonstrate their role and influence in the research process by reflecting on different aspects (data collection, the interview and ethical processes) of the study to make sense of what the participants say and do throughout the study (Steier, 1991). Also, reflectivity puts the researcher at the centre of the study so that the field observations made (stories heard and notes taken) during the data collection process are analysed and interpreted and become the required product of interpretation (Willig, 2008).

In this study, the methodologies adopted by the researcher were consistent with both the values of the research and the research objectives, as explained in (chapter 1) of the thesis. However, other factors also impinged on the choice of methodology. For example, the fact that the researcher was researching his area of practice, to effect improvement in the area of practice, shows a positivist or empiricist approach (see section 3.2.2, p. 113), where the researcher being seen as an external observer objectively researching others would not suit the purpose of the research. In this context instead, the researcher facilitated the research process and was influenced by a notion which aims at integrating both prior knowledge and new knowledge for action and feedback in the

organisational learning process. The reason was to help make sense of the participants' stories for clearer interpretation and analysis reflecting the plurality of meanings (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). The process signals the identification of different courses of actions for organisational improvements and additional research to facilitate organisational learning processes.

In undertaking this research, the researcher did not set out study propositions in section 1.9, p.12 to accept or reject with scientific conviction but to engage in an enquiry into an area in which he was an active participant. In other words, the researcher perceived himself to be a practitioner-researcher and a facilitator seeking to improve the situation in which he was involved. The role of the researcher as a practitioner and educator, then, could be interpreted as a personal commitment to change that leads to improvement for him and other participants in their professional practice. Leonard (2000), in what appears to be an argument for an integration of the conventionally separate scopes of practitioner and researcher, refers to the benefits of such integration when the issue of whether practitioners were to be regarded as researchers and researchers were to be regarded as practitioners.

A greater understanding of the researcher's practice and the in-depth knowledge of the current higher education environment was necessary for this study because it provides some value in explaining workplace well-being in the educational sector – suggesting an interpretive or social constructionist methodology. The researcher, therefore, admits that the realisation of this is not simply through observation alone, but also through critical engagement in cycles of planning, acting and reflecting as a practitioner-researcher and keeping the focus on the research objectives but not influencing the research outcome as an educator.

The role of the researcher as a lecturer in higher education could be understood as having a dual mandate. The researcher was providing learning support for other colleagues in the higher education sector who needed some understanding of theories concerning workplace well-being while on the other hand seeking to avail of the opportunity to interrogate the theories and practical implications. Both dimensions were equally important to the research and were deemed valuable sources of data.

### **3.2.5 Defining the research approach**

The study sets out to determine how key respondents who are also beneficiaries of the research outcome in higher educational settings in Ghana understand workplace well-being and what constitutes well-being to them. The literature gives diverse theoretical perspectives on workplace well-being and the extent to which these perspectives determine how policy choices are made. Although some theoretical models on the concept exist, the focus of this study was not on proving or disproving such theories, but, rather, the study aimed at an orderly analysis of data based on a wide range of experiences to construct explanations and conclusions upon which a theoretical model that will contribute to an existing theory of workplace well-being of employees in HEIs would be based.

To capture the experience of the participants in their workplace, a qualitative research method was chosen over the quantitative and mixed methods. The reason is that a qualitative method/approach promises a close fit between what individuals do and say and the data generated (Taylor et al., 2015). Through observation or interviewing individuals in their daily lives, the qualitative researcher listens to them to gain first-hand information about their lived experience. Again, the qualitative researcher through interviews interacts with

the individuals, understands them and makes meaning of what they do and say (Taylor et al., 2015).

In contrast, quantitative research emphasises the reliability and replication of the study and does not discuss the meaning things have for different individuals or research things in their natural location, as qualitative research does (Creswell, 2014:12). Quantitative research is mostly concerned with a large population sample leading to the generation of statistical data. Although a mixed-method design also enriches data generated with in-depth information, this was also dismissed in favour of a qualitative approach. The reason is that a qualitative approach was deemed suitable to address the key research questions designed for this study, and also since existing studies had largely addressed quantitative research questions. The IPA, its benefits and the philosophical approach to this study are discussed in detail below.

### **3.2.6 Interpretative phenomenology**

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach and science of the first-person viewpoint with an emphasis on the lived experience of individuals (Luft & Overgaard, 2012). Interpretative phenomenological analysis (hereafter, IPA) is growing rapidly in qualitative research with its origin in psychology. It is gradually being used in business, education, social science and health science (Kings & Horrocks, 2010). IPA was selected for this study as it is positioned towards investigating and understanding how individuals make sense of their life experience. It encompasses an in-depth investigation of an individual's experience of a specific phenomenon, how they make sense of that experience and the meaning they attach to it. IPA was accordingly considered appropriate to investigate the experience, views and understanding of workplace well-being and what that means to academic employees in this study.

IPA was selected in place of other research approaches, such as grounded theory and discourse analysis, despite the distinct differences they present. Starks and Trinidad (2007) stated that the differences between grounded theory, phenomenology and discourse analysis are unclear. Interpretive phenomenology is closely related to discourse analysis because both approaches share a concern with a person's experience (Smith et al., 2009). Interpretive phenomenology renders an in-depth analysis of the research participants' involvement in the context, describing the significance of the lived experience of a specific phenomenon of the participants (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). By contrast, discourse analysis covers the interpretation of the structure of the context and how individuals use language to generate and legislate activities and identities (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Smith et al. (1999) argued that the main differences between discourse analysis and interpretive phenomenology are that discourse analysis examines the role of language in unfolding an individual's experience, whereas interpretive phenomenology examines how a person assigns meaning to their experience. IPA is important to this study as it helps to uncover the participants' lived experience in terms of their understanding of workplace well-being issues in Ghanaian higher education institutions.

Again, according to Smith et al. (2009:201), grounded theory "is seen as the main alternative to an individual considering interpretive phenomenology approach for a research". There is a significant connection between grounded theory and interpretive phenomenology, as both approaches have a broad inductivist appeal to research. Nevertheless, the grounded theory approach is likely to follow "a more conceptual explanatory level based on a bigger sample and where a person's accounts can be drawn upon to demonstrate a theoretical

claim” (Smith et al., 2009:202). Again, IPA is likely to offer a detailed analysis of the lived experience of a small number of participants with an emphasis on diverse views between participants and the issues discussed (Smith et al., 2009).

Subsequently, interpretive phenomenology was selected over grounded theory and discourse analysis since investigating and understanding the lived experience and the meaning the participants attach to their workplace well-being issues is in line with my belief that academic employees’ workplace well-being experiences should be heard and supported by their employers for them to feel fulfilled and make meaning of their work. The choice to embrace interpretive phenomenology, therefore, reflects the researcher's belief, values and passion to use eudaimonic theory to explore the participants’ experiences, views and stories in understanding their workplace well-being issues in the Ghanaian higher education workplace.

The two main requirements of IPA are to recognise and give voice to individuals and to interpret and contextualise their problems and claims (Larkin et al., 2006). However, interpretive phenomenology does not distinguish between interpretation and description; rather, it draws on the understanding from the hermeneutic tradition and argues that all descriptions constitute a form of interpretation which helps to establish the subjective understanding of what is said by the participants. The adoption of IPA shows commitment to investigating, interpreting and describing the ways the academic employees make sense of their workplace well-being experience. With this approach, the researcher is required to “return to the existing issues” to challenge the phenomena and to revisit their direct experiences. By returning to the issues,

the possibility of new meaning emerging which can enrich the understanding and meaning of the phenomena is high (Crotty, 1996).

The fundamental principles of interpretive phenomenology are paying attention to the individual's direct experience and encouraging them to tell their stories in their own words (Smith et al., 2009). This echoes the idiographic approach of interpretive phenomenology, which refers to the distinct experiences of a specific group or individuals and the specific context in which those experiences happen (Eatough & Smith, 2008). IPA aims to understand the life world of participants and their experience of a particular phenomenon to tell "what it is like". This typically leads to attention to specific experiences, process, events and relationships. IPA involves an extremely thorough analysis of the accounts produced by a small number of individuals (Lakin et al., 2006).

In this study, the researcher's focus is on how the academic employees understand workplace well-being issues and how that has influenced their lives and experience of higher education work in Ghana. Smith's (1996) advice to researchers using IPA is that gaining access to "experience" is complex and partial as the analytical approach cannot achieve a sincerely first-person account. This is because the individual account is always constructed through the interaction between the participant and the researcher. The interpretive phenomenologist understands that it is challenging to gain direct access to the life world of participants and that an investigation of the participants' experience must not only be based on the researcher's view of how he/she sees the world but must also include the nature of the interaction between the participant and the researcher. For this reason, a phenomenological analysis view formed by the researcher is always an interpretation of the participants' experience and not an independent view of the researcher (Willig, 2008). Through the

interaction between the researcher and the participants, a socially constructed understanding of knowledge and nature as well as a meaningful relationship are established between the participant, the research topic and the researcher.

Therefore, knowledge is based on a persons' perspective, and the researcher plays an interpretive and active role in the construction of knowledge instead of embracing an objective and neutral position, which arguably cannot be achieved satisfactorily (Gillies & Alldred, 2012). Thus, interpretive phenomenology requires subjective knowing, which includes drawing on the personal experience of others to produce an interpretation and understanding of a specific phenomenon. The participants' experience is, however, not always directly accessible to the researcher as it can only be done through an interaction between participants and the researcher.

Smith (1997:189) describes IPA as "an attempt to unravel the meaning and the accounts through a process of interpretative engagement with a text and transcript". With this process, the researcher is said to be engaged in double hermeneutics as he/she "attempts to make sense of the participants' view and what is happening to them" (Smith et al., 2009:3). Double hermeneutics is used to describe the two interpretations involved in the process: first, the participants making meaning, engaging in an interpretation of their own experience, and second, the researcher making sense in interpreting the participants' stories (Smith et al., 2009). The double hermeneutic process is in the form of a circle as it involves finding meaning through repeated questioning to better understand and interpret a phenomenon.

IPA has been selected for this study to try and understand the individuality of each participant's story and construct a meaningful explanation of their workplace well-being experience. This process allows each person's experience

to be unique and apparent in making meaning of their experiences. It also highlights the series of experiences to give a clearer meaning to the differences and similarities. To get a rich description of the participants' stories and experiences, semi-structured interviews were adopted to assist in eliciting the participants' stories, emotions and thoughts about the target phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). From an ethical and practical viewpoint, interviews are deemed the best to explore the lived experiences of individuals. The reason is that if interviews are properly executed, this can help to produce data that allows the participants to take an active role in the discussion to shape the topics that arise during the interview process (Edwards, 1993). Details of how the researcher gained access to the participants are presented next.

### **3.3 Part 2: Research Design and Data Collection**

This section explores the process involved in accessing and identifying the participants for this study, the research sample and the study demographics alongside the participants' responses to the data collection process.

#### **3.3.1 Accessing and identifying the study participants**

This study depended on primary data collection from participants (lecturers and researchers) from three public HEIs in Ghana. Details of their location and names are not provided for confidentiality reasons. The three universities together had a student population of over 47,505, excluding the teaching and the non-teaching staff, at the time of the data collection. The cities where these universities are located are vibrant with diverse ethnic groups and cultural influences. The universities were chosen due to their academic performance and unique programs, including teaching, research, science and technology, business, economics and law. These universities have produced most of the best scholars across all professions in the country and are easy to locate in the

main cities. Most of the best academics in the country also teach in one of these institutions, making them centres of excellence. Another important reason for choosing these universities was based on my colleague's experience. My colleague, who eventually became a gatekeeper to the study sites, had worked in two of these universities and complained about the lack of support in terms of her work-related well-being issues, even though they are considered by the general public to be the best workplaces in the country. My colleague provided important introductory information into these universities for me to meet the participants, making the work less daunting.

However, there were challenges to this approach. Even though the research set out to interview academics with PhD qualifications and more than five years' work experience, my colleague recommended academics who were actively working with PhD qualifications but had less work experience. For example, in a text message communication with my colleague, it was explained that:

*'I have colleagues at my former university who may be interested. They are also PhDs with work experience'.*

This shows that my colleague's recommendations, based on professional insights and convener role, even though helpful, were based on her view of who would enthusiastically engage with the study. Consequently, those academics who contacted my colleague and were interested in the study but did not meet more than five years' work experience were seen as not suitable. The reason is that, in this study, the researcher is of the view that employees' work-related well-being issues and lived experiences are better captured following years of experience.

A recruitment challenge was expected due to the cultural background of the participants, who are brought up to respect their leaders and not complain about workplace issues. The reason is that “a complaint” is seen as tarnishing the image of the institution a person works for (either private or public). From personal experience as a Ghanaian, our society “frowns upon” those who complain about issues at work and tags them as “lazy and irresponsible”. For this reason, people do not want to be labelled as such, and instead, remain quiet and endure all the pressures at work to be seen as committed and hard working.

Further, there is a notion among Ghanaian society that an individual cannot win a case against an institution and this, therefore, does not encourage employees to fight for their rights when they feel overburdened or ill-treated at work. They believe that institutions are favoured by the legal system at the expense of individual rights. This belief is widespread in Ghanaian society and is difficult to understand. This may be due to the lack of job opportunities in the country, which has created a culture of fear as those who complain can become targets to be sacked.

Also, Ghanaians are by nature calm people, so they prefer to walk away instead of raise alarms at work, which could develop into a scuffle between them and their employers. With this in mind, I was concerned that with the reputation of the three institutions described above and my research based on the work context, the participants would find the topics too sensitive to discuss and would not freely provide information due to the fear of losing their jobs should their identity be revealed to their employer (Lee, 1993). However, with a detailed explanation of the topic to assure the participants that their identifying information would be anonymised and that this study would not form part of

their institutional review process but rather is a way to explore their understanding of workplace well-being issues and what that means to them and to draw the attention of policymakers to their concerns, it was possible to calm their nerves and the interview process kicked off smoothly.

### **3.3.2 Research sample**

This study is aimed at involving and meeting the participants to share their workplace well-being views and experiences to answer the research question. As the research methodology (IPA) is a non-probability sampling technique, snowballing, also known as chain-referral sampling, was adopted, whereby identified participants were encouraged to refer others to take part in the study based on their understanding and experience of the phenomenon (Plowright, 2011).

Snowball sampling was selected over other qualitative research methods, such as convenience and theoretical sampling, due to its uniqueness in reaching participants who share a particular lived experience within a particular group (Naderifar et al., 2017; Yardley, 2000 in Smith et al., 2012; Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). Due to the nature of the study, which requires participants to provide information about their workplace well-being experience, whereby their employer is the central government, I was concerned the participants may not be willing to come forward to take part in the study for fear of being identified. However, more participants came forward freely to participate in the study, negating my earlier concerns.

Sample size determination and the use of the IPA methodology in qualitative research was also considered in this study. The reason is that there are different viewpoints in the literature on a perfect number for IPA and qualitative research (Guest et al., 2006; Marshall et al., 2013). Smith et al. (2009) tend to

use the term “small sample sizes” in their explanation with the hope of getting a rationally homogeneous sample for a detailed divergence and convergence understanding to be captured on the topic. They alluded that rich and detailed research data could be collected with small numbers, such as 3-8 participants. Cresswell (2013) also argued for 12-20 participants and said the researcher should bear in mind their participants’ knowledge on the topic (i.e. considering purposive sampling).

However, Morse (2015) argues that predetermining the sample size in general qualitative research may be a pointless task. The reason is that the researcher may not know if fewer numbers will generate the data saturation needed and that the results may become shallow and obvious with nothing of interest to write about. Also, if a researcher keeps looking for a specific number, the study may not be trustworthy.

As Mores (2015) argued, more time spent with the participants during interviews is likely to attain qualitative research reliability, rigour and quality. The assumption here is that spending more time with the participants in a specific field and cultural background will provide time to observe, establish trust and increase confidence. Other scholars using IPA suggest that data saturation should be the main reason and not numbers. This means that interviews should continue until a saturation point is reached where no new information is forthcoming (Starks & Trinidad., 2007; Pietkiewicz & Smith., 2014).

With this in mind, 40 academics were invited, and the 18 who met the study protocol of more than five years’ work experience with a PhD qualification and who had agreed to participate in the study were recruited. Data richness was realised at an earlier stage of the interview due to the participants’ background and knowledge on the topic. This gave me confidence in the process. Also,

much time was spent with academics to know them and understand their issues better. This supports Mores' (2015) argument on time spent with participants during interviews and Cresswell's (2013) idea about selecting participants with a purpose. However, as a novice researcher, the issue of scope in determining a sample size remains an area of interest for me, and I argue that sample size should be considered in the field of study as it is important to look for more participants to attain data richness, confidence and quality than to concentrate on a smaller size, which could result in repeated chats difficult to analyse and discuss. Details on the number of participants invited and their acceptance rate presented on table 1, p. 133 below.

### **3.2.3 Demographics: the participants' response to the study**

A total of 18 participants from the three study sites and from different faculties who met the study protocol and agreed to take part in the study were interviewed. The participants were Africans from the West African region (Ghana), including four women and fourteen men. All participants were PhD holders who had worked at their various universities for five years or more, with ranks ranging from lecturers to senior lecturers and heads of department. Two of the participants were professors who had worked for about fifteen years in the higher education sector and were heads of department. The participants' age range was between 35 and 50 years. The sampling strategy was based on the notion of purposive sampling to select participants with specific characteristics who had experience and knowledge and were willing to provide information to meet the objective of the study (Patton, 2002). In this study, the differences in the understanding of the term well-being and what that means to the participants in their workplaces began to appear after eight participants were interviewed.

All participants had their first-degree qualification from Ghana and mostly from the universities they are working for now. This made it easy for them to understand their work environment and culture. Only one out of the eighteen participants was born outside Ghana, however, he received his tertiary education in Ghana and had lived and worked in the country for over fifteen years. The rest were all born and brought up in Ghana with a good understanding of the Ghanaian educational system.

In terms of their masters and PhD qualifications, fourteen out of the eighteen participants had received their training outside Ghana in countries such as Denmark, the UK and the USA through various scholarship schemes by the Ghana Educational Trust Fund, the Danish Government and the Commonwealth scholarship programs. The reason is that universities in Ghana offered limited opportunities for such training during their time, and for others, it was a requirement of their scholarship.

The participants were keen to return to Ghana and teach in their alma mater due to the opportunities public universities in Ghana give to their alumni who return to serve their university. The participants said they were able to adjust quickly in their role due to their understanding of the university environment. However, one of my participants was of the view that going back to his alma mater was not the best option since he would still be seen as a student and not as a qualified PhD by his former professors. Appendix five presents a summary of the participants' background information, location and the length of interviews. The table below explains where I met the participants and their acceptance rate in percentages.

### Means of recruitment across the three study sites

| Means of recruitment                               | Total number invited to take part | Agreed to take part | % agreed to take part |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Study site A                                       | 15                                | 6                   | 40%                   |
| Study site B                                       | 12                                | 5                   | 41%                   |
| Study site C                                       | 9                                 | 5                   | 55%                   |
| Colleagues' referral across the three study sites. | 4                                 | 2                   | 50%                   |
| Totals   | 40                                | 18                  | 45%                   |

Table 1 Means of recruitment across the three study sites

The first study site produced the highest number of participants with a total number of 15 more than half of the entire sample. However, the participants from this same study site proved to have the lowest acceptance rate at 40%. The most effective strategy for recruiting academic employees in this study was colleagues' referral, with an acceptance rate of 50%. Most participants were happy and willing to contact their colleagues at the other study sites to participate in the study as they believed they had workplace well-being experiences to share (Naderifer et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2009). This shows the importance of using the snowball approach, as one key participant can reach out to other participants with similar experience and educational background to encourage them to take part in the study, thus reducing the time and effort spent by the researcher in the recruitment process. I was confident in the referral process as I believe that the participants understood the study objectives and could refer to those with similar characteristics. The third study site also had a higher acceptance rate of 55%, again showing a positive sign of endorsement of the study from the participants. In all, the total acceptance rate across the three study sites was 45%, which again shows the high level of participation and endorsement of the study.

### **3.4 Part 3: Data Collection, Processing and Analysis**

This section is divided into two: the first section covers how the data were collected through the interviews; then, it continues by looking at the issues of ethics and participant consent and the process of conducting the interviews. The second section further looks at the IPA method of analysis, issues of trust and authenticity in qualitative research, and the various stages of analysing IPA data, which are explained through a step-by-step approach using sample interview transcripts from the three study sites.

#### **(1) The Data Collection Approach**

##### **3.4.1 The interview method**

Different methods can be used qualitatively to carry out this study, including interviews (structured, unstructured, semi-structured and group interviews), observations and ethnographic methods. Using an ethnographic method, the researcher tries to unravel the perception and meaning on the part of the individuals taking part in the research, gaining an understanding of the individuals' culture and worldview. In this regard, the researcher tries to see things from the participants' perspective (Crotty, 1998).

The main benefits of an ethnographic method are the building of relationships and trust between the participants and the researcher over time. To do this, an ethnographic researcher is required to get involved in the social locations of the participants to understand their activities and daily lives to make meaning of their lives and experiences (Bryman, 2012). In contrast, carrying out an observation over a period could assist in validating that which is observed, relating specifically to the lived experiences of the individuals in the study (Atkins & Hammersley, 2007), see section 3.2.6, p.125. Nonetheless, interviews were chosen over ethnographic and observations approaches. The reason is

that interviews are less time consuming, prevent the interviewer from invading the participant's space and were also more suitable for addressing the key research questions. This is the case in ethnography, where the researcher must stay with the participant over a longer period to get to know them and to understand their ways of life and experience (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The focus of the study and its use of the social context to gather data made it harder to use observations.

The research is concerned with academic employees' experience of workplace well-being, what that means to them and how that has changed over time. This reflection of events and gathering of individual thoughts is something that can be accessed using an interview process as interviews are useful to produce feelings and thoughts concerning the past, present and future (Smith et al., 2009). There are some opposing views from scholars about how interviews should be conducted, from those supporting a structured process of questions and answers to others arguing for a completely open-ended discussion (Grix, 2004). However, the choice of interview selected is dependent on the requirements of the study and its context. Given the focus on investigating and listening to the experience of academic employees at their workplace, the use of a structured interview approach was dismissed.

Structured interviews have a high degree of structure and are not flexible, whereby questions cannot be asked impromptu during the interview process as the interview guide must be followed strictly (McLeod, 2014). This method was an unfavourable characteristic, as the purpose of the interview was to examine issues that are vital to participants' circumstances, and hence, a structured interview approach would not provide the flexibility needed. Again, a structured interview method does not allow the researcher to reflect based on his/her

personal experience and beliefs about what is vital to ask during the interview process, thereby limiting participants' involvement in shaping the interview context (McLeod, 2014). Hence, the structured interviewing technique was overlooked as it was considered to form a hierarchical relationship, with the participant being seen as a data-producing machine (Oakley, 1981).

In contrast, an open-ended interview is more spontaneous and usually involves an initial question that may guide the interview process. These questions might be added or missed as the interview progresses (McLeod, 2014). However, open-ended interviewing was rejected due to the risk of digression from the main questions, which could lead to less data being gathered and shared to answer the research question (Creswell, 2009).

Beyond the above-discussed interview approaches, there is the semi-structured interview method. Semi-structured interviews consist of prearranged questions that serve as a guide for the interview process, which can be expanded upon by the researcher as the interview progresses in the form of probing to enrich the interview process (Schensul et al., 1999). The researcher uses his/her judgement about tangents through a list of questions and topics from the interview guide to ask meaningful questions (Flick, 1998:94). In this study, the semi-structured interview method was considered appropriate since it granted the participants the opportunity to freely express themselves, develop their thoughts and share their concerns about workplace well-being in detail (Smith et al., 2009). A semi-structured interview recognises the participants' contribution as being key to the research process, instead of merely being "speaking questionnaires" (Portter & Wetherell, 1987). Furthermore, this process ensures flexibility and enables the uniqueness of each person's story to be clear and meaningful, which is in line with Dahlberg et al.'s (2001) notion of

“openness”. According to these researchers, “openness” is about the readiness of the researcher to listen, see, understand and reflect to allow a phenomenon to present itself, instead of imposing predetermined ideas on participants through the research process.

### **3.4.2 Ethical considerations**

Prior to the data collection process, ethical issues concerning this study needed to be well-thought-out and resolved. The ethical guidelines set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2004) and the British Sociological Association (BSA, 2002) were followed. Ethical approval was gained from the UK and Ghanaian universities, (see Appendix Four).

A key part of ethical practice is that participants give consent freely without experiencing any fear of being involved in the study (see Appendix Two). For the participants’ consent to be seen as truthfully informed, they must understand the purpose, nature and possible consequences of the study (BERA, 2004). In this study, the participants were all adults working in HEIs and they had the capacity and ability to consent to their involvement in the study. Again, there was no perceived risk or financial benefits to the participants in this study and this was explained to them verbally before and during the interview process. It was emphasised to the participants that this study was not part of their institutional review and assessment process, but rather a chance to discuss and listen to their work-related well-being experience and what that means to them.

However, it was important for those invited to take part in this study to receive an explicit explanation about the objectives and aims of the study and what the information they provided would be used for. Further, it was explained to the participants that they had the right to not answer questions if they were unhappy

or uncomfortable with them, the right to withdraw from the study up until the point of write-up without providing a reason, and the right to anonymity and confidentiality and to know how the data would be securely stored (Redsell & Cheater, 2001; Grinyer, 2009; Bell, 2014).

These ethical principles were detailed in the information sheet provided to the participants and were again explained to them orally during the face-to-face interview (see Appendix One). The approach allowed the participants to ask any questions that were on their mind about the study.

As the conversation progressed, the participants asked how their confidentiality will be ensured, meaning that their involvement in the study and the outcome would not be known to anyone (Rose, 2013). In practice, however, anonymity is what can be offered to participants as their information could be circulated in different forms beyond the interview process (Smith et al., 2009). This was further explained to the participants and confidentiality was positioned in the context that when their experiences of workplace well-being stories are shared with other individuals or organisations, their identity will be protected by the use of pseudonyms. Participants' names and all identifiable information have been changed using pseudonyms throughout the study to make sure that any traits that identify their unique characters and personal experiences are concealed. The pseudonyms represent the order in which the participants were interviewed and are arranged alphabetically from Agnes to Perfect.

Further, it was explained that the confidentiality provided is temporary and would be broken if any participant or someone related was believed to be at a high risk of harm. Nevertheless, there is no agreement on what establishes harm that could be so serious as to overshadow the duty of confidentiality

(Rose, 2013). The situations listed below were considered in this study as being ways in which issues of confidentiality may be broken.

- If the researcher knows or suspects that the participant is harming themselves
- If the researcher knows or suspects that the participant might harm themselves in the future
- If the researcher knows or suspects that the participant is harming others
- If the researcher knows or suspects that the participant might harm others in the future
- If the researcher knows or suspects that the participant is being exploited or abused by others

Adapted from Rose (2013:43)

Furthermore, one of the most important exercises that took place before the data collection process was the pilot testing of the data collection tool. Although not overly important for the qualitative study, the pilot exercise helped to evaluate the practicability of the study procedure as well as examine the credibility, transferability and neutrality of the process (Song et al., 2010). Three academic employees from different public universities in the UK who met the study criteria took part in the exercise. Their participation and contribution helped to check the suitability of the questions and to further develop them in consultation with my supervisors (Smith et al., 2009:48). The pilot exercise helped me to gain confidence in knowing that my interview guide would help answer my research questions.

All the research activities and ethical concerns that were raised and acted upon before the data collection process began have been explained in this section.

Nonetheless, it is important to emphasise that ethical consideration is an on-going process throughout this study and issues of ethical concern are addressed as and when they arise to protect the participants' identity and views and the information they provide. More details on other specific ethical issues of concern in this study and how they were addressed are given below.

### **3.4.3 The process of conducting the interview**

The interviews were conducted from August to October 2017 across the three study sites in Ghana (A, B and C), as previously indicated under the participants' response to the study. My contact person on the study site was able to organise all the key participants ahead of my arrival in Ghana. This made the interview process less stressful and time-consuming, although a few changes were made to the meeting times and dates by the participants. A digital recorder was used together with written notes to ensure that the details of the participants' responses were captured properly and transcribed verbatim and to increase the credibility of the data collected. This was done to decrease the possible loss of meaning during data interpretation and transcription by the researcher (Patten, 2007). The participants were asked to read and sign the study information sheet after it had been explained to them again.

One of the key ethical issues linked to conducting interviews is that the researcher mostly dictates the conditions of the study and may not pay sufficient attention to the participants' choices and preferences. To reduce this and to increase the participants' involvement, the participants were allowed to choose a venue and time convenient for them to conduct the interview. Although this approach required more resources, such as money, a vehicle and time to move to different study sites and cities, I believe this approach helped the participants to take control of the interview process and their experience to

reduce the unequal power relationship between the participants and the researcher (Morrow, 2005). Subsequently, all the interviews were conducted in various locations, including participants' own homes, offices during the day and night, cafes and opens spaces within the university, such as under trees and in a summer hut.

These places reflected personal and known environments in which the participants felt relaxed and safe to discuss their experience and the changes that have taken place in their work. It is fascinating to note that the richest and longest interviews were those conducted under trees, in the night and, in particular, the three interviews (Agnes, Peter and Katrina) conducted at the participants' own homes.

The interviews were mainly conducted on a one-to-one basis, but occasionally other staff members were present in the room, i.e. when the interviews were conducted in the office during the day. In the case of Patrick at study site B, some of his colleagues were present in the adjoining office waiting to take part in the interview process as one office space was shared by six staff members, with little cubicles divided by plywood. This, however, did not stop the interview process, although it caused a few disruptions with mobile phones ringing, the noise of doors being opened and closed, and people talking to each other.

The most disturbing situation was when one of the staff members in the office took a phone call and started talking. Her phone conversation became so loud that the participant felt distracted. On this occasion, the interview continued beyond the agreed time to capture the participant's in-depth experience in terms of how he understood well-being and what that meant to him.

There was an interesting episode in my subsequent interviews. Stanley, one of this study's participants, entered one of the rooms where I was interviewing other participants and saw me. Stanley commented on how he felt my study was important and that there was a need for more such studies to be conducted in their university. This led to a debate among the two colleagues on the different types of research they need in their university and for HEIs in Ghana. This resulted in me gathering more information about my study and realising how important some of my participants considered my study as well as its relevance to their universities and their personal lives. A full account of where the interview was conducted and the duration is provided in appendix five.

I developed an interview guide around the three main questions from the literature review conducted for this study (see appendix three for the interview guide). However, I occasionally paused a bit to give the participants the time and freedom to reflect on other subjects that were important to them. In this regard, the participants were able to communicate at their own pace, decide on the extent of information they were willing to give and shape their own stories. I began the interview by asking participants to tell me the story of their academic career, i.e. their educational background and work history and why they had decided to work at their present institution.

In some instances, this question provided a good platform for participants to tell the story of their educational level and past and present jobs. In this interview, I was following the lead provided by participants as I mainly concentrated on asking probing questions to produce more detailed accounts. My experience from this question was that most participants enjoyed talking about their qualifications, the numbers of papers they had published, the various awards they had received through research work and the work they were doing or had

done with some international organisations besides teaching. They also liked to talk about the different stages and events in their lives as this provided in-depth detail and rich explanation. I believe that the participants' talking about their achievement gave them a "feel-good factor", which can be taken literally as a positive well-being experience.

In contrast, two of the participants at the study site A were not willing to "tell their story freely" as they had reservations of their anonymity despite the ethical assurances given. These interviews were short, with a fast pace of communication and required my participation as the researcher. This made me consider whether there is a culture of fear at Ghanaian universities when it comes to discussing workplace issues. The challenge of obtaining in-depth information from participants during an interview process had been documented in studies by Holstein and Gubrium (2004).

According to Wise (2001), the interview process assumes that participants can eloquently express their feeling and thoughts and want to do so freely. The data produced and their quality mostly depend on the willingness of the participants to tell their story and their ability to reflect on important occurrences, experiences and consequences. In this instance, the participants' time, flexibility and willingness to recount their lives and experiences were reflected in the duration of the interviews, with some interviews lasting between 30 minutes and one hour and others an hour and a half (See Appendix Five). Some of the participants' unwillingness and inconsistent manner in providing information about their workplace well-being experience and events are acknowledged limitations of this study. In these cases, the interview guide was strictly adhered to for structure and the participants were encouraged to speak while occasionally discussing issues outside the topic.

## **(2) Data Processing and Analysis**

### **3.4.4 The IPA method of analysis**

The recognised steps of data analysis, data interpretation and the IPA framework proposed by Smith et al. (2009) are explained in this section. IPA is covered through a phase-by-phase analysis of the empirical claims, understanding and concerns of participants (Larkin et al., 2006). This approach involves the identification of commonalities, nuance and emergent themes and emphasising divergence and convergence from individual participants' transcripts across several transcripts (Eatough & Smith, 2008). IPA produces a circular interpretation instead of a linear and dynamic thinking style, leading to an inductive style that uses a method of "moving from the specifics to the communal and to the interpretive" (Smith et al., 2009). IPA consists of six main steps, which will be explained further below to provide clarity in the data analysis process. A selected transcript from the three study sites will be used to explain the data analysis process under each step, with the rest presented in the appendix.

Step 1: Reading, re-reading and transcription

Step 2: Initial noting of emerging themes

Step 3: Developing emergent themes

Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes

Step 5: Moving to the next case

Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases

From Smith et al. (2009).

The steps stated above are described successively below to provide clarity in the IPA data analysis process after the discussion of the research authenticity and trustworthiness in qualitative research.

### **3.4.5 Qualitative research authenticity and trustworthiness**

One of the key considerations in carrying out a qualitative study is how to ensure its trustworthiness and authenticity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that the vital role of the researcher is to convince the participants that their answers are valued by the study and are worth taking into account. Loh (2013:2) asked the following questions in regard to research authenticity and trustworthiness:

*“How reliable and valid is the collection of these ‘stories’, how valid is the analysis of the data? If the data is collected through the participants’ telling of their storied experiences and events, how do I know if they are being truthful? What if they made up a story or are exaggerating the retelling? Will the research be valid then?”*

The questions posed above by Loh (2013) highlight some of the vital questions surrounding the research participants and the researcher when it comes to the authenticity and trustworthiness of the participants’ responses to the questions. Polkinhorne (2007:479) stated that “evidence of the participants’ stories and issues collected is not to ascertain if some of the issues truly happen but is about the meaning experienced by the people”. The text of stories is evidence of personal meaning and not of the factual occurrences of the events reported in the stories. Subsequently, in this study, I do not intend to certainly confirm the facts. Rather, I am seeking to question the meaning that academic employees give to their well-being experience at work. This position is supported by Riessman (2001:704-705), who stated that the “verification of the ‘fact’ is less salient than understanding the changing meaning of events for the individual involved and how these, in turn, are located in culture and history”. The past

rebuilding of events is, therefore, not my main concern in this study. Instead, the emphasis is on how the participants understand their well-being in relation to their workplace.

To create an effective, strong and powerful relationship with the participants, the suggestion of Lincoln and Guba (1985) was considered. Aligning with the view of the extended meeting, I spent some time with the participants (visiting their lecture halls and laboratories, going to the staff canteen to eat together) before the interviews. This was done to gain an understanding of their experience at work and again to build rapport and trust. This also contributed to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

### **Step 1: Reading, re-reading and transcription**

The most challenging issue in reading, listening to and transcribing interviews is whether the transcription should contain jargon, incomplete sentences, slang or inaccurate statements (Ulin et al., 2012). The reason for this is that jargon and slang can mean different things to different people and in different settings. In this study, I transcribed the participants' responses precisely to include all the laughter, short pauses and errors in grammar as well as the participants' dialect. I considered these features important as they demonstrate how the participants experience events and how their stories are told with passion and emotions. The interviews were transcribed successively throughout the process of collecting data to reflect the interview technique and the process before the next interview. The process of reflection and consultation with my supervisors and the ideas gathered were then used to improve the follow-up interviews (Creswell, 2009).

The first stage of IPA, once the transcription was done, was to repeatedly read over the transcript to become conversant with the content. I then subjected the

transcript to line-by-line scrutiny, analysing the language used and the content of each paragraph. The importance of this stage in IPA is to develop an extensive set of notes about each transcript that echoes my initial views and observations as the researcher. At this stage, my focus was on identifying descriptive comments, key events, experiences, objects and issues in my participant accounts, taking things as they were (see Table 2).

**Table 2 The first stage of IPA data analysis: Example of a line-by-line analysis from study site B (Peter’s transcript).**

| Interview: original transcript   | Exploratory comments   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>DO:</b> What do you mean when you said you were grateful for the change that has happened at the departmental?</p> <p><b>Peter:</b> Oh hmm [sigh] I have been here for years without support to progress. The current head of the department saw potential in me and decided to support me. His support has helped me to progress in my academic work and I’m happy.</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Could this be due to your relationship with the head of the department?</p> <p><b>Peter:</b> Oh no, is about the quality and consistency of the work I do and the leader being able to identify talents and support them.</p> <p>Hmm, when it comes to promotion someone can progress quickly due to their contacts and others will not due to a lack of clear policy on promotion.</p> <p><b>DO:</b> How does this make you feel in terms of your well-being at work?</p> <p><b>Peter:</b> Happy, very happy, haha (laughs). You get scared when it’s getting close to promotion. The fear of being seen by your colleagues as a failure and not sure if your contract will be renewed is a big concern to us all.</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Can you explain a bit more when you said well-being depends?</p> <p><b>Peter:</b> You see, people are different and all they care about is their promotion to become associate professor within a short time. For those people, is the recognition and status that matters to them not the money.</p> <p><b>DO:</b> What do you mean when you said, “due to</p> | <p>Emphasise how long he has worked without support to progress.</p> <p><i>“He has been of great help to me”</i> positioning himself as being lucky due to the leadership change in the department.</p> <p><i>“Due to their contacts”</i> emphasises the different ways to get a promotion without following a laid down process.</p> <p>The repeated use of <i>“I am happy”</i> is used to describe his excitement and joy and to emphasise how much furthering his studies means to him.</p> <p><i>“People are different”</i> explains how people see their workplace well-being differently.</p> <p>A hesitant start, hmm...<i>“asem ooh”</i></p> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>their contacts”?</p> <p><b>Peter:</b> Hmm, “asem ooh” here we tend to work individually but if you fail to get the grants for your research, then you have to leave your individuality and join a team, ha-ha. Now if you join a team you will do all the work and the leader will take the bigger portion of the money. That’s the problem, hmm. Like me, I don’t care how much I get when I join a team to work because I want to progress.</p> | <p>meaning it’s difficult. Expressing the frustrations of joining a team.</p> <p><i>“Like me, I don’t care how much I get”</i> emphasising the importance of career progression rather than money.</p> |
|--|--|

I also explored the use of specific language. My focus here in reading the transcript was on the use of laughter, pause, repetition and tone as well as the use of metaphors and dialect. Significant phrases and words were underlined and written down for deconstruction to understand the precise ways the academic employees presented, understood, discussed and formulated their views about their well-being experience at the workplace (Smith et al., 2009). The table below presents the meanings of the phrases and words which have been used for a well-thought-out analysis (see Table 3).

**Table 3 Some of the key phrases and words identified in Peter’s transcript**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><i>“He has been of great help to me”</i></p> <p><i>“How good I’m and consistent.”</i></p> <p><i>“Due to their contacts”</i></p> <p><i>“Asem ooh”</i></p> | <p><i>“Rise through the ranks”</i></p> <p><i>“You see people are different”</i></p> <p><i>“Like me, I don’t care how much I get”</i></p> <p><i>“I’m happy whatever I get”</i></p> |
|---|---|

### **Step 2: Initial noting**

This step of IPA looks at the language and semantic content used on the exploratory level. At this level, I maintained an open mind whilst reading through the transcript and took notes of things of interest in the transcript that were linked to my initial thoughts of designing the interview guide. This process of paying attention to details from the transcript helped me to become familiar with it. I developed more understanding, and I was also able to recognise the explicit ways through which my participants talk, understand and think about issues. In IPA, steps one and two are seen as combined steps as I found myself writing notes and re-reading the transcript several times for more exploratory comments to add to the process in step one above.

### **Step 3: Developing emergent themes**

Step three of IPA is about noting and synthesising the earlier codes identified in steps one and two to form emerging themes. Whereas the initial noting and coding is very descriptive and considers everything of interest within the transcript, this step is more detailed, with a more comprehensive exploratory commenting. At this step of the IPA approach, I had gathered enough data and I had become familiar with the interview model and the notes taken. The large volume of the data set generated in this step forms the basis of the next phase of the analysis, namely developing the emerging themes. Again, at this step of the IPA process, the volume of information gathered from the earlier two steps is reduced, but the complexity in terms of drawing up the connections and the interrelationships between the exploratory comments is maintained. The focus at this level is on analysing a distinct amount of exploratory comments from the transcript to identify emergent themes (see table 2, p. 147).

#### **Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes**

Various themes have been assembled from the transcripts in step three of the IPA. The next step of the data analysis is to refine the themes that have emerged and to see how they fit together. The idea here is to look for a way to put together the emergent themes to produce a structure that will allow me to develop the most important, exciting and unusual accounts of my participants' experience at work. The emergent themes from step three will be listed and re-arranged to form a collection of connected themes. This process of identifying patterns across emergent and connected themes is called abstraction (Smith et al., 2009). The process further involves organising related emerging themes together and developing them with a new term for the grouping (see Table 4).

**Table 4. Similar emergent themes identified from the transcripts and put together.**

| Identified emergent themes  | Original transcript  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| The procedure for promotion | “Hmm, there is no clear policy on promotion to support career progression. Someone can progress quickly due to their contacts and others will not due to the lack of clear policy on promotion. Where there are no plans for you to progress, it delays your promotion and they will say it's your fault. So, it's a challenge to us all.” |

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Lack of information flow on policies | “No, no. Hmm, maybe they have but I have not seen it. In this university, you have to rely on your friends and word of mouth to get information or hear stuff. There is no specific site in the department or from the HR office where you will get basic information even about your entitlement as an employee. Hmm, the systems just don't work.” |
| Lack of resources                    | “The authorities are busy painting buildings and constructing new road but no resources in the laboratories for the students to learn with. Poor internet facilities to do your work as a staff and talk less about the students. Hmm, ah, well, what can I do as a lecturer.”   |

The new themes were re-arranged and given new titles of “consultation” for that grouping.

### **Step 5: Moving to the next case**

The next step of the IPA is to move to the transcript of the next participant and go through steps one to four for the rest of the participants. Smith et al. (2009) stated that it is imperative to see each participant's transcript separately to allow new themes to appear within each transcript. To this effect, the ideas gathered from the other transcripts are connected and maintained while working on a new transcript. This process helps to keep the idiographic pledge of IPA during the data analysis. It is also very vital to know that a comprehensive tabula rasa approach to the data analysis is unlikely (Gibbs, 2007). It is impossible to start a

data analysis with no existing views. Instead, I decided to approach each transcript with a fresh viewpoint so as not to be influenced by the information assembled from the earlier transcript. My goal here is to collect new information and combine it with the ones earlier identified to form newly emerging themes.

#### **Step 6: Looking for a pattern across cases**

The final step of the IPA is to look for patterns across the various transcripts. I evaluated all the transcripts by searching for links and choosing which themes were most important. Doucet and Mauthner (2012) noted that deciding on the type of data to choose and which to eliminate is a vital consideration in the process of analysing the data. Repeated themes are suggested to be added in the research analysis to intensify the research validity (Creswell, 2009). Although the analysis is aimed at capturing repeated themes, themes appearing in more than half the transcripts, as well as lower occurring themes which were unexpected and contributed to a good understanding of my participants' experience, were added. Subsequently, the key criteria for choosing and including data were finding differences and similarities between the participants and contradictions across and within the various transcripts.

The strength of IPA is underlined by this method as I can establish the exceptional idiosyncratic example together with the commonalities between my participants (Smith et al., 2009). After reviewing and analysing the entire transcript, the final emerging themes are shown and explored in the next chapter of the data analysis (see Table 5)

**Table 5. List of final emerging themes from all the transcripts**

|                                      |                                |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Students' progress                   | Lack of policies on well-being |
| Meeting targets                      | Delayed promotion              |
| Status                               | Workload                       |
| Respect                              | Research collaboration         |
| Identities (social and professional) | Lack of resources              |

The next stage of this thesis is the data analysis chapter. It is vital to note that whereas the main objective of IPA is to reveal the lived experience of the participants and the meaning they give to that experience, the succeeding chapters are the interpretative accounts of their experience.

Griffin (1996) notes that the fact that we as researchers speak for others does not make us become them. We can only tell our story as researchers about our participants' lives. Taking inspiration from Griffin's (1996) words, for me to tell my story about my participants' lives, detailed accounts of events are provided in the next chapter, with illustrative excerpts from the various transcripts and case scenarios. This focuses on the experiences and viewpoints of the participants involved, which is essential to well-being research.

The level of detailed accounts produced by my participants is also a sign of quality in this research work, with Richardson (1994) promoting credibility for the study to come "alive". Creswell (2013:219) contends that for a study to be good, it must contain inscriptions and scenarios that "become 'real' and 'alive', an inscription that sends the reader straight into their world of the study". Nevertheless, Creswell stresses that "we must recognise that the writing is only a representation of what we see or understand". In this regard, I saw the stories of the participants I worked with as an opening to knowing something of their

lives. However, this opening was not clear, providing only a hint. While this is a subjective interpretation of my participants' stories, it has been laborious, systematic and dialogical in its presentation (Smith et al., 2009).

The next chapters cover the results chapters' interplay with discussions of the relevant workplace well-being literature and theory. These chapters should be read differently but also as an overlapping account of my participants' experiences and stories shared. The chapter will take a sequential trip through my participants' experiences of their work-related well-being issues. The first results chapter, with a discussion of the literature and theory, explores how Ghanaian academics understand workplace well-being and what that means to them. The second chapter covers what constitutes workplace well-being for academic employees. The changes that have taken place in HEIs in Ghana over time is explored in the third chapter. A summary of each results chapter together with the analysis and discussions and the implications for further studies and practices are also presented.

## Chapter 4 Understanding and Meaning of Workplace Well-being

### Results, Analysis and Discussion

#### 4.1 Introduction

Miles et al. (2014) posit that there are no clear limits between explanation and description in qualitative data analysis. Therefore, this study's results, analysis and discussion chapters are integrated. The chapter provides an insight into the experience, views and understanding of workplace well-being of the academic employees selected for this study. The structure of this chapter reflects the results based on the research question: *How does the Ghanaian academic employee understand workplace well-being and what does it mean to them?* This chapter is of specific importance to this study as it contextualises what the academic employee perceives to be their understanding of workplace well-being and what is important to them. It is, therefore, important to understand the sociocultural context of their life and work to give meaning to their stories and experiences.

A sample interview transcript is used to outline the participants' stories, views, and experiences throughout the chapter, and it is supported by one component of the conceptual framework earlier presented in chapter 1 (work expectations and demands in the HEWE). The participants' responses to the interview questions often addressed more than one research question. In those cases, the interview data are ascribed to where they appear to fit most logically. Hence, repeated quotes will be seen throughout this and the other chapters. This chapter is divided into three sections based on the key findings that emerged from the participants' stories and experiences to show their understanding of well-being at work. Unexpected findings, such as the societal

beliefs beneath the participants' understanding of workplace well-being and the differences in their stories, are also explored and presented.

The first section examines the resources to work with and career promotion of employees. It looks at how the participants desired to get teaching resources to work so that they can be promoted on time as this gave them a sense of pride and a positive self-image. Peter, Prince and Paul's stories and experiences are outlined to demonstrate the challenges of getting teaching resources to work with as well as being promoted, and how that shaped their understanding of workplace well-being.

The second section emphasises the importance the academics attach to meeting work targets and seeing their students' progress. It illustrates how the academics, and especially the heads of the department, see student progress as a positive achievement for their department and their leadership status.

The third section explores the research collaboration between colleagues in the same institution. The academic employees often see research collaboration between their colleagues as problematic. The academic employees linked the problem with research collaboration to the sharing of money, individual status and influence in the faculty/department. Finally, a discussion and interpretation of the key findings together with a chapter conclusion is presented.

Overall, this chapter demonstrates that higher education work is a social institution that is marked by learning, teaching, imparting knowledge and interaction between different people with different cultures and backgrounds. It can be argued that all the academic employees to some degree had an understanding of workplace well-being but could not link it to any specific well-being definition or approaches. However, they were able to mention things that

were important to them in their stories when they tried to explain how they understood the term and what it meant to them. This chapter, therefore, explores the key question of the understanding and meaning of workplace well-being.

## **4.2 Teaching resources and promotion**

Institutions are becoming gradually aware that for employees to gain and maintain a competitive advantage, they need to get adequate resources (Nielsen et al., 2017). The majority of this study's participants, except for the heads of department, expressed their relief when they get teaching resources (for example, stable internet facilities, online portals and laboratory equipment) to work with without difficulties. This, they said, brings them a sense of satisfaction in asserting power over their subjects to impart knowledge to students which then earn them respect as indicated by Paul, William and Andy in the quotations below.

*“Personally, workplace well-being is about resources. Through this, I can also support my students better. Resources will also help me to develop my research capacity so that I can be promoted but even a stable internet is a problem here”* (Paul, lecturer for 7 years).

*“Resources to work with will give me the confidence to teach without worrying. My students will also trust what I teach and respect me. Having self-confidence is part of well-being”* (William, lecturer for 7 years).

*“I like it when my students critique the research papers I upload to the teaching portal. This shows their readiness to learn, however, internet*

*connectivity to search for current journals is a problem, let alone to conduct your research” (Andy, lecturer for 8 years).*

This expression is consistent with the findings of Huta (2013) that most of the academic employees’ experience of workplace well-being is expressed in the eudaimonic perspective of well-being; that is, individuals withstanding difficult situations to see others succeed. In this case, the academic employees saw the future of their students as important and were able to stand the challenges surrounding limited resources to ensure learning took place. Some of the academic employees spoke about the difficulties of getting teaching resources. Their difficulties ranged from delays in getting laboratory resources released to delays in resolving internet connectivity problems and not being able to download current research papers to teach their students. For example, Prince explained:

*“I can’t download papers because the internet is just not working. I panic when I see the students in the laboratory and the lecture rooms because the students expect a lot from us as lecturers and the resources are not enough for all” (Prince, lecturer for 9 years).*

A lack of resources at work is seen as an issue of importance as this has been linked to low employee performance and morale at work. The academic employees not getting enough resources to work with is a concern as it is seen to have negative implications for both their students and the institutions (Richardsen, 2019; Nielsen et al., 2013). However, Nielsen et al. (2017) argue that researchers who explore the implications of the lack of resources on the employees only concentrate on the impact on the work outcome and not on their well-being. They further stated that previous studies have provided limited insight into how the challenges of limited resources at work might be

understood from the viewpoint of employees (the academics) or to the peak times of their work and lives.

The findings from this study support some of the findings from other studies in HEIs that lecturers value conducting research activities more than developing their reputation as academic department managers because research work helps them to get promoted and build their academic profile (Weng et al., 2010; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011). However, it is important not to see a resource to publish as the only way to promote academic employees in HEIs. It can be argued that having a limited resource to work with is not unique to the HEWE. Borst et al. (2019) argue that it depends on the type of resources and the demand for them. Lecturers and their heads of departments generally want their students to enjoy teaching and get excited about their teaching resources online, but many institutional practices often limit the realisation of this notion due to resources challenges.

On promotion, the academic employees' expressions were full of the phrase, "I feel good" and "the feel-good factor". These expressions were accompanied by broad smiles on their faces, passion and a modulated voice stressing how much getting promoted meant to them. For example, one academic employee who has been a lecturer for the past 15 years without promotion expressed his joy when he was assisted by his head of department to further his studies and was later promoted. He recounted his experience and the respect accorded him by his colleagues after his promotion and how happy he felt. His idea of what workplace well-being meant to him and the benefits of being promoted was explained as follows:

*"I was assisted in furthering my studies, and that was a big turning point for me [smiles]. If you are here for about five years without promotion,*

*publications and no research grants, your colleagues will see you as a failure. However, once you are promoted, the university will send an email to your colleagues, and they will congratulate you. You will be given more responsibilities but it's a good feeling, and that's the well-being factor here, ha-ha [laugh]" (Peter).*

Paul Said:

*"hmm, I have worked here for some time but whenever it came to promotion, I'm told to wait. It happened twice and I finally raised the issue with a very senior person, and I was promoted after a year. Sometimes the delay has to do with some of our leaders and their style of leadership. Most have their favourites and if you are not part then it turns to a struggle" (Paul, lecturer for 7 years).*

The participants' stories resonate with the work of Lesta (2015) on the determinants of lecturers' promotion in Ghanaian universities. Lesta found inconsistencies in the ways that lecturers were promoted across faculties: promotions were delayed without reason, based on ethnic lines and favouritism, and some waited for eight years before their first promotion. Again, these findings resonate with a study conducted with academic employees in Malaysian universities, which found a strong link between promotion and leadership responsibilities (Asaari & Desa, 2017). However, it is important not to see promotions simply as the opportunity for institutions to pile work on individuals as there are both merits and demerits. It can be argued that being promoted and given additional responsibility at work is not unique to academic employees in HEIs, as demonstrated by Paul in the quotation below:

*"Before I became an academic, I remember being given lots of responsibilities when I got promoted to a senior position in a consulting*

*firm. Here too, it's all about promotion. If you know what to do (research and publication), within a short time you will become a senior lecturer, associate professor and eventually a full professor" (Paul).*

Etmanski et al. (2017) argue that in the university work environment, postgraduates who get into academic work face uncertainties in the early part of their careers when it comes to promotions and obtaining full-time employment. The reason is that they are often seen to be inexperienced and needing support. However, it is important not to position them like that, but rather, look at their contribution towards education and passion to make a difference in their students' lives. This will help to explain why they should be promoted and the impact this may have on their careers and lives. What was striking about the academic employees' story is that Peter, Paul and Prince could identify precise events in their careers that led to a delay in their promotion. When asked to reflect on such event and to think whether things have changed in their careers and lives after promotion, they openly spoke of their excitement and the respect they receive from their colleague and the wider university community as the main reward of the promotion. For example, Peter said:

*"Most of our colleagues are still experiencing delays in their promotion. But when you are promoted, your colleagues come to you for advice and guidance on different things. That in itself is respect and the well-being factor, ha-ha [laughs]. Now when I walk around, I don't worry about anything, I feel good that I am a senior person in the department although my promotion came late" (Peter).*

*"I remember how happy I was when I was promoted after waiting for so long. It was a joy for me, I felt some burden has been off my shoulders" (Paul).*

*“It was a good feeling when I got promoted after two years though I was due. My department head will not sign my promotion form for reasons only known to him. I only concluded that he did not like me. Fortunately for me, there was a leadership change and the new one signed the forms for me” (Prince).*

These important career events can have a negative influence on the employees' work, for example, their interactions with students and colleagues. While the academic employees may not express or show their disappointment to their students and colleagues, their desire for the profession and priorities are likely to have changed. Therefore, there is a need for their leaders to focus more attention on the events surrounding promotion, as opposed to merely teaching and publications (Hetland et al., 2018; Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Thus, these events can be seen to represent significant moments in academic employees' stories. This notion supports the work of Miller and Rollnick (2002), cited in Copley (2018), on the relationship between the individual desire and willingness to change (progress), and the institutional structures in which the individual experiences the event of progress. Miller and Rollnick (2002) further explained that the desire to change depends on the individual and whether that will bring them the progress they need in their work and lives.

Several important issues emerged from Peter, Prince and Paul's stories about their experience of workplace well-being, most importantly, their difficulties in obtaining teaching resources and being promoted. Interestingly, there was a variation in the resources between participants from the social science background and those from pure sciences such as nursing and medicine. While the former had no difficulties downloading recent papers for teaching and supporting their students, the latter struggled. This raises concerns as to why

academics in the same universities had such differences. Again, whether the leadership in these universities see certain courses as more important than others is not known. This impacted negatively on the academics from the physical science faculties as they felt less important. Thus, the academic employees' understanding of workplace well-being is based on the availability of resources to work with, promotion or activities that support their career progression.

### **4.3 Meeting work targets and students' progress**

Lauermann (2014) explained that the key responsibility of most academic employees is their commitment to meeting the work target in terms of their students' progress. It was evident in the stories the academic employees shared about their understanding of workplace well-being that their experience was strongly and negatively influenced by their struggle to meet work targets and their engagement with their students. Most of the academic employees to some extent stated that they struggled to meet work targets. They described their struggle to meet work targets as coming with burden and tiredness, with the phrase a "lot of pressure" regularly used to describe their feelings; for example:

*"As a head of department, you are expected to meet the departmental target set by your senior managers and also teach a subject or share one with other colleagues. This comes with a lot of pressure"* (Cynthia, head of department for 11 years).

*"We have higher students numbers, plus administrative work with less staff to help. This makes the work daunting"* (Anthony, lecturer for 10 years).

*“Sometimes I have to step in and teach subjects I have little or no knowledge of and the government is not recruiting lecturers, this puts a lot of pressure on me”* (Jack, head of department for 15 years).

*“For me, the pressure is from my superiors and not the students. My staff also look up to me to resolve issues in the department”* (Katrina, head of department for 8 years).

Similar to part of the findings of de Paula and Boas (2017), it appears that some of the academic employees, both the lecturers and the heads of department, found meeting their work target difficult. For the heads of department, pressure from senior management and their lecturers to get their department functioning properly and the government not recruiting featured powerfully in their stories. This was seen to play a key role in hampering the progress of their work’ for example:

*“You cannot teach well when senior managers are on your neck for one document or another. Is a struggle every day but what can you do”* (Cynthia).

Having enough time to prepare and teach was important in Cynthia’s story. Cynthia believes that the heads of department are overwhelmed with work because they have dual responsibilities (i.e. teaching and department responsibilities). Instead, she thinks, the heads of department should not teach and instead concentrate solely on the departmental duties. Cynthia did not believe that being a head of department gave her any supremacy for not meeting work targets; instead, she was working more than the lecturers.

Other heads of department, like Agnes, reported her struggles to meet work target but took interest in her students’ progress. Agnes’s stories came with

phrases like “it’s a joy to see students’ progress” and “it’s a positive feeling”. For example, Agnes explained:

*“Oh yes, I remember our first graduating class, it was such a joy to see the whole class pass. It was great to be part of that and is the moment I will cherish forever. I felt I have positively contributed to people’s lives [smiles]. It was a sense of joy and fulfilment, and I will always cherish that moment. Irrespective of all the difficulties, in the end, the students made us proud, and we were all very happy”* (Agnes, head of the department for 9 years).

Students’ progress was a sense of joy for Agnes. The emotion and passion Agnes used when saying “it’s a joy” shows she gave her all for the students. She reflected on the challenges of being a head of department in a new faculty, her struggles to get things done and the results. She said aside from all the struggles and difficulties to get things done, students’ progress gave her a sense of fulfilment and a positive self-image for her position. This finding is in line with other studies conducted by Lauermann and Karabenick (2013) in Germany on German and American academics and Matteucci et al. (2017) on academics’ responsibilities. Both studies found that academic heads of department attached importance to educational outcomes for their department growth as a sense of accomplishment for their self-respect. This is true in the case of Agnes in this study. However, it can also be argued that her sacrifices and dedication contributed to the students’ success and she, therefore, deserved some personal glory. When Agnes was asked what students’ progress meant to her, she said:

*“It’s a positive feeling; it’s personally fulfilling for me to be able to say that I have been part of the history of this faculty and the university”*  
(Agnes).

However, this was not the case for Cynthia and Katrina, as previously stated. They complained about their struggles and frustrations in meeting departmental targets, and Anthony, a lecturer, cited high student numbers. Jack, however, emphasised the importance of staff performance to his well-being. For example, Jack explained:

“Hmm, as the head of the department, my well-being depends on how well I manage my team at the end of the academic year. I’m saying this because I will be seen as a failure if my staff fail to support the students to graduate in higher numbers. If my staff are not happy and keep complaining, I get worried” (Jack).

William and Anthony, who are lecturers, also shared their experience below:

*“I teach across faculties and it’s a challenge supporting students on their hospital practice. The numbers are high so you will end up with several groups to support throughout the semester”* (William, lecturer for 7 years).

*“There is a high demand for our course with high student numbers, but we don’t have enough staff. This makes meeting marking and supervision targets difficult, but we are managing”* (Anthony, lecturer for 10 years).

The lecturers' experiences stated above show they were more concerned with the activities in the classroom, such as teaching, supervision and student numbers, as compared to the heads of department. However, they attributed

these to the lack of teaching staff with high student numbers, which is similar to some of the heads of departments' concerns, such as Cynthia's story, as earlier stated. As previously indicated, both Jack's and Agnes' stories suggest that as heads of departments they were more fulfilled when they met department targets and saw their lecturers supporting the students with the hope that they would graduate in higher numbers. This, they said, brought them personal and departmental accomplishment. Many important issues emerged in Cynthia, Anthony Katrina, William, Agnes and Jack's stories about their workplace experiences. Most important were their struggles to meet work targets (teaching load and administrative responsibilities) and how to support their students to progress. Therefore, academic employees' understanding of workplace well-being emerged from the perspective of achieving work targets and students' progress, which can lead to both positive and negative well-being experience.

#### **4.4 Research collaboration with colleagues**

The academic employees' stories indicated that they felt that research collaboration with their colleagues was problematic. Their accounts of research collaboration draw attention to the idea of individual self-interest at work. Individual self-interest was seen to exceed institutional interest as the academic employees' accounts of research collaboration were strongly constructed and defined by the benefits individuals' receive when they work alone, rather than collaborating with their colleagues and with other institutions. Bozeman et al. (2013) explained the importance of research collaboration and said that when institutions collaborate, it is usually the people who interact with each other to achieve a common goal. However, the uncertainty in finding collaborators is the extent of the meaning of the word collaboration because people come with different expectations. Bozeman and Gaughan (2011) also explained that most

academics think of collaboration as co-authorship in written and published papers. From this, one would have thought that collaboration will be the means of working together in a HEI to boost research work. However, this was not the case for the academic employees in this study as they preferred to work independently. Various studies (Mattsson et al., 2008; Bozeman & Gaughan, 2011; Jeong et al., 2011) have shown and suggested a broader concept of collaboration and the benefits when researchers collaborate, especially in the current climate where research funding and grants are difficult to get.

The academic employees in this study, especially the lecturers, acknowledged that research collaboration with their colleagues would help them to get their required research papers on time in preparation for their promotion. However, through their stories, I was surprised to hear that most of them only got into research collaboration out of necessity and preferred to work alone. The academic employees explained the challenges they encounter when they collaborate with their colleagues and the negative impact this has on their work-related well-being. In explaining their challenges during research collaboration, they tend to start every statement with the exclamation “hmm” and “the thing is”, expressing a sign of hesitation in their speeches. Although one cannot ascertain the whole truth in interviews but must rely on integrity, these comments can be taken as a sign of the frustration the academic employees experience when they collaborate. One of them, Peter, echoed their challenges as explained below.

*“Hmm, the problem is, there is always a disagreement with money among us when we collaborate. Everybody wants a bigger share of the money. This can sometimes create work tension, but individuals will benefit independently”* (Peter, lecturer for 15 years).

DO: What do you mean by individuals will benefit independently?

*“Hmm, the thing is, at the end of the day, we all want money. If I write for grants and get X amount of money and manage to use 50% to do the research, the rest is for me. But when you work with someone, you have to share the remaining money with the person after paying 15% to the institution, and you may end up with nothing” (Peter, lecturer for 15 years).*

DO: What happens if an individual fail to get any grant?

Participant: *“Then you use your head” ha-ha [laughs].*

DO: What do you mean by using “your head”?

Participant:

*“Then you leave your individuality and join a team with grants. Now if you join a team, you will do all the work, but the initiator will take a bigger portion of the money. I don’t care how much I get when I join a team with grants; all I want is to progress. But some individuals will not agree, and that is the confusion among us here” (Peter).*

Another participant explained:

*“I think there is a wealth of human capital, but there’s no effective coordination. What we need is teamwork, but most people don’t want to work together. The resources might not be enough, but I don’t think that is the key issue. The problem is the desire to work together is not there and people are not taking responsibilities. If we don’t train this generation to take the initiative, even if we have all the resources in the world; we will not be able to work effectively to improve our research capacity” (Jack, head of department for 15 years).*

Peter’s earlier story suggests that some of the participants know that through research collaboration, they will be able to write and publish the required papers

for their promotion on time. However, due to their desire for more money and the misunderstandings that frequently arise whenever the money from research collaboration is shared among colleagues, some of them prefer to work alone to avoid making enemies at the workplace.

Peter does not seem to care much about the money aspect of research collaboration; instead, he is concerned about his progress and promotion as he puts it, *“I do not care how much I get when I join a team, all I want is to progress”*. Peter thinks that progress at work (promotion) will bring him respect and status among his colleagues and also increase his self-esteem at work. Peter’s story is a demonstration of how the desire for money and fame among some academics within HEIs have exceeded the benefits of research collaboration between academic colleagues. This situation also affects those who have good reason to engage in research collaboration for their career development and progress at work. The result of this is that those who are less experienced in writing proposals for grants never get the chance to learn from their senior colleagues. Jack also supported Peter’s story and said the lack of research collaboration is affecting research growth in Ghanaian HEIs, an issue which needs to be addressed. Details of Peter and Jack’s stories and experiences alongside the rest of the academic employees’ stories are explored and discussed below with well-being theory and the implications for their lives and work.

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the academic employees’ stories, views and experiences based on the research question. An explanation of how the academic employees understand and think what workplace well-being means has been given as covering delays in their promotion, a lack of resources, meeting work targets and research collaboration. The results presented also

cover the impact on academic employees' lives and careers. The experiences of the academic employees, both positive and negative, based on the results have also been presented. A link between the results has been demonstrated and presented on a diagram to support the discussion, with the implications for the academic employees' careers and lives.

#### **4.5 Discussion of the Results for Research Question 1**

Overall, the findings presented earlier in this chapter revealed interesting facts on how the academic employees understand workplace well-being in HEIs in Ghana (see section 1.8 in chapter 1). Their stories showed both positive and negative workplace well-being experiences. The issues important to their well-being emerged, including teaching resources and promotion, meeting work targets and collaboration with colleagues on research projects (see table 5, p. 153, the final themes).

On resources and promotion, the participants' experiences appeared negative because they struggled to get stable internet to teach and conduct individual research for their promotion. However, they endured these struggles to get promoted and for their students to graduate in higher numbers, and this turned their negative experiences into positive ones. This suggests that when workplace resources meet the needs of the employees, a positive work experience is likely to be achieved. It could also mean that individual attitude towards the use and management of resources meant that the resources were never enough. Likewise, it was shown in the academic employees' stories that meeting work targets was a huge struggle and led to frustration, exhaustion and negative workplace experiences. Individual interest to progress in their career and a desire to make quick financial gains were the causes of the lack of

research collaboration. These results support the conceptual framework designed for this study presented in chapter 2.

Also, and most importantly, the results of this chapter support the eudaimonic theory proposed for this study, which states that for an individual to achieve stable well-being at work, there should be a balance between their resources pool, their physical, psychological and social needs, and their physical, psychological and social challenges (Dodge et al., 2012). Dodge et al. further explained that meeting these needs and work challenges ensures that individual well-being at work in terms of meaning and growth is realised (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Seligman, 2002). Equally, it supports the IPA chosen for this study, which is about the lived experience (stories and views) of the academic employees in their institutions, as earlier presented.

#### **4.5.1 Teaching resources and promotion**

For the participants in this study, being promoted on time and having the resources (internet facilities, online portal and laboratory equipment) to work without struggles was important to their well-being at work. This was a common expression by most of the participants. The reason is that resources make the participants work more effectively, productively and efficiently, a view supported by Nielsen et al. (2017).

The participants' stories captured resources to work with and promotion as key attributes to their well-being. For example, Paul said, "For me is about resources, through that I will be able to publish the required papers for my promotion." This is in keeping with Peter and Prince's experience, as previously stated. Their explanation supports the assertion by Sastre (1999) that individuals understand their well-being based on their meanings and interests. The views expressed by the participants in this study shows that well-being is

not understood in one context but relies on several factors, such as individual support from their employers and colleagues as well as their knowledge of policies on promotion in their institutions. Paul's experiences, as presented earlier, are a good example of this. Another possible explanation is that because most of the participants were lecturers, promotion was important for their career progression; therefore, it was not surprising that they saw teaching and research resources as important to their promotion (Weng et al., 2010).

The issue of resources is pronounced, and most (12) of the participants argued that not having resources prevented them from building their research profile and impeded their chance of a salary increase. This study has shown that the well-being of academic employees in HEIs in Ghana is understood by the lecturers in terms of having teaching and research resources to aid work and being promoted on time. Their understanding was also influenced by their status in society and their recognition among their colleagues at work instead of their physical aspect of well-being. Paul's experience is an excellent example, "For me is about resources, through that I will be able to publish the required papers for my promotion, get a salary increase and respect from my colleagues." The view presented by the lecturers in this study supports some of the findings from the work of Floyd and Dimmock (2011) in that junior lecturers in a university work environment value conducting research activities more than developing their reputation as academic department managers because research work helps them to get promotion and build their academic profile.

Only the heads of departments in this study expressed their understanding of workplace well-being differently from the lack of resources and promotion. An example of this is provided by Jacks' experience, as presented earlier on page

169. The experience of the few heads of departments expands the knowledge on understanding individual workplace well-being by seeing different viewpoints. On promotion, this study found that the participants, particularly the lecturers, were inspired to work hard, not only for their promotion but also for their status and self-identity among their colleagues at work. The reason is that promotion in the Ghanaian higher education context is linked to respect, recognition and increases in individual salary. These factors contribute to an individual “feel-good factor” at work. The views of the participants are described by Ryan and Deci (2000:60) as extrinsic motivators, wherein individuals are inspired to work or carry out an activity to achieve “roughly different results”. In this study, the promotion was linked to the participants’ status, respect and increased salary. This contributed to their understanding of well-being at work and why they worked hard – a clue which this study has provided.

This study’s participants’ stories, especially those of the lecturers, may be due to the global changes in the higher education work culture in recent years, in which writing books and publishing academic papers have become important for university rankings and the promotion of academics, instead of their previous focus on quality teaching practices (Brown, 2007; Dickson-Swift et al., 2009). The heads of department, however, expressed their understanding of well-being in terms of collaborative working. This, they believe, can increase the research capacity of their institutions to compete with other HEIs worldwide. Their understanding demonstrates a desire for workplace well-being, i.e. a sense of collaboration to achieve results and not for individual achievement. This intrinsic expression of workplace well-being contradicts the motivational factors indicated by Ryan and Deci (200:60).

Despite the Ghanaian universities having systems in place to promote their employees, the picture painted by this study's participants demonstrated otherwise. On the one hand, the participants said they are aware of the guidelines on promotion. On the other hand, they claim these guidelines are either not followed properly or are delayed without explanation (for example, Peter and Katrina's experiences presented earlier), creating anxieties for the participants. These anxieties led to participants like Katrina negatively expressing their experience of workplace well-being (see Katrina's experience stated earlier). A possible explanation for this is that when guidelines on employee promotion are applied differently to individuals with the same or similar job roles and responsibilities, they tend to blame the organisation or question the process of promotion and themselves. The result of this is self-doubt, which tends to cause anxieties and increase individual stress levels at work. Further, individuals become less committed to their organisation because they feel it does not support their career progression (Ilies et al., 2010; Letsa, 2015; Mabaso & Dlamini., 2018).

The participants' views and experiences point to their eudaimonic understanding of the well-being theory proposed for this study in chapter 2. The reason is that overcoming resources challenges and struggles to overcome delays in their promotion to earn respect, status and recognition from colleagues at work are part of the eudaimonic well-being attributes. Also, this chapter has provided a hint as to the importance academics place on teaching and research resources (i.e. internet facilities) in HEIs in Ghana which other academics in the Western countries may take for granted. Lastly, the participants' stories revealed a link between resource challenges at work and delays in their promotion. This was interesting because other workplace studies

earlier reviewed in chapter 2 saw these factors separately. This points to a geographical difference in the way individuals understand and experience workplace well-being. The implication of these findings is presented in chapter six under the importance of context in understanding workplace well-being.

#### **4.5.2 Meeting work targets, students' progress and their impact on individual well-being**

Studies suggest that employees who meet their work targets feel satisfied with their work, feel good working, and have a positive work-life balance and good emotions towards their work and the organisation (Waltman & Sullivan, 2007; Bakker & Oerlemans, 2011; Bell et al., 2012). The participants in this study talked at length about the challenges they faced in meeting work targets, teaching load, and the shortage of lecturers to teach specialised subjects. Cynthia, Anthony and Jack's experiences, stated earlier, are good examples of this. A study by Ilies et al. (2010) on the impact of high workloads on academic employees at Midwestern University (USA) describes the impact of workload and work pressures on employees' well-being and their performance as "tragic". Lilies et al. (2010) identified that workload and demands harm employees' daily well-being, such as affective distress and blood pressure. They again found that work pressure can lead to a high rate of employee absenteeism and low commitment to their organisation, which could result in low performance if not properly addressed by employers (Lilies et al., 2010).

From this study's participants' responses, it was clear that not meeting a work target has some detrimental effects on their lives and performance, including feeling stressed due to excessive workload. Also, they become nervous because failure to meet deadlines portrays them to their superiors as ineffective and inefficient. The participants' stories and experiences are close to what Lilies et al. (2010) mentioned in their studies. In contrast, this study's participants did

not complain of having high blood pressure which resulted in any of them taking time off. Instead, they felt anxious, which to some extent had an impact on their performance.

A possible explanation is either the participants in this study failed to disclose the full impact of work pressures on their health to their employers for fear of losing their jobs should they be found to be unfit for work, or they may have other ways of dealing with work pressure which they failed to disclose during the interview process. This suggests a sociocultural context concern in that individuals do not speak about issues that affect them in the Ghanaian work setting. Nevertheless, this study has highlighted the challenges academic employees face in HEIs in Ghana in terms of meeting work targets and sociocultural factors, which needs further investigation on the impact on the participants' well-being.

Again, research suggests that employees who have support from their employers to meet work targets perform better and have a high commitment to their organisation (Hyman & Summers, 2004; Kelliher & Anderson, 2008, 2010). However, this was not the case in the participant's responses in this study. A sense of helplessness, anxiety and a lack of support from their employers in dealing with the challenges were observed. A possible explanation is that most people do not research the work pressure and demands of HEI jobs before accepting employment. Instead, they tend to look at institutional prestige, ranking and past achievements (Wosnitza et al., 2014). This makes them less prepared for the challenges associated with the work they are offered and thus they are unable to cope.

The participants also talked about other challenges, such as being asked to teach subjects they have little or no knowledge of. For example, Cynthia said,

“Sometimes I am forced to teach subjects I do not know.” This, they said, added to their work pressures, especially when their performances on these subjects were compared to the subject experts who taught the same subjects repeatedly. The participant's story demonstrates how they are overwhelmed with different types of work pressure to the point that some feel “scared” of being seen as failures when they are not able to meet work targets. Again, Cynthia and Jack's experience as heads of department are good examples. Cynthia said, “I cannot fail because the senior managers expect my departments to meet set targets. This put pressure on me and I feel stressed and scared”. Jack: “I will be seen as a failure by the senior management if my staff do not support the students to graduate in high numbers”.

These stories from participants also give a hint of the general pressure to perform in some of the departments in their universities (Briggs, 2009; Bell et al., 2012). On the one hand, meeting work targets helps organisations to show to their stakeholders that their employees are effective and efficient in what they do. On another hand, their employees are under pressure to work and are afraid that they will be held responsible when mistakes happen. This act of fear restricts employees' autonomy at work, and the results could be low self-esteem and low commitment to their organisation (Gottschalk, 2016; Karim, 2017), as in the case of some of the participants in this study. For example, Jack, William and Cynthia's experiences, as earlier stated.

Students' progress was another interesting point in this chapter made by all the participants. However, this point was linked to meeting work targets in their stories. They agreed that seeing their students progress was a source of joy to them as lecturers and heads of department. This is exemplified by Agnes, Jack and Katrina's experiences, as stated earlier. However, their success stories did

not come without challenges, such as making personal sacrifices to meet tight work deadlines, which in some cases affected their lives and those of their families. For example, Jack said; “Sometimes I have to sacrifice my holidays and work at weekends to meet deadlines, so my students can progress” (Jack).

Studies have shown that academics who support their students through teaching, engage them in activities that support their growth, and feel responsible for their progress report high levels of satisfaction compared to those who do not (Lauermann & Karabenick, 2013; Lauermann, 2014; Matteucci et al., 2017). This was noticed in this study’s participants’ stories, as they made personal sacrifices to ensure that their students graduate in high numbers. An example of this is Agnes’ experience, as stated previously. This suggests that this study has shown the understanding of the differences in satisfaction levels some academic employees get from supporting their students and the impact on their well-being in the context of Ghanaian HEIs. The views expressed by the participants above point to their eudaimonic understanding of well-being. The reason is that irrespective of their institutional pressures and challenges as earlier stated, meeting work targets for their students to progress was seen to be a priority from their stories.

#### **4.5.3 Research collaboration with colleagues**

Studies have shown that research collaboration among academics and their colleagues, and between academic and non-academic institutions, has become the norm in both the technical and scientific research fields (Boardman & Corley, 2008; Bozeman & Boardman, 2014; Gaughan & Bozeman, 2016). This is due to the benefits that individuals and institutions get in terms of knowledge generation, recognition and financial rewards in research collaboration (Abramo et al., 2011; D’este & Perkmann, 2011; Bozeman et al., 2013). However, in the

past, this only existed on an ad hoc basis to resolve specific problems in the Western academic community (Papatsiba, 2013). The reason has been that some academics and researchers saw research collaboration as dull, over-financed, over-organised, and unattractive, while Individual research receives responses such as dedication, true intellectual work, creativity, inspirational, and non-bureaucratic. Collaboration research, the cliché tells us, is bad and individual research is good (Wilson, 1970:1076 cited in Papatsiba, 2013).

Nevertheless, the views and experiences shared by the participants in this study on research collaboration presented differences in their responses to what has happened in the past and what is happening now in higher education institutions. Most (fourteen out of the eighteen) of this study's participants, both lecturers and senior lecturers, felt that research collaboration among colleagues is good because it helps them to swiftly organise the required research papers they need for their promotion, a conclusion similar to the findings of Bozeman et al. (2016) on good and bad research collaboration. Their views here point to their eudaimonic understanding of well-being (i.e. the concept of flourishing) in their career. The participants who were particularly enthused about research collaboration in this study are the heads of the departments. They believe that through research collaboration, both their faculties and the institution can boost their research capacity. For example, Jack said, "What we need is teamwork, with that we can increase our research capacity" (Jack).

However, twelve of the participants (lecturers) felt that research collaboration with their colleagues in the same institution has some setbacks. An example is Peter's previously stated experience. This assertion is similar to the finding from a quantitative study conducted by Youtie and Bozeman (2014) in the USA on researchers working in different Carnegie universities. This study concluded

that problems occur in most collaboration research, particularly when both academics are at the same institution. While this was a common concern for the participants who were lecturers, only Peter was able to voice his reservations about the problems involved in collaborating with colleagues to conduct research. This supports the sociocultural influence pointed out earlier by Jack that employees in Ghana generally do not complain about issues at work. A possible explanation is a strong cultural belief that prevents people from speaking about the challenges involved in research collaboration, as this study has revealed from the participants' stories.

Lam (2011) conducted a study on what motivates academics to engage in research collaboration based on online questionnaires and individual interviews involving 735 research scientists from five UK universities. Lam (2011) found that most research scientists engaged in a research collaboration to improve their academic reputation, for financial reward and for intrinsic reasons. However, the financial reward played a moderately small part of their overall motivation to engage in research collaboration (Lam, 2011).

In contrast, most (twelve out of the eighteen) participants in this study were more interested in individual research because of its financial reward (to control and keep all the money). For example, Peter said, "At the end of the day is about the money, we all want money. So why work with someone and share that money" (Peter, lecturer). It appears that the participants in this study were more interested in the financial rewards that come with conducting individual research than the other benefits stated in Lams' (2011) study. However, five of this study's participants (lecturers) believed that research collaboration would help them to organise the necessary research papers for their promotion and also boost their status among their colleagues. For example, Paul said, "Like

me, I don't care how much I get when I join a team because I want to progress in my career.” This view has been well documented in policy futures in the education literature, including those from Lam’s (2011) study. Further, from this study’s participants’ stories, there appear to be disparities (power dynamics) between the lecturers and heads of the department when it comes to sharing the monetary gain through research collaboration. For example, Peter said, “If you join a team with big ideas, you will do all the work, but the ‘big man’ will take a bigger portion of the money, that is the problem.” This has made research collaboration less attractive to the lecturers in HEIs in Ghana.

Again, Bozeman et al. (2016) conducted a study to explore the causes of bad and good research collaborations among academics using semi-structured interviews. They found that bad research collaboration was characterised by power differences, inadequate communication, and problematic personalities. On the other hand, good research collaboration was connected to good work habits, complementary skills, trust and researchers enjoying each other’s professional company. Relating the findings of Bozeman et al.’s study to the views presented by this study’s participants shows that what constitutes bad research collaboration among academics in HEIs in Ghana is the issue of “sharing the money” from research collaboration among colleagues, particularly the lecturers. This may suggest that unless there is a huge financial reward involved in research collaboration, some academics in Ghana prefer to work individually.

On the other hand, when individuals fail to secure research grants to work individually, they then tend to join a team with the hope that at least through that they will get the needed research papers for their promotion. These “double standards” displayed by some of the participants when it comes to research

collaboration undermine their commitment to the idea of research collaboration and their readiness to contribute to the research work which most academics are proud of. A possible explanation could be the financial pressures on academic employees in Ghana, where family members and society depend heavily on those working for financial support. This has made them look for individual financial interest instead of working together as a team to increase the research capacity of their institutions, a hint which this study has provided. A clear link between research collaboration, career progression (promotion), teaching resources and meeting work targets has been revealed in the participants' stories. This is illustrated in the diagram below.

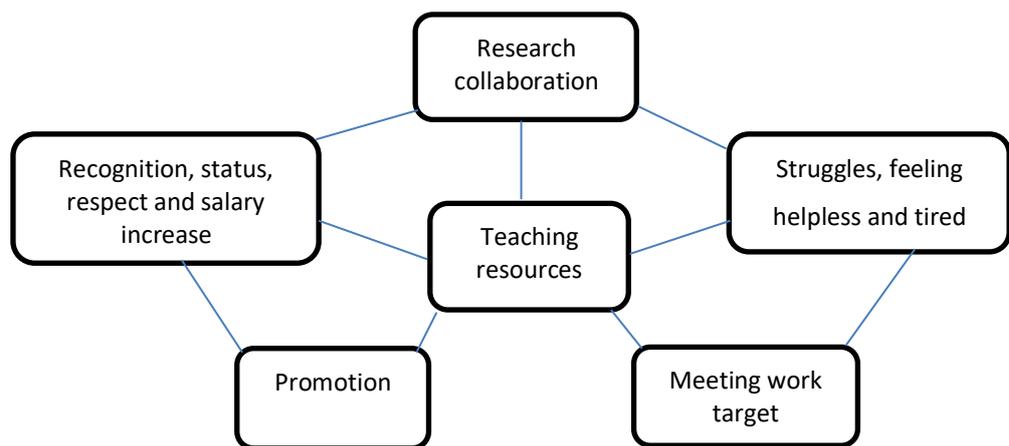


Figure F: Understanding and meaning of workplace well-being  
 Author's design based on the analysis of the findings.

The diagram presented above is based on the findings from the participants' stories, views and experiences of understanding workplace well-being. This diagram positions the participants' understanding in one of two halves: negative and positive workplace experiences, with teaching resources at the centre as the most important item. Details of these results and their implications for employees' workplace studies are presented later in chapter seven.

## **4.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has demonstrated how the participants understand workplace well-being and what that means to them. A common account running through their stories was the participants' passion to get promoted, which comes with respect from their colleagues and a salary increase. This was linked to positive workplace well-being experience. The challenges surrounding their work was explored, and these were identified as a lack of resources (stable internet facilities, online search portal and laboratory equipment) and struggles to meet work targets. These factors were identified and linked to the participant's negative workplace well-being experiences. Significant among these negative experiences is the participants feeling tired and helpless in getting teaching resources to work with and to meet their students' needs.

Through this study's participants' stories, it becomes clear that their understanding of workplace well-being consists of both their hedonic (celebrating their students' progress during graduation) and eudaimonic (persisting through challenges to make students happy) viewpoints. However, the key element that emerged (overcoming resource challenges to meet work targets, struggles to collaborate to get research papers for promotion, and the desire to see students' progress) pointed more towards the eudaimonic thinking of well-being, which this study has proposed.

Finally, the chapter has also revealed that poor research collaboration was linked to issues of money and power dynamics between the lecturers and their senior colleagues, while good research collaboration was connected to status and recognition from colleagues at work. The results presented so far have explored the lives and experiences of academic employees from the three

public universities in Ghana, their understanding of workplace well-being and how that has impacted their lives. The next chapter considers the second research question, “What constitutes workplace well-being for the participants’ in this study?”

## Chapter 5 **Constituents of Workplace Well-being**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In chapter 4, it was noticed how teaching resources were important to the academic employees' workplace well-being. Positive workplace experiences were linked to promotion, which gave the participants recognition, respect among their colleagues and salary increases. Negative experiences were related to the academics' struggles to meet work targets and feeling tired and helpless. The academic employees emphasised how the lack of teaching resources affected their work and how they felt helpless in not being able to support their students the way they would have wanted. They situated their discussion in their leaders' management style and asserting that with adequate resources, they would have been motivated to support their students better to fulfil their objectives.

This chapter draws on the academic employees' stories of what constitutes their workplace well-being to demonstrate how these constituents contribute to their understanding of workplace well-being. The sociocultural beliefs that influence academic employees' understanding are also demonstrated. The chapter focuses on the key results that emerged from the academic employees' stories based on research question 2 (see section 1.8 in chapter 1). These include the academics' identities (professional and social) at work, their sense of belonging and loyalty to their former universities and hometowns, the academics seeking help on well-being issues outside their institutions, and the impact that this has on their lives and career (see table 5, p.153).

First, the chapter starts with a demonstration of how four participants (Cynthia and Peter from study site A, Jack from study site B, and Prince from study site C) understood what constitutes their workplace well-being. These four

participants were selected based on the commonalities in their experiences and the stories shared. Second, the main issues that emerged from Patrick, James and Charles experience are further explored to cover how academics seek help outside their institutions on workplace well-being and its importance. It is demonstrated how these academics spoke about their challenges to get help and how that has shaped their views. The experiences of other academics, such as Frank, Jane, Stanley, Charles and Paul, are demonstrated throughout the chapter. Third, the participants' sense of belonging and their loyalty to their former institutions and homes towns are also demonstrated.

Finally, one component of the conceptual framework, namely the HEWE and its stressors, as stated in chapter 2, is used to analyse and discuss the results in this chapter. This is supported by Ryff's (1989) conceptualisation of the component and constituents of well-being previously presented in section 2.2. Overall, this chapter demonstrates that the constituents of individual well-being in a Ghanaian higher education work context are marked by both positive and negative experiences. It is argued that most of the academic employees see themselves as individuals who are part of wider society believe in the values and norms of being a Ghanaian.

## **5.2 Individual Constituents of Workplace Well-being**

A growing number of scholars have provided different answers to what constitutes individual well-being, resulting in different well-being constructs (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Tov, 2018). As individuals, our views on what is important to our well-being at work differs depending on the type of work we do, what we want from our work and the environment in which we find ourselves (Foresight, 2008; NICE, 2015; Cartwright, 2017). The academic employees' constituents of well-being are therefore positioned important as they have a positive impact on how they can achieve a work-life balance (the quality of work-life balance) and continuity (Harter et al., 2003; Warr, 2003; Bakker et al., 2008). Ryff (1989) argues that the different categorisation of well-being constituents has to lead to different understandings and therefore must be understood from the academic employees' viewpoint or in relation to their experience and stories.

Most of this study's participants (fourteen out of the eighteen) were able to explain what constitutes their workplace well-being. However, their explanations were influenced by what the Ghanaian society says and thinks of them. The participants' expressions were full of the phrases "in Ghana" and "culturally", linking their understanding to cultural values and social and environmental influences. These expressions fit into Ryff's work on the conceptualisation of well-being rooted in the pursuit of goals consistent with a person's identity (McGregor & Little, 1998; Waterman, 1993; Ofori & Bell, 2020). Aside from the cultural values, their expressions also captured issues about their professional and social identities with the use of phrases such as "society sees us as" and "society expects us to". These expressions were used to explain specific instances and issues which to them explain what constitutes workplace well-being. Their expressions further captured the societal pressures on them which

tend to affect their well-being negatively (Ofori & Bell, 2020). As one participant Cynthia put it:

*“I think because of our extended family system in Ghana, society expects a lot from us as lecturers, and that scares me most of the time and I get stressed. For example, during funerals, naming ceremonies and birthday parties. The problem is, once you fail to attend one of these programs, they all turn against you, especially we the women, hmm [Pause]”* (Cynthia, head of department for 11 years).

DO: Why do you say, you the women?

Participant:

*“I don’t know, but I hear a lot of my female colleagues complaining about this and not the men. I also feel society thinks we the female lecturers are not as busy as our male colleagues and that we should have time for funerals etc.”* (Cynthia).

Another participant said:

*“Society sees lecturers as intelligent people and that is a huge confidence and responsibility on us. You cannot go out there and misbehave as a lecturer because society and your students look up to you. As a lecturer, you cannot be seen drunk and walking about improperly dressed. Society frowns on a certain lifestyle, ha-ha [laughs]”* (Prince, lecturer for 9 years).

From Cynthia’s and Prince’s stories, it becomes clear that they were aware of what society expects from university lecturers. Cynthia was concerned about the pressure on female lecturers and how this affects her personally. This suggests that although all academics experience a certain level of pressure

from Ghanaian society, that of female academics is seemingly more, indicating a gendered phenomenon. Their stories as presented indicate negative experiences of well-being with a link to social pressure and values (Ofori & Bell, 2020). This suggests an understanding of well-being components based on social and cultural values in a Ghanaian context.

### **5.3 Seeking Individual Identities at Work**

As individuals, we show our identities through the ways we interact with others. We organise our capabilities, communication, and behaviour and present ourselves in a way that will be accepted by others (Walsh & Gordon, 2008). These traits represent our internal images, which we build on to project our public image. The outward appearance is the reaction others give when we present ourselves, which can be accepted or rejected (Goffman, 1959). A person's identity is a continuous process of relationship-building between their self-image and public image. From Goffman's work, a person's identity encompasses several elements, such as the interactional capabilities and the management of impression (Goffman, 1959, 2008). The interactional capabilities tend to show the unique identity of a person to others to inspire their reception. These comprise their role, ideas, style and abilities, which emerge from early interaction and are embodied in non-verbal communication as well as language (Goffman, 1959 in Pelias, 2018).

This study's participants' stories on their identities were described in two ways. First, their professional identity was seen through their role as lecturers, their interactions with their students and colleagues, and how their employers regard them. Second, their social identity was expressed in the way their friends, family members and society see them and the demands others make of them because of their profession. Consistent among all the participants' stories of seeking

identities at work was the use of “I” and “I am” to tell their story. Participants’ tended to personalise their stories and only concentrated on the good things they had done throughout their academic profession. For example, Andy and Chris explained:

*“I have work on several projects and have won awards. I was happy when I saw the award published on the front page of the national newspaper; I felt satisfied that I have done something special for my institution and country”* (Andy, lecturer for 8 years).

*“I won a research grant for my department and I was commended by my managers. Now my colleagues come to me for advice and I feel good and important. Can you imagine how the management will react if I decide to leave and go to another university? Ha-ha [laughs]”* (Chris, lecturer for 5 years).

Chris and Andy’s stories demonstrate individualised achievement and show how important the recognition from their colleagues and managers was to them. They emphasised this through the use of “I got this, “I did that” and “I have done that”, which from their perspective helped them to gain admiration from their colleagues, institutions and the nation. This, they, said gave them a level of respect in working with their colleagues and senior managers. Their stories are in line with the work of Clarke and Mahadi (2017) on the importance of workplace respect and its relationship to both the individual and the organisation, as Chris can be seen expressing in his story. Again, Darwall (1977), as indicated in Benditt (2008:488), says that appraisal respect also focuses on an individual’s talent, how good a person is in his or her job, and a person’s attitude and integrity in engaging with others or in pursuing a course of action. Both Andy and Chris felt that they are good at what they do at work and

that is why their colleagues and managers respect them. To them, being respected among their colleagues gave them authority and positively influences their personal and professional identities.

### **5.3.1 Professional identity**

Professional identity is not just about the work people do or the organisations they associate with, rather it also covers the ways they present themselves, think, interpret issues, the things they aspire to, and how they communicate (Corley, 2004; Whetten, 2006; Fuller et al., 2006). In this study, the participants' professional identity was important to them as it demonstrated their role, what they do and stand for, and their authority and influence. All the 18 participants interviewed agreed to a certain degree that their professional identity was important to them. Their stories were backed up by the use of phrases such as "I am a lecturer", "as a lecturer", "your colleague sees you as" and "society respects you", thereby emphasising the importance participants attach to their professional identity, how their colleagues see them, and how they are perceived by the Ghanaian public.

The participants' stories are similar to part of the findings of Beijaard et al.'s (2000) study on teachers' professional identity conducted in the south-western part of the Netherlands. They found that teachers gain authority and respect from their colleagues and students based on their subject knowledge and, from the general public, based on their qualifications and behaviour outside their work environment. The respect gained by the participants for doing their work and how that affects their work-related well-being – both positively and negatively – also came through in their stories. For example, one participant said:

*"I am a lecturer, and my performance is important to me because that is what my managers will judge me on. Also, I have to keep a certain level of appearance and work standard to gain respect from my colleagues and students. This is what defines me as a lecturer in this university"* (Prince, lecturer for 9 years).

DO: How does that make you feel?

*"Oh, to work harder but at the same time, it puts pressure on me because my colleagues, managers and students expect more from me. I know through hard work I will be rewarded"* (Prince).

Prince's story shows how much his performance, appearance, and reputation mean to him among his colleagues and students at work. For Prince, the pressure makes him work harder and through that, he believes he will be rewarded. The reward will then increase his confidence and influence among his colleagues and eventually result in positive well-being experiences. Prince's expression shows how important his identity is to him as he continues to work hard to attain a recognised standard among his colleagues and students at work.

Another participant explained:

*"If you are here for some years without doing much in terms of grants and publications, your colleagues will see you as a failure. You will be tagged as not knowing what you are doing. Your colleagues expect to hear or read your papers"* (Peter, lecturer for 15 years).

DO: How does that affect you?

Participant:

*"Hmm, unhappy, you are not seen important and nobody talks to you about anything. Here, the important and 'the big guys', are those who*

*bring in big grants and are on different research projects. They easily get promoted and lots of attention from the heads of the department”*  
(Peter).

In comparison to Prince’s stories, Peter’s story showed that his professional identity was not seen in a positive light among his colleagues. Peter feels that because he has not done much in terms of securing research grants and publishing academic papers, his colleagues do not regard him as important as Prince. Peter appeared worried, felt unhappy at work and as a result, tended to isolate himself from his colleagues and work alone. Such workplace experiences create self-doubts for an individual and impact negatively on their performance. The following story, told by a female participant who has worked for 11 years (who was incidentally promoted to a senior position a few days before the interview), presented her experience in detail:

Participant:

*“You see, I have just been promoted and my female colleagues were happy for my elevation. I feel that my hard work and commitment has paid off, and now my voice and vision can be heard at the senior management level. Now I will not only be addressed as a lecturer but as a head of the department too, ha-ha, [laughs]. In this university, the whole leadership structure is dominated by men, so you do not only get respect from the female colleagues but the male ones too. I am happy and proud of myself”* (Cynthia, head of department for 11 years).

DO: So, do you think your promotion has added to your status?

Participant:

*“Oh yes, yes. I feel good and important, ha-ha [laughs]. Apart from that, it is also a big push for female colleagues at this university. I hope to do well so it can open doors for more female colleagues in leadership” (Cynthia).*

Cynthia’s use of the phrase “I feel good and important” indicates how important her new role is to her in relations to her colleagues, especially as a female working in a male-dominated environment. Cynthia seems to indicate that there will be challenges but she wishes to do well and hopes to take each day at a time to survive in her new role. Cynthia’s expression is supported by the work of Goddens (1991). When asked what she meant by “is a big push for the female colleagues in this school”, Cynthia explains that there are few female lecturers in leadership positions in her university and that her role comes as an opportunity to show that female lecturers can do equally well in management positions as their male colleagues. She has decided to prove herself to create opportunities for other female colleagues in the school:

*“You see, the whole leadership structure in this university is dominated by men and I’m determined to do my best to make an impact. I know the standards for us is different from our male colleagues and I will face the challenge” (Cynthia).*

Katrina said:

*“I am a professor with a senior position and my female colleagues look up to me, so this makes me happy. However, among my male colleagues is a daily challenge as I have to work extra hard to prove my worth” (Katrina).*

Jane also said:

*“I once taught a course with a male colleague, hmm. I was always under pressure to prove myself because our male colleagues are*

*perceived better than us. We always have to do something different to be recognised by our male colleagues, hmm. I think is a problem in our society and these problems are far from solved” (Jane, lecturer for 8 years).*

Cynthia, Katrina and Jane are aware of the competition and opposition between them and their male colleagues at the university. They describe this as a struggle indicating their unhappiness. Cynthia further explained that she is aware of the competition and opposition she is likely to face from her male colleagues and will try everything possible to overcome it for her vision and her voice to be heard. Cynthia explained that she is passionate about students and staff progress. However, most of her female colleagues are not sure how this can be achieved since the department is faced with resource challenges.

While Cynthia's employer and some of her male colleagues are happy about her promotion, her female colleagues believe that Cynthia cannot achieve much among the male-dominated leadership positions in the university. For example, Katrina and Jane expressed similar sentiments. The reason is that the expectation of female academics by their male colleagues puts pressure on them and this affects both their emotions and performance (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007). Further, it discourages most of the female colleagues from taking up leadership positions in the university.

The experiences of Cynthia, Katrina and Jane are similar to those reported in a previous study conducted in the UK by Bagilhole (1993) on the challenges that female academics face in UK universities. This study found that discrimination against women exists in the academic profession, especially when it comes to promotion to senior positions. Bagilhole further stated that female academics face hostility from students and their male colleagues, feel isolated, have fewer

mentors and fewer female networks within the university environment. Similar results were also found in Australia by Wincheste et al. (2006), in the UK again by Bagilhole (2017), and in Sweden by Angervall and Beach (2018), all on female academics in universities, showing the “gendered institutions” that this study’s participants have also revealed.

Many important issues emerged from the stories of Prince, Peter, Cynthia, Katrina and Jane regarding their professional identity among their colleagues in their work environment. Most importantly, the attitude of male colleagues towards women in senior positions and the notion of having both self and professional identities remain relevant within the HE environment. The positioning of female academics as inexperienced in taking up leadership positions in comparison to their male colleagues in the university work environment is explored further in the rest of the chapters. Particular attention is paid to how this study’s participants’ professional and social identities differ and how much value each participant attaches to their overall identity both in and out of their work environment. The implications of these factors on this study’s participants’ well-being and the impact on their institutions is explored further in chapter seven.

### 5.3.2 Social Identity

According to Abrams and Hogg (1990), how individuals' construct their work identity can be explained through social identity theory. Through social identity theory, individuals are able to construct their identity by creating, classifying and comparing themselves with other social groups (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Abrams, 1996; Gini, 1998). Social identities epitomise individuals' sense of fitting into a group with which they can identify, either through their culture, community, social grouping or environment, to find a place for themselves and also choose an aspiration that positively reinforces themselves and their self-image (Hewitt, 1989). This gives the individual a "feel-good" factor (positive well-being) and a sense of achievement among social groupings. This study's participants' responses indicate individuals who value their social and professional identities. They described their social image as key to reinforcing their authority in society. However, in trying to reinforce their identity, they faced challenges such as having to live a life worthy of emulation by their students and conforming to social standards (Ofori & Bell, 2020). For example, one participant said:

*"In Ghana, every action and movement of a lecturer is scrutinised by society as if the lecturer is a super-human being. You can't make a mistake as a lecturer, especially in public because you don't know who is watching. Ghanaians set their standards for you to follow"* (Cynthia).

DO: How does this affect you?

Participant:

*"You are constantly on the alert to not make a mistake; this puts huge pressure on you. Sometimes I feel that anytime I'm out and about in town, people are watching me and it brings my confidence down."*

*Lecturers are not supposed to make a mistake, hmm, ha-ha [laughs], it is difficult in this part of our world” (Cynthia).*

Anthony also said:

*“As a lecturer in Ghana, your appearance in public is always judged by society and it puts pressure on you. Before I was loud and use to engage in all sort of public debates in drinking bars but now I don’t” (Anthony, lecturer for 10 years).*

Another participant explained:

*“So, hmm, for me I find the expectations scary and I am extremely careful when I go out, and this restricts me. If I make a mistake, it becomes deadly” (Jane, lecturer for 8 years).*

The participants' stories show that the Ghanaian public has a high expectation of academics and wants to see them live up to that expectation. However, these expectations also have their downsides, as previously explained by Jane and Anthony. Heinze (2005) and Ofori & Bell (2020) both describes this as an “unpleasant feeling” as society expects people from a certain profession to act appropriately in social settings with fewer mistakes when interacting with people. From the participants, although mistakes are generally part of being human and we are supposed to learn from them, the actions of the Ghanaian society put pressure on them. Jane believes that making a mistake in public as a lecturer with the title doctor affects her social identity and because of this, she is careful with her public engagements, as she details:

*“Ghanaian society expects you to know everything because you are a doctor. Sometimes the questions they ask, the doctor doesn’t even know the head and the tail of what they are asking. This is scary because if you make a mistake, it affects you as a person and the same*

*people will turn around and say this doctor from this university does not know anything” (Jane).*

A society in which the lecturers’ role is understood and they are allowed to go about their social life freely without any pressure from the public would be ideal (Beijaard et al., 2000; Ofori & Bell, 2020). However, this does not appear to be the case with this study’s participants. Cynthia seems to have a level of control over the pressure, as she said again:

*“For me, I don’t let the pressure get to me too much, I try to do my best. If I can’t do something, I tell them so I can feel free instead of worrying about what people will think about me because I am a doctor” (Cynthia).*

In the participants’ stories, they expressed concerns about their social identities, how their lives have changed because of their titles (doctors), and working at the university. The participants regularly described the changes in their emotions and performance as a result of the pressure society puts on them. In line with the work of Goffman (2010: 24-31) and Ofori and Bell (2020), this process of change in emotions is due to the demands that others make of them as individuals on the basis of their profession and public image. They do this based on how they see, answer and treat them. For example, Anthony explained:

*“For me, the pressure is good. It gives me the drive to do more for people and at the same time to be careful of what I say and do. It is good to know that people look up to you and recognise you are intelligent. The problem, however, is anytime something happens in the village, the villagers will want to wait for the doctor to come and you should have answers to everything” (Anthony, lecturer for 10 years).*

Anthony also explained how becoming a lecturer working at a university has positively changed his life and behaviour. Before becoming a lecturer, Anthony described himself as “a loud scientist” who challenged his colleagues on different issues, engaged in public debates in drinking bars freely without worrying about what society said of him. As a result of gaining a PhD, Anthony has now adopted a “quiet scientist” identity with a humble attitude to prevent society from saying negative things that will affect his image, professional identity and work. Anthony’s attitude, as described, is his response to the pressure from society mentioned earlier.

Archer et al. (2007) argue that this practice allows the individual to be more mindful of their actions and self-image in transforming their carelessness into a more socially “acceptable” one. This helps the individual to live up to the standards required by the society they live in, as in the case of Anthony. Also, this has helped Anthony to gain recognition from having the title “doctor” and working at the university. The participants’ “accounts” of change in their lives and professions demonstrate how difficult it has become for them to conform to societal pressure and designated norms (Dukerich et al., 2002; Ofori & Bell, 2020). The participants were also worried about the continuous scrutiny of their social lives and the financial demands from their extended families, friend and some members of the public. For example, Frank explained:

*“Whenever there is a funeral in the family or the community, everybody will wait for the lecturer to come, take decisions and take the lead in contributing money. Families and friends depend on you so much that even if you tell them you don’t have money or do not have what they asking for, they don’t believe you. This can be frustrating”* (Frank, lecturer for 6 years).

Frank believes that these constant expectations of financial demands and support for social activities from family members and the general public make the whole profession challenging as he and his colleagues are constantly under pressure, looking for ways to meet these demands (Ofori & Bell, 2020). In this study, most of the participants said that the pressure is crushing, and that they wish the public did not know they were lecturers and doctors working at the university (Ofori & Bell, 2020). Two of the participants understood the social pressure and appear to be getting on with their lives. However, two other participants (Stanley and Peter) recounted their experiences at different events as follows:

*“I was so embarrassed at a funeral when a lady walked up to me and demanded I help with her diagnosis because she heard I was a doctor. I tried to politely explain to her that I am not a medical doctor but rather I teach at a university. This woman was not happy with my explanation and said why should people be called doctors if they were not, and said, ‘you are a fake doctor then’. I was shocked at her reaction with people looking at me”* (Stanley, lecturer for 7 years).

Stanley’s experience appears to have a negative impact on his social image and believes a section of society does not understand the work of academics with the “doctor” title, as he explained again:

*“Most of our people do not understand our title. The life of a doctor in our society is more of a celebrity but has its challenges. I will be much happier to attend events and not been introduced as a doctor. I think I will enjoy the event better”* (Stanley).

Stanley saw his embarrassment as a challenge in his career (part of his identity), as he explained again:

*“Honestly, I believe this is part of a life I have to live now as I can’t do much about it. I have to find ways to deal with the negatives and focus on the good things I can do to better the lives of my villagers”* (Stanley).

Peter also said:

*“I have been mistaken for a medical doctor many times. All I can do is explain to them that I am not. The problem is that most of our people find it difficult to understand us, but I think some do when we explain our title”* (Peter, lecturer for 15 years).

It was clear in the participants’ stories that societal demands and the constant approaches by people at public events seeking to find solutions to their problems comprise what they dislike about their titles and work as academics. Both Peter and Stanley’s stories suggest that they have not completely lost interest in attending public events, but they are concerned about unexpected occurrences (Ofori & Bell, 2020). The participants’ stories emphasise the importance of their identities (social and professional) to their well-being. This was seen to have a relationship with individual respect and status at work. Pressure from society was seen to have a negative impact on the participants’ social identity and well-being during public engagements such as funerals. Meanwhile, respect in public gatherings was linked to individual status and was seen as important to their positive well-being (Ofori & Bell, 2020). Again, and most importantly, the participants’ stories and experiences regarding their social identity raised interesting gender differences. For example, high societal expectations such as financial support and giving advice/direction to people as “doctors” were generally embraced by men, but were a source of pressure for

women. The impact of these to the eudaimonic theory proposed here is presented in chapter seven.

#### **5.4 Seeking Help on Well-being Issues Outside Their Organisation**

It has been shown in this study how the lack of well-being programmes at the three study sites pushed the academic employees to seek help outside their institutions. While seeking help to solve their work-related well-being issues is seen as the right thing to do, this study's participants said they were careful about what to say to their private (informal) counsellors. For example, Frank said, "You have to try not to say anything about your employer to private counsellors because if it goes wrong, your job will be on the line". Paul said, "When you go to these counsellors for help, there is no privacy. You don't feel you are being taken seriously". The participants' accounts of seeking help were often mixed and inconsistent. On the one hand, they were excited that their work-related well-being issues were solved outside their work environment, but on another hand, they were concerned about their privacy. De Dreu et al. (2004) and Ofori & Bell (2020) argues that finding a balance between the pressures from work and those from society is a challenge. However, it is the responsibility of the individual to find a balance between these pressures to achieve positive well-being. For example, Paul said:

*"There is no place you can walk to and get information or help on your well-being. We don't have any office for that, hm, you are just there, ha-ha [laugh]. What we do have is a clubhouse and we use the 'African social support system', that is, we talk to colleagues, friends and church elders. Some of my colleagues also talk to their families on issues bothering them socially or emotionally at work" (Paul).*

DO: How does the lack of support affect you?

Participants:

*“Well, I feel I’m just here to work and all the other things about my life and health do not matter to my employer. Initially, I was surprised because things were different from my previous employment. I was worried, but as time went by, I decided to look for ways to deal with issues, like joining my colleagues at the clubhouse and talking to my family” (Paul).*

Paul’s story shows how uncertain he is about getting help from his employer should something happen to him at work which affects his well-being. The use of the phrase “you are just there” with a laugh appears to show that the institution has no concrete plans in place to support their employees’ work-related well-being issues should they arise. Thus, they are left to navigate different processes to address their well-being challenges. Paul believes that talking to friends and families, which he called the “African support system”, was the starting point in trying to deal with some of the negative issues that affect his well-being. His story shows how committed he is in trying to take control of his life as compared to Frank, who explains:

*“The only thing I have heard of is the student’s counselling unit, which is all I can say. We have the HR department too, but I don’t think they know anything about employee well-being” (Frank, lecturer for 6 years).*

Based on the participants’ stories, seeking help to address work-related well-being issues was seen as an individual responsibility and not one of the organisation. Consequently, this is missing in the day-to-day discussion among colleagues, until an issue arises, and nobody knows where to go or whom to talk to, as Charles explained:

*“Hmm, [pause] one personal experience I encountered, and I was so sad to realise that even we the educated people also do the same. Hmm, [pause], a good number of our colleagues met at a conference outside the university. During our interaction, we found ourselves complaining about the same issues (lack of resources and delays in promotions) which affect our work and lives. When we got back and I tried to raise the issue again, no one appeared interested to join me in taking it up with the authorities. Until today we here and nobody has said anything”* (Charles, lecturer for 7 years).

DO: Why do you think people do not want to take issues up with the authorities?

*“Hmm, [pause] I don’t know, but I think we all do it, ha-ha [laugh] and that should change. Culturally in this country, our leaders are always right and that is what we are taught from primary school and even at the university, so I think it has become part of our lives. People in this country generally don’t complain about issues at work and those who try to complain find themselves with no support from their colleagues due to different reasons or some sort of favours here and there”* (Charles).

DO: How does that make you feel?

*“Hmm, I feel sad, but I think it is about society and the way we are brought up”* (Charles).

Another participant said:

*“Our society is such that, when you complain, you are a bad person. What I do is seek advice from my senior colleagues. It’s due to their experience that I am able to survive until now”* (William, lecturer for 7 years).

The participants' explanations, here again, highlight a cultural and individual approach to workplace well-being challenges. The influence of social and cultural factors, such as "do not complain about your leaders, they are always right", repeatedly emerged in both William and Charles's stories. This, in essence, helped to remind them of being at the centre of a society influenced by cultural factors, making both William and Charles believe that not complaining about negative issues at work is the best way to be seen as a good employee. This point is supported by Ely and Thomas's (2001) study on the cultural, diversity and work outcomes of different organisations in the UK. Ely and Thomas's found that cultural beliefs can affect work outcomes negatively if not properly managed in workgroups in an organisation.

Ofori and Bell (2020) argued that cultural views and factors have had a huge impact on this study's participants' work and lives; hence, the participants fail to demand things from their employers that would benefit their well-being. This raises questions about the institutions' policies on worker well-being and its importance to work outcomes. Lastly, there appears to be a lack of information dissemination from management to employees, which has led to a lack of awareness and understanding of well-being issues at work. The implication of this for the participants' performance and well-being in terms of work outcome is presented later in chapter six under the importance of well-being in a given context.

## 5.5 Sense of Belonging and Loyalty

The participants in this study see themselves as individuals who have to give back to their hometowns and former universities. Most (seventeen) of the participants, said that they were former students and wanted to give back to their universities through teaching. Phrases such as “I come from this town”, “my family is here” and “I like teaching” were used to show the importance they attached to working at their former universities and hometowns. In the participants’ own words, coming back to work for their former universities gives them a sense of pride and fulfilment. As one participant said:

*“I studied here from my undergraduate to PhD degree. Coming back to teach is like coming home. I feel I belong here, and the environment is well suited for me too”* (Patrick, lecturer for 9 years).

Another participant said:

*“I come from this town and I have lived most of my life here. My husband is a native of this town, so for me, there is no way I am going to leave this town. Again, I wanted to impart knowledge to current and future generations and I feel that the best place to do this is my former university”* (Cynthia).

DO: So, do you feel you are indebted to this university?

Participant:

*“Hmm, I will say yes and no because I have all my extended family here, which I can rely on for support, and also this university has played a major part in my life. Interestingly, my friends have asked me the same question, they feel I can earn more money with my experience and qualification elsewhere, but I just can’t leave this place, ha-ha”* (Cynthia).

William said:

*“I studied here and feel attached to this place. Working here feels like home to me. I enjoy teaching and working as a former student is great. I know the environment and both students and staff respect me”* (William, lecturer for 7 years).

James also said:

*“I grew up in this town and had all my education here. Now as a lecturer, the only way I can say thank you to my people is to impart knowledge through teaching to the younger generation”* (James, lecturer for 6 years)

Patrick, James, William and Cynthia expressed how working for their former universities gives them a sense of belonging and fulfilment. Patrick, James and William received their education in the same university and feel their lives have been positively influenced through the training they received and thus they want to give back to the young ones of the future generation. They have all the qualifications to help them to get jobs outside the university work environment, but they believe that imparting knowledge to the younger generations in their native towns and former universities gives them a sense of joy.

Cynthia, on the other hand, explains how having her family around, working in her hometown and getting married to a man who also comes from her hometown gives her a sense of belonging and makes it difficult for her to leave the town. Before she started working at the university, Cynthia was a “businesswoman” who was involved in different businesses to make ends meet. Her passion for teaching never stopped, until she got the opportunity to teach as an assistant lecturer in her hometown. This was a joy and a dream come true for her.

Patrick, William, James and Cynthia's narratives demonstrate how their former universities and hometowns, places they have spent most of their lives, influenced their career positively. Their stories are in line with the work of Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) on the relation between self and place for lakeshore property owners in northern Wisconsin. This study found that individuals' sense of belonging is consistent with their identity, neighbourhood and independence. However, one participant explains that he did not want to go back and work for his former university. As he explained:

*"I felt it is less ideal for me to teach in an institution where my former lecturers were also teaching. It is one of those places where you would be working with your former professors and lecturers, and I feel working in another university represents a fresh start"* (Charles, lecturer for 7 years).

Charles's explanation is influenced by the fact that he fears his former lecturers and professors might see him as inexperienced or still see him as a student, which would not boost his confidence or image. As he explained further:

*"I prefer to do my work freely, without looking over my shoulders to see who is checking on what I am doing. Working with your professors feels a bit awkward to me. I turn down an offer from my former university to come here because of what I said earlier"* (Charles).

DO: Do you have the freedom you wanted here?

Participant:

*"I think is better; others may see it differently. Also, this is a new faculty with young lecturers and there is this drive to get things done properly, so I can put my ideas through and they will be discussed. Other places,*

*hmm, [pause] those so-called “old guys” will not give you the chance that easily” (Charles).*

Charles’s story highlights that he is an individual who wants to take control of his work with less interference from his professors. Although Charles said he is loyal to his former university, he is not comfortable working with his former professors. In the words of Moore (1984), showing a sense of belonging or loyalty to a place or an institution is not simply showing a sign of conformity or compliance; instead, it is about showing the readiness to take a course of action. It can be argued that there was no sense of readiness in Charles’s story to work for his former university as he was working at another university at the time of this interview. This study’s participants’ stories raise questions about the impact of cultural influences on individuals’ decisions to work in organisations. Details of these findings on employee’s workplace well-being are discussed further below in relation to theory and practice.

## **5.6 Discussion of the Results for Research Question 2**

Overall, the results presented above emerged with a strong emphasis on the participants’ identities and sociocultural influence (see section 1.8 in chapter 1). A link between well-being, loyalty, a sense of belonging and identities and their understanding and meaning of well-being was demonstrated. On the participants’ identities (professional and social), respect and status were linked to the participants’ positive workplace well-being experience, while struggles to reinforce identities were linked to negative well-being experiences. These include the participants maintaining a certain lifestyle to gain respect from their colleagues and the general public. On seeking individual help on workplace well-being issues outside their institutions, the participants’ negative workplace experiences emerged, while the participants’ sense of loyalty toward their

institutions and hometowns showed their positive well-being experience. This supports the conceptual framework design for this study alongside the eudaimonic theory and the IPA selected for this study presented earlier in chapter 2.

### **5.6.1 Seeking individual identities at work**

From the results presented earlier, it becomes clear that most of the participants have some understanding of what well-being means and what its constituents are. For example, in the experiences of Cynthia, Franklin, Anthony, Stanley, Jane, Peter and Prince. Their explanations and descriptions are recognised in most workplace well-being studies (e.g. Ryff, 1989; King & Nappa, 1998; Diener et al., 2009; Zheng et al., 2015; Day & Nielsen., 2017).

In this study, the participants' saw their social and professional identities as key components of their well-being. Phrases such as "in Ghana", "society expects us to" and "culturally" were used in their stories, such as in Prince, Frank, Katrina and Cynthia's experiences presented earlier. Anderson et al.'s (2010) study conducted in Maidenhead in the UK on education found that seeking personal status is a fundamental motive which defines how a person is respected or admired by others in society or a work setting. They further state that individual respect is also linked to power and social belongingness.

In contrast, Damij et al. (2015) conducted a study on academics from both private and public educational institutions in Slovenia. They found that academics are now seeing the importance of having a clearer understanding of things at work than the previous traditional ideas, which focused primarily on prestige, identity and salary based on Western economic values. Relating Damij et al.'s findings to this study's participants stories, it becomes clear that the participants' view of their identity to reinforce respect is not only aimed at

improving their self-image but is also rooted in the traditional approach indicated by Damij et al. (2015). This raises questions of cultural identity and its influence on individual well-being both at work and in society. Finally, seeking individual respect and status through identity in society has a cultural underpinning in the Ghanaian context, which this study has revealed through the participant's stories. A relationship between individual identities (social and professional) and well-being has been demonstrated and is presented at the end of this chapter to support the discussion and analysis.

### **5.6.2 Pressure to maintain individual identities at work and in society**

Pressure from society was seen to have influenced this study's participants' lifestyle (both in and outside work) more than the ethics and principles of their work (Wielers & Raven, 2013; Stam et al., 2013, 2014; Stem et al., 2016). For example, Prince said, "Society sees us as intelligent people and that is huge confidence in us and responsibility, so you cannot go out there and misbehave". Anthony said, "Your appearance in public is always judged by society". Cynthia also said, "When you attend public events, you are careful because society expects you to be different from others, i.e., the way you dress and behave, that is a lot of pressure on us" and Jane said, "The public expectation is scary".

This study has revealed that Ghanaian society keeps academics in check and that those who are able to live up to social norms are respected, and vice versa (Ofori & Bell, 2020). For example, Katrina said, "For me, I am careful when I go out there, just to keep my respect because you cannot tell who is watching and what they will say". The study's assertions, in addition to Katrina's statement, demonstrate a sense of self-consciousness and nervousness when they engage with the public. This has made them live a life that pleases society more than themselves (Ofori & Bell, 2020).

Studies on the social pressure on academics and its impact on individual well-being mention limited time spent with family and for their own life and lack of social support and a work-life balance (Mohd Noor & Amat, 2010; Noor, 2011; Drummond et al., 2017). However, what this study's participants experienced is pressure from society on how they should behave in public as well as engage with society. Previous studies by Mohd Noor et al. (2009) on societal pressures found a perceived lack of work-life balance among academics globally. Mohd Noor and colleagues argued that this lack has made academics unable to reduce work pressures and create a positive work-life balance with their families and society. Dundas (2008) also conducted a study on academics at Southern Cross University, New South Wales and found that the lack of recreational activities and leisure as well as not engaging in community activities are the causes of pressures in most academics' lives because society expects them to engage more. The differences between those studies and the experiences of the participants in this study mean that a person's work environment, their type of work and their geographical location are likely to determine the type of societal pressures they encounter both within and outside their work (Ofori & Bell, 2020). This indicates a context-specific find, which this study has also revealed. Details on this find are discussed further in chapter six under the importance of context.

This study's participants also talked about the negative impact that the expectations from the Ghanaian public and their colleagues have on their social and professional identities (Ofori & Bell, 2020). For example, Peter said, "You always have to do something to feel important among your colleagues". Cynthia said, "Because we work at the university society expects us to keep a certain standard of life, especially we the women. Society expects us to have time for

wedding and funerals.” Charles said, “You are expected to live like a celebrity and show no sign of financial struggles”.

Cynthia’s story on how Ghanaian universities perceive female academics and their work was echoed by all the female participants in this study. Acker (2014), in a qualitative study among female academics at a faculty of education in a Canadian university, found a lack of recognition of female academics’ work and promotion into leadership positions. Acker’s study is similar to a study in Swedish universities, which found a lack of recognition for female academics’ work by both their male colleagues and the wider society (Angervall & Beach, 2018). This study has found that female academics in Ghanaian HEIs are likely to be overlooked for leadership positions irrespective of how hard they work, but they are the first to be assigned to attend public events on behalf of their faculties, creating the impression that they are less busy.

The findings from this study on female academics are in line with other studies in the UK, e.g., Bagilhole and White (2011), Pyke (2011), Morley (2013), and Sweden (Angervall & Beach, 2018), all in the higher education context. The actions by a section of the Ghanaian universities and the public, as earlier referred to by this study’s participants, put enormous pressure on the female academics and the result could be feeling “second-best” to their male colleagues, a loss of confidence in themselves in attending public events, and a demotivation in their performance. For example, Cynthia said, “As a university lecturer in Ghana, you cannot make a mistake in public; society observes all your movements and actions”. Jane said, “hmm, for me, I find the expectation scary and because of that I am extremely careful when I go out”. Some of the male participants supported their female colleagues’ assertions and said, “Your appearance in public is always judged by society” (Anthony), and Jack also

said, “It is difficult to be a lecturer in Ghana because your entire life is under scrutiny by the public, you do not have your life anymore” (Ofori & Bell, 2020).

A possible explanation of this is the perception among most Ghanaians that academics have well-paid jobs and, therefore, are expected to live a life above that of the average working person. These social expectations have a reciprocal consequence on the academics’ life, as, on one hand, they are praised and respected, and on the other hand, they are expected to live by the standards set by the general public (Ofori & Bell, 2020). Thus, this study has highlighted the challenges academics face when working in HEIs in Ghana, in particular for female academics. This study has also underscored the peculiarities of how the participants’ social lives are being scrutinised by the general public, as presented earlier. This is likely to restrict the academics’ ability to be themselves and raises questions about a study context where cultural values have the potential to influence individuals’ lives either positively or negatively. The implications of this for individuals’ lives and their well-being at work is discussed in chapter six.

### **5.6.3 Seeking help on well-being issues outside their organisations**

Seeking help on work-related well-being issues outside this study’s participants’ workplaces was another important finding in this chapter. The participants mentioned that the lack of workplace well-being programmes at their institutions meant they had no choice but to look for help elsewhere. Some of the places they went to included private counsellors, church elders for counselling, meetings with colleagues at “clubhouses” to share ideas, and talking to friends and family members. The examples in the experiences of Charles, Paul and Frank have been presented earlier. Another excellent example is Cynthia’s story:

*“In this institution, our employers only look at results and nothing else. No discussion on how we feel or the challenges we face in doing our work. What I do is call my senior colleagues who are not working with us again for their advice. Their suggestions and support have help me to survive until now” (Cynthia).*

The study’s participants’ stories suggest that both the context of work and the individual factors are important in understanding employees’ workplace well-being. Studies suggest that employers should provide opportunities for their employees to contribute their ideas to the design of well-being programmes in their organisations (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005; Grawitch et al., 2006; Oades & Dulagil, 2017; O’Neil, 2017). The reason is that such contributions are likely to bring changes in the context of their work, which could lead to positive workplace well-being outcomes.

For example, Paul said, “You are not involved in any discussion regarding your well-being, hmm, you are just there”. Frank said, “We have the human resources department, but I don’t think they know anything about employee well-being”. When employees feel they are not involved in initiatives that benefit their progress, autonomy, work effectiveness and well-being, the results could be a low commitment to their organisation (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Meyer et al., 2002; Aggarwal-Gupta et al., 2010). This point was echoed again by Paul: “Well, I feel I’m just here to work and other things about my life and health do not matter to my employer”. The explanation by Paul and Frank and their colleagues suggests a sense of frustration, a lack of support and a break in communication between them and their management.

Previous studies on the factors that negatively influence employees’ commitments to their organisations found a lack of attention to employees’

behaviour, attitude and work concerns by their employers (Eby et al., 1999; Aggarwal-Gupta et al., 2010). Also, these studies found that jobs that motivate and support their employees help to increase individuals' psychological well-being at work. Similarly, Eisenberger et al. (2001) also conducted a study on postal employees in Houston, USA, and found that working conditions that support employees and motivate them to develop a positive attitude towards their organisations also enhance their employees' well-being. This means that irrespective of a person's profession or type of work, when an employer creates the right work environment for their employees', their well-being is likely to increase. However, this study's participants did not see the actions of their employers as being supportive of their well-being and therefore they were unlikely to lead to a reduction in them feeling unhappy and frustrated.

Again, it was observed from the participants' stories that the lack of support and the perceived nonexistence of workplace well-being programmes meant that where to seek help when one is facing work challenges is a difficulty. Thus, they tend to use what Paul earlier described as the "African social support system" to solve their work-related well-being issues. It appears that either this study's participants are happy with the use of the "African social support system", which is why they have not demanded their employer provide initiatives/strategies that will support their well-being, or they have difficulties conveying the issues to the attention of their management, as Charles explained earlier. The implication of this is that nothing gets done and both the employees and employer end up blaming each other.

In line with this study's participants' stories, Howell et al. (2016) found in their study that organisations which invest in workplace well-being programmes that integrate ideas from employees thereby strengthen the employer-employee

working relationship, motivate employees towards success, and improve employees' commitment to the organisation. Miller (2016) also argued that even though an organisation with well-being at its core will reap productivity gains, most organisations are reluctant to invest due to the cost involved. Miller further explained that for effective workplace well-being to be realised, a national strategy that incorporates ideas from all (employees and employers) is needed. The differences in these studies imply that in a situation where employees' well-being programmes appear to not exist, these initiatives will be difficult to achieve. A structural change backed by a national policy which takes into account the concerns of employees is needed for positive workplace well-being strategies to be realised (Ofori & Antwi, 2020).

What was noticed from this study's participants' stories was the lack of institutional eagerness and awareness to design workplace programmes that will support their employees' well-being. The reason assigned to this is that the participants believe their institutions have the resources to put up buildings and construct roads, which are equally important for the modernisation of their institutions, but such projects are more expensive than designing workplace well-being programmes. In conclusion, the participants' views on seeking help on well-being issues point to their health component of well-being. It also raises questions about the lack of institutional strategies to support their employees' well-being in Ghanaian higher education institutions.

#### **5.6.4 Sense of belonging and loyalty**

The participants feeling attached to their past universities and the towns and cities where these universities are located was part of the findings in this chapter. The participants in this study feel that they have a sense of belonging and responsibility towards their former institutions. An example is the experiences of Patrick, Williams, James, Charles and Cynthia presented earlier. The literature on employee loyalty to their organisations reveals that employers need to know why some employees feel attached to their organisations, as this is usually due to more than the benefits, salaries and training opportunities (LaMalfa, 2007).

Previously, employees generally believed that when an organisation hired them, they would be with that organisation until retirement (Mehta, 2010). However, finding employees to stay with an organisation for more than two years has become a challenge for most employers. The reason is that factors such as the work environment, pay, work contentment and benefits can influence their decisions (Frederick, 2006 in Mehta, 2010). A review conducted by Mehta et al. (2010) on a group of academics and non-academics on their loyalty to their organisations found that job security, motivation, career development, bonding, commitment and leadership are underlying loyalty factors. Mahta and colleagues further explained that loyalty can also be described in terms of a process, whereby individual attitudes can give rise to different behaviours, either intended or actual.

In contrast, Murali et al. (2017) also conducted an internet-based survey and randomly selected a group of working people. They found that individuals who were loyal to their organisation were acknowledged and rewarded. The findings from the above studies mean that for an individual to be loyal to their

organisation, there should be more than incentives, motivation and financial benefits. Relating the above study's findings to that of this study's participants stories, it became clear that this study's participants' sense of loyalty did not highlight any of the issues raised by Mehta et al. (2010) and Murali et al. (2017). Instead, they are similar to a study conducted by Peretti and Igalens (2015) on employees in Hungary, which found loyalty to be associated with job location, personal fulfilment and career status in society, among other findings.

What is different in this study's findings is how the participants' sense of belonging and loyalty is deeply and completely rooted in their passion to give back to society, good citizenship and altruism. For example, Patrick said, "I was trained here, so coming back to teach is like coming home. I feel I belong here and I have to help". Cynthia said, "I come from this town and studied here too. I feel the best place to teach is my former university as I feel I have to give back to the university and the community". Plato, who was a well-being philosopher, initially said that "only a man who is just can be loyal, and that loyalty is a condition of genuine philosophy" (Plato in Mehta et al., 2010). Plato's view resonates with this study's participants' views and experiences on their sense of loyalty to their former universities and native towns. However, it can also be argued that loyalty to community is the blind effect of culture as Ghanaians generally are compliance with cultural norms.

The participants' sense of belonging and loyalty to their communities and former universities points to their eudaimonic understanding of well-being. The reason is that individuals with eudaimonic attributes have a strong affinity for their communities and are happy to be involved in activities that support community progress (Hutta, 2015). Also, their sense of belonging, loyalty, respect and status were linked to individual and family prestige in society. These attributes

were seen as an important contributing factor to the participants' positive well-being constituents, while factors that constituted their negative experience are seeking help on workplace well-being issues outside their institutions, lack of well-being programs and support systems, as presented below in figure G.

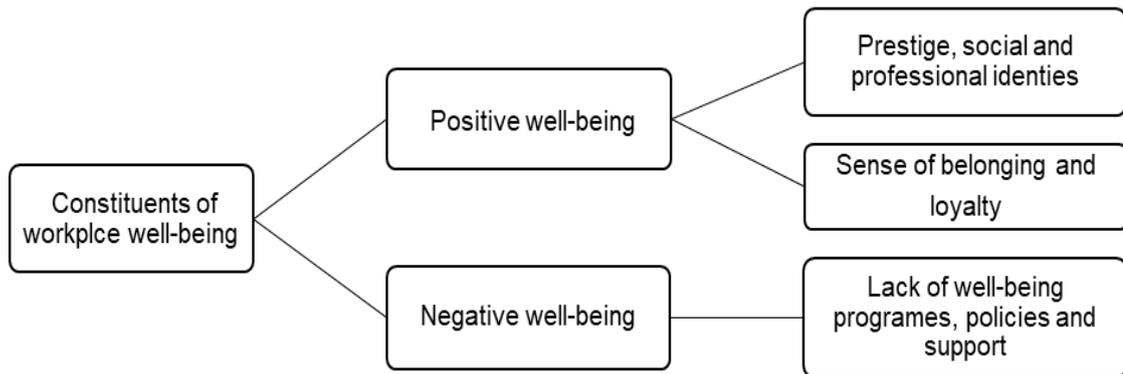


Figure G: Constituents of workplace well-being

Source: Author's construct base on the analysis of the findings.

## 5.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has looked at what constitutes workplace well-being in the Ghanaian higher education workplace. A narrative describing the participants' sociocultural factors was recurrent in their stories. The participants saw themselves as being brought up in a society which influences their daily lives, such as their attitude, behaviour and interactions with others, both within and outside their institutions.

A recurring theme among the participants' stories was that workplace well-being was not on their employers' agenda. This made them seek help informally (i.e. talking to their friends and families) and formally (talking to professional counsellors and church priests) outside their work. The participants' accounts exposed the non-existence of workplace well-being policies and programmes in

their institutions. The way the participants took charge of their negative workplace issues was also revealed, indicating a lack of institutional support from their employers to address their work-related well-being issues at work. The chapter also revealed both positive and negative constituents. Positive constituents were linked to the participants' identities and sense of belonging, while negative constituents were related to the lack of well-being programmes, policies and institutional support.

The next chapter examines the HEWE in Ghana and critically explores the changes that have taken place over time, the impact on individual well-being and the institutional outcomes.

## Chapter 6 **Changes in Higher Education and the Well-being of Academic Employees**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the results based on the research question “*How do the changes in HEIs over time impact on individual well-being at work?*”. First, the chapter provides a brief context of the leadership and organisational changes in HEIs. It proceeds to look at the external changes, such as political interference and a freeze on staff recruitment and its impact on academic employees in Ghanaian HEIs. The stories and experiences of Charles, Katrina and Agnes are demonstrated to show how these changes impacted on their work and lives.

Second, the academics’ past and present experience of leadership and organisational changes that have taken place within the higher education sector and their impact on academic employees’ lives are explored and presented. This will cover high student numbers and mindset changes. Daniel and James’ stories and experiences are presented alongside those of other academics.

Third, the participants’ positive and negative experiences of these changes are explored and presented. The conceptual framework, presented earlier in chapter 2 and based on the literature reviewed and well-being theories, is also presented. A discussion and interpretation of the key findings together with a chapter summary are presented.

Overall, the chapter demonstrates that external influences, leadership and organisational changes cause workers’ unrest and can lead to negative workplace well-being experiences. It can be argued that most of the academic employees complained about external influences on their work but could not resist them because they came from employers, the central government. A link between political interference, leadership and organisational changes, and

mindset changes has been demonstrated to cause structural and administrative changes which can lead to either lead positive or negative workplace well-being for employees. This chapter thus explores the main question of the changes that have taken place in HEIs over time and their impact on employees' well-being at work.

## **6.2 Organisational and Leadership Changes**

A change of leadership in any organisation, either public or private, large or small, has an impact on the employees (Ngambi, 2011; Ngotngamwong, 2014; Ofori & Antwi, 2020). Some leadership changes bring positive and negative outcomes to both the employees and the organisation and vice versa. Ngotngamwong (2014) conducted a study on “the impact of frequent leadership changes as perceived by employees” using a semi-structured questionnaire sent through social networks to 28 respondents from universities and schools. Ngotngamwong found that most (77.8%) of the employees were happy with the repeated leadership changes made by their organisations. However, those who were not happy (22.2%) did not complain. The reason was that some of the changes supported individual growth, increased profits levels for the organisation, generated new ideas and created happy working environments. The leaders used both autocratic and democratic leadership styles to lead the change.

Also, those who encountered negative experiences through leadership changes complained of stress, job instability, uncertainty, and low productivity. The study concluded that leadership changes should be kept to a minimum to reduce the stress repeated leadership changes brings to employees. Again, new leaders should introduce changes gradually to maintain stability and reduce the possible negative impact on the employees (Ngotngamwong, 2014).

When this study's participants were asked about the changes they had encountered, they used different phrases to explain their experience. Their stories captured both their past and present experiences together with the effect that these have had on them, which resonates with the findings of Ngotngamwong (2014) that leadership changes have both positive and negative impacts on employees. The impact of this study's participants stories and experiences of the repeated leadership and organisational changes are presented and discussed below.

### **6.2.1 The participants' past experiences of organisational and leadership changes**

This study's participants' used phrases such as "it was a joy working in a team", "we understood each other" and "people were ready to work" to describe their past experiences working with their leaders. One key observation made while listening to the participants' past experiences was the smiles on their faces and the excitement which accompanied their stories. Out of the eighteen participants involved in this study, Charles, Katrina and Agnes, from different study sites, had positive leadership change experiences at work. Their stories are presented below as an interpretation of their past workplace well-being experiences. For example, Charles said:

*"The leaders I meet when I started were determined to get things done. Lecturers were also committed, and we work as a team. Most of the leaders then understood the university system and this made things easier" (Charles).*

DO: How did that make you feel?

*"Oh, very relaxed and fun to go about my work. The leaders understood what we were doing, and our students were much closer to us. I think*

*the support we gave the students showed in their results because we had a good pass rate and we were all happy” (Charles).*

Another participant, Katrina, who had gone through the ranks and was a professor and a head of the department for eight years, presented her past experience as follows:

*“There are several good instances but I will give you just a few. Some of the leaders I started with were very supportive and guided us to find our feet. It was one of our professors who took an interest in my work and recommended that the university support me to further my studies, so I can come back and help the department. I will not forget the day I got the news, haha. Our leaders were friendly and we got on well” (Katrina).*

DO: How often were your leaders changed?

*“Well, not that much, most of the department and faculty heads stayed on much longer and they knew their work. They were concerned about our progress, I came back from further studies after years abroad and my head of the department was still here. I just continued with my work until I went again for my PhD. There was some sense of steadiness in the department and the staff and students liked that” (Katrina).*

DO: How does that make you feel?

*“It gave me peace of mind knowing that I will come back to continue working without going through the trouble of explaining myself to a new leader. We had the freedom to work and worked with leaders who had passion for the work. The sense of togetherness and the freedom to make decisions as a lecturer was great but now it’s something else” (Katrina).*

Agnes, head of the department for six years, also said:

*“The leaders I came to meet were very helpful [smiles], I can stand anywhere and say it. They encourage us to work together to build the department. They made sure I was happy at work and it was a joy working with them” (Agnes).*

The stories of Charles, Katrina and Agnes show they were happy working with their past leaders, especially with the support they received. Charles’s positive experience was about working with a committed and dedicated team (lecturers and leaders), and support from past leaders who were interested in his career growth and student progress. For Katrina, it was about how the leaders understood academic work and the interest they had in her career progress, as in the case of Charles. Katrina’s emphasis was also on the job stability and academic freedom that existed in the past.

This, she said, gave her confidence and peace of mind to work, while Agnes attributed her positive experience to work autonomy and a happy working environment. Charles, Katrina and Agnes all believed that their experience with their past leaders had affected their work and lives positively. Also, they were able to support their students better in the past, as compared to their current experience. The participants’ experience resonates with previous studies by Ertureten et al. (2013) in Turkey on general employees, Tse et al. (2013) in China on employees working in telecommunication companies, Samad (2015) on higher education employees in Australian universities, and studies by Hinds (2017) and Ngotngamwong (2014), all indicating that organisations that support their employees’ career growth foster a happy working environment. The participants’ stories point to their positive workplace well-being experiences and are also linked to the concept of “flow” in their eudaimonic understanding of

well-being. The implications of the participants' stories are discussed together with the literature and well-being theories below in detail.

### **6.2.2 The participants' current experiences of organisational and leadership changes**

The participants' past experience of organisational and leadership changes presented earlier, which demonstrated much enthusiasm, autonomy and passion to work, diminished as they started to talk about their current experiences. Their current experience of change indicated a lack of communication, consultation, uncertainties and anxiety in the workplace. Agnes, Daniel and Charles can be interpreted as experiencing negative workplace experience due to the changes. For example, Agnes presented her experience as follows:

*“Personally, one change of leadership affected me badly to the extent that, I felt my sacrifice over the years was worthless. I had a very good working relationship with this person who had to leave suddenly. I found out that a lot of plans and discussion we had for my department which has been approved and things that seemed to have been agreed in past suddenly did exist because someone else came and disagreed with everything. So, I found that transition very stressful” (Agnes).*

DO: Did you explain your previous agreement to the new leader?

*“Hmm, I did but I later found that the agreement only existed verbally, and they were not written down. So, I think that was due to lack of documentation and communication, where persons in leadership positions fail to document important discussions” (Agnes).*

DO: So how was the situation resolved?

*“I had to start all over again, rebuild trust and agree on different things. So, all that makes dealing with some of the current leadership changes difficult. In the past, we worked and agreed on things together and we understood our roles” (Agnes).*

DO: How did that affect you personally?

*“The whole experience was stressful. I got angry at the whole situation that my colleagues noticed changes in my behaviour at work. Going to work and starting all over again was my biggest concern. This caused a lot of delays in certain areas of my work and performance in general, I just lost it at a point, hmm” (Agnes).*

It was observed in Agnes’ story that her past experience of leadership changes gave her a positive experience at work. Her assertion resonates with the work of Aydin et al. (2013) in Turkey on teachers’ motivation and commitment in that leadership styles have a positive impact on employees’ commitment and attitude to work. However, her current experience demonstrated an individual whose work schedules had been disrupted, causing her a lot of stress and emotional instability (negative experiences). She found this upsetting and it made her rethink her future commitment to the university. Agnes’s comment on her future commitment describes a person who has lost the motivation at work. Her story/experience is in line with a study conducted by Bayona-Sáez et al. (2009) on “How to raise commitment in public university lecturers” in Spain using a survey questionnaire. This study found that personal variables (i.e. showing appreciation and valuing people) and group variables (i.e. working environment) have a positive impact on the affective commitment of university lecturers, while job-related variables do not. Relating Bayona-Sáez and colleagues’ findings to this study’s participants’ experiences show that individual

commendation for their hard work is important to their commitment to work and a positive well-being experience.

On the other hand, Agnes and her colleagues felt that the frequency of the leadership changes created a working environment full of uncertainties, fear and tensions. The participants' present experience of their work environment is similar to a three-stage longitudinal study of 397 regional water authority employees conducted by Nelson et al. (1995) on "uncertainty amidst change: the impact of privatization on employee job satisfaction and well-being" in the UK. This study found a decrease in the work satisfaction of employees before privatisation combined with self-reported physical health issues for the period before and following the privatization. Also, the perception of uncertainties increased, leading to negative workplace well-being experiences of employees. The findings from this study are further supported by another study by Nelson et al. (2013) on the same topic, confirming that workplace changes impact negatively on employees' satisfaction levels and their health and well-being at work.

Another participant, Daniel, who is an old student and now a lecturer, described his current experience of leadership change and the impact that it had on his work as follows:

*"One will not be happy with every change that takes place in an organisation, but for me my overall experience recently is negative. There are too many changes and a lack of communication among the senior managers and the lecturers. Leaders are changed without any notification to the staff. This disrupts activities at all levels in the university"* (Daniel, a lecturer for 11 years).

DO: How do you feel when you hear such news?

*“I feel I am not valued as a staff because if there is going to be a change, I expect the management to inform us all” (Daniel).*

Daniel attributed his negative experience of the recent changes to the lack of information flow between the management and the staff. He stated that the lack of information flow delayed the progress of work, increased uncertainties about job security and increased the lack of commitment, which tended to affect individuals' performances at work. His assertion is in line with a study conducted by Abugre (2011) on selected public sector workers, including a university in Ghana, titled “Appraising the impact of organizational communication on workers satisfaction in the organisational workplace”. Abugre used a cross-sectional field survey of 90 employees from three large organisations. This study found that amongst all the organisational processes (employee training and development programmes, appraisals and welfare systems, etc.), communication is the most important and that a well-organised communication process in an organisation during a change process reduces workplace anxieties and supports the other processes in being effective.

Another participant, Charles, said:

*“Change for me, my experience has been a mix. In the most recent years, it's been more negative experiences. Some of the leaders that came to the department recently behave as if they are here to write wrongs. They will change things without asking anyone's view or input. There is a complete loss of communication and I get worried because that is not what I am used to” (Charles, a lecturer for 7 years).*

DO: How does that make you feel?

Participant:

*“I feel disappointed that our efforts and sacrifices have not been recognised by the new leadership. In recent years, I think more and more I feel this may not be a place for me for much longer” (Charles).*

DO: Have you discussed how you feel with the new leadership?

Participant:

*“Hmm, well, I have not. Maybe I should have, but I feel nothing will come out of it because there have been several complaints and nothing was said or done, so I feel the same thing will happen” (Charles).*

A sense of frustration was seen in Charles’s story as he used phrases such as “hmm”, “I am disappointed” and “I am not sure anything will come out of it”. While Charles seemed satisfied with the work done by his past leaders (i.e. their commitment and dedication) for the growth of the university and their students’ success, his recent experiences with his new leaders showed frustration, uncertainty about the future and pain. Charles felt that his hard work in the past has not been recognised by the current leadership due to their one-sided management style. Charles’s experience is in line with a study conducted by Gallie et al. (2017) based on the 2012 British Skills and Employment Survey with 2949 participants from both the private and public sector organisations. Gallie and colleagues found that a lack of proper consultation during a change process in an organisation can impact on employees’ lives and well-being negatively, resulting in poor performance, non-attendance to departmental meetings and struggles to meet work deadlines and targets.

Likewise, a study by Harney (2017) used structural equation modelling to test a hypothesis on a national representative sample of 5,110 employees drawn from the National Workplace Survey of Employees conducted in Ireland in 2009. This study pointed out that consultation served as a “buffer” to reduce the scale of

negative experience faced by employees during a change process in an organisation. Harney went on to explain that to reduce the negative experiences encountered by employees during organisational change processes, managers should consider consultation important to making a positive impact on employees' lives and must take pragmatic steps to achieve that. The results from these two studies mean that when leaders involve their employees in a change process, the outcome is likely to be positive. However, this was not seen in the study's participants' stories. Their stories pointed to their negative workplace well-being experience, which will be explored in detail and discussed with the relevant literature and theories.

### **6.3 Changes in the Political Environment and its Impact on the Participants**

#### **6.3.1 Political interference**

Ghana has gone through several changes of military rule to democratic governance over the years. These changes have had different impacts on the citizenry, economy and institutions, including higher education (Herbst,1993; Whitfield, 2009). When this study's participants were asked to share their views and experiences on the impact of political changes, some said that their leaders were "pressured" to do things that favoured the politicians to achieve their personal and political campaign promises. Similar experiences were expressed by academics in Kenyan universities (Sifuna, 2012). Also, most of the organisational and leadership changes they had encountered in their various institutions were engineered by politicians, especially when their leaders refused to bow to political pressure. Consistent in the participants' stories was the use of the phrases "the politicians have all the powers", "they put pressure on you", "it's all political" and "they control everything". These phrases were used to either emphasise a point or describe their level of frustration due to

political interference in their work. Out of the eighteen academic employees involved in this study, James, Jack and Peter can be interpreted as experiencing political interference at work. For example, James, a lecturer, said:

*“Oh, over here the politicians control everything. Even an ‘assemblyman’ has power. When it comes to admissions, for instance, they will bring their people who do not meet the admission criteria and ask you to help them, hmm, is not easy I tell you”* (James, a lecturer for 6 years).

DO: So, what happens when you are not able to help them?

*“Well, on the surface it may seem ok, but believe me there is a lot of things that go on behind the scenes. Sometimes if you are not lucky, it can even affect your promotion, especially if you are close to getting one of the senior positions in the university”* (James).

DO: How do you feel when you experience all these?

*“Is not a good one, there is constant pressure on you. You don’t have the free hand to work and this can be stressful. For you to have your peace of mind, you have to try and provide what the politicians ask of you because they have their ways to get you, hmm”* (James).

James’s story demonstrated an individual who understands that there is a “power play” between the politicians, university managers and the academic staff. He also seemed to be aware of the consequences when one is not able to meet the demands of the politicians. This situation, he said, restricted his academic freedom to take certain decisions and he simply described his experience as “not a good one”. His assertion is described in Rhodes et al.’s (2018) study on academics in Australia in that effective change can be made through academics’ involvement and active participation in politics. This was the

case in James's and his colleagues' stories, namely that they seemed to allow the politicians to make all the decisions without their involvement.

Another participant explained his experience with politicians as follows:

*"Hmm, I have seen two vice-chancellors and their board members changed in this university without notification. We just heard it on the news. The truth is, it was all politically motivated as there was nothing we could do. The problem here is whenever there is a change of government, the new government comes with their people and that is our fear. This delays university programmes such as graduation ceremonies and clearance to recruit new staff"* (Jack, head of department for 15 years).

DO: What do you mean by "it is all politically motivated"?

Participant:

*"Well, these political parties come into office with their agenda which sometimes does not align with the university programmes. Their sector ministers come into the office to work for their 'political masters' and that worries us. Whenever they need something from you, they will call you day in and out and these calls put pressure on you. If you are not able to help them then you are in for a 'battle', hmm, ha-ha"* (Jack).

DO: Can you explain a bit more about the "battles" you referred to?

*"Once you are not able to help them, they will do everything in their power to frustrate you. For example, when you send your request to the ministry for approval, they will deliberately delay processing it with lots of excuses. This comes with its stresses aside from the work you must do for your students. I will say that is more of administrative stress than teaching and dealing with student issues"* (Jack).

Jack's story describes a person who did not want delays in his work but found himself struggling to keep a balance between meeting the demands from the politicians and his work as a head of department, knowing the impact that it would have on his department. His experience also presents an individual with a title but less power to act when it comes to dealing with politicians, as he termed his frustration in dealing with the politicians as a "battle". Jack knew the difficulties that awaited his department when he was not able to meet the demands of the politicians and said this made the whole administrative position more stressful than dealing with students.

Peter, a lecturer for 15 years, also said:

*"The politician controls everything in this country and anytime you try to challenge them then you become their target and believe me you are in for a 'long war' with them" (Peter).*

Peter's description of the pressure from the politicians as "a long war" suggests a situation which can only be won by the politicians. When asked how the current pressures from the politician differ from the past when he started his career, Peter said:

*"Oh is bad now because in those days the pressure usually came from close friends and family members. If I'm not able to help my friend's daughter to get admission into a programme this year for whatever reason, I can explain, and they will understand but with the politicians, no" (Peter).*

Peter's stories describe both his past and present experiences of political pressures and the impact on his work. Peter was not happy with the way the politicians tried to interfere with the work of academics, but he was unable to do much as he described the situation as a "long war" between the academics and

the politicians. The experiences of Jack, James and Peter are similar to a study conducted by Sifuna (2012), who presented an overview of the “leadership in Kenyan public universities and the challenges of autonomy and academic freedom since independence”. Sifuna found that academics and managers in Kenyan public universities are faced with pressure from politicians and lack control to make decisions, while the politicians appoint their people to fill key positions in the universities. Sifuna argues that the actions of the politicians have created tension between them and the academic staff, resulting in a stressful working environment and poor academic work and standards as those appointed are not qualified academics.

A recent study conducted by Akomea-Frimpong and Olaniyan (2019) on two private organisations (telecommunication and banking) in Ghana with 287 respondents described some of its findings as “political interference for self-reasons”. This, they further explained, is when politicians make decisions to privatise organisations only for their political gain and not for the benefit of the country, resulting in job losses, uncertainty for job seekers and low economic growth. This means that political interference is not only peculiar to the higher education sector in Ghana. However, the challenge this brings to the higher education sector is that political interference distorts not only academic work and the livelihood of the academics but also the future of the younger generation. This is because part of the responsibilities of the higher education sector is to prepare the younger generation for the future so that they can take over from the current leaders. Therefore, any unwelcome interference is detrimental not only to the future of the younger generation but also to the economy of the country. On the impact of political interference on the participants’ lives and work, Jack said:

*“I get stressed with their constant calls. It affects me emotionally though I may not say anything to my colleagues, hmm. In my department, a simple request to the ministry takes months to be processed, you can imagine the damage that will cause to my department. It delays lots of programmes. Your staff members will be looking at you as if you don’t know your job, is a worry” (Jack).*

James said:

*“With these politicians, you cannot win when dealing with them. You only have to dance to their tune to have your peace of mind. I get worried but what can I possibly do? I just try to do my job” (James).*

Peter said:

*“Is frustrating dealing with the politicians in this country. They have all the powers and you cannot win” (Peter).*

A sense of helplessness was seen in Jack’s story as he tried to describe his experience. Jack sighed (*hmm*) constantly before every statement, showing a sign of hesitation to speak. Jack’s actions demonstrated his level of uneasiness due to the challenges he had gone through at the hands of politicians. Also, his hesitation to respond to questions underlined his frustration, which can be described as negative expressions. James, on the other hand, was concerned about the lack of autonomy by the leaders of the university when dealing with politicians. He described the situation as helpless with the phrase “In fact, I am not happy but what can I possibly do? I try to just do my job.” The sense of impossibility demonstrated in James story shows his frustration and the impact on his life and work.

Unlike James, Peter's story captured both his past and present experiences of political interference and he said that, currently, there were too many interferences compared to when he started working as a young lecturer. This, he said, affected him emotionally and negatively impacted on his work. Peter described his negative experience dealing with politicians with phrases such as "is a long war", "it's frustrating" and the "politicians have all the powers". This, he said, caused workplace unrest. James simply summarised his experience of political interference as "not pleasant at all", indicating a sense of worry and anxiety. Throughout James's, Peter's and Jacks' stories, it became clear that they were all not happy with the level of political interference they were experiencing in their institutions and somehow agreed that the actions of the politicians marginalised their role as academics. Though the actions of the politician's caused them unhappiness, they did not give up on their responsibilities as academics but continued to deliver quality and support teaching to their students because of their passions to impact knowledge to the younger generation and influence change in their society through education. The impact of political interference on the participants' work and lives points to their negative workplace well-being experiences. This is explored and discussed further in conjunction with the workplace well-being literature and theories below.

### 6.3.2 A cap on staff recruitment

The participants' stories on a cap on staff recruitment showed an increase in workload, long working hours and pressures to meet deadlines. When asked to share their experiences on these changes and how they had impacted on their work and lives, Cynthia, head of the department, said:

*“What worries me most in all these changes is workload, because we are few and the student numbers keep rising. Now, in my department, we need more staff but because of the embargo we cannot recruit”* (Cynthia).

DO: How does this impact your work?

*“It’s exhausting because I’m teaching courses I have no idea of, hmm. We have new courses, but no lecturers teach them. This embargo is close to 10 years now, but we don’t know when this will end. Lecturers are doing their best but this is affecting the quality of teaching as they are stretched with work”* (Cynthia).

Another participant Jane, a lecturer said:

*“Now the university cannot recruit, and we have all been told to help in whichever way we can. If you are asked to do something you can’t say no because there is nobody else to do it, so, there is a lot of pressure on us.”* (Jane, a lecturer for 8 years).

DO: How does that make you feel?

*“I am exhausted, and my colleagues also feel the same. The most difficult part is we do not know how long we will have to continue to be working like this with all these work pressures on us. We are pressured to work and is as if we do not have our own lives anymore.”* (Jane).

Cynthia's story shows a leader who is concerned about her staff and students' progress in her department. She feels that her lecturers are overloaded with work, which is affecting not only the contact time with students (students' university experience) but also the teaching quality and standards. She describes this as exhausting and emotionally draining, saying, "We are struggling, hmm, maybe in your recommendation you can suggest to the government to lift the embargo." Further, it became clear in Cynthia's story that she was worried about teaching new subjects she had little or no idea of, as she feared any mistake in front of her students would embarrass her, affect her status as and lower their confidence in her.

Jane's account here demonstrates a person who was tired of the work pressures on her. Her use of the expression "there is a lot of pressure on us" and "is as if we do not have our own lives anymore" demonstrate a sign of frustration and an expression of negative sentiments due to work pressure. Jane again explained how the long working hours and pressures had affected her life and that of her family. As she put it:

*"For those of us who have children, it is difficult to have a work-life balance. Our children are also feeling the pressure since we do not spend much time together"* (Jane, a lecturer for 8 years).

The participant stories and experience shared on a cap on staff recruitment depicts frustration and emotional anguish due to work pressures. However, as they do not have individual powers to change the situation they turn to support each other, especially the heads of department. For example, Cynthia's experience presented earlier. Jane's experience also portrays an individual who is not happy with the workload but could not resist the fear of been seen as unsupportive to the plight of her department. They laid the problem on the

central government and their leaders for the lack of consultation before introducing the cap.

### **6.3.3 Increase in student numbers**

It has been revealed in this study that some of the changes experienced by the participants led to an increase in student numbers. However, this varied across the three study sites. Prince, Paul and Katrina's stories are interpreted as experiencing high student numbers. This affected their lives and work negatively. For example, Prince said:

*“Oh yea, student numbers are very high now, so, paying attention in class is very difficult. Marking has become an issue because I teach five courses now, so you can imagine”* (Prince, a lecturer for 9 years).

DO: So, what accounts for the high student's numbers?

*“Eh, the numbers, emh, [pause], it's about the university admitting more for more money, ha-ha. The problem is that it affects the students themselves because they don't pay attention in class”* (Prince).

Paul, a lecturer, also said:

*“Well, it depends, some of the courses are not attractive to students. For example, those of us in the health sciences are used to having high numbers. Our work involves hospital placement supervision as well, so the pressure is massive”* (Paul, a lecturer for 7 years).

Prince, unlike Paul, did not sound worried about the increase in student numbers as he seemed to suggest that the students were the ones affected due to limited classroom space and overcrowding, which made some students not pay attention during lessons. Whereas the increase in student numbers and its relationship with work stress has been highlighted in the literature review chapter of this study, Prince seemed to suggest that the increase in student

numbers is an issue for the university management and not for the lecturers, with a phrase “it’s about the university admitting more for more money”. Thus, it is obliged to provide the needed resources to match the student numbers.

Paul, however, was worried as he said his department attracted the most students every year, making him and his colleagues work more than the other academic staff in the university. He said this situation put more pressure on him and affected his life negatively. Both Paul and Prince agreed that workload and pressure due to increasing student numbers were not a general concern across the whole school but were department and course-related. However, on the part of Prince, it was the duty of the university authorities to ensure there were enough resources to meet the demand for such attractive courses. On how the increase in student numbers had impacted on their work and lives, Prince put it this way:

*“Well, I don’t think it has affected that much because, in my department, our assignments are multiple-choice questions with two essays for the students to answer one. In terms of marking, we have teaching assistants and the national service persons to help well. It’s the classroom size and space which is the problem and not the numbers”*  
(Prince, lecturer for 9 years).

Katrina also described her experience and the impact on her as follows:

*“Over here, students say our courses are difficult and therefore our numbers are not that high. This year we have quite an increase, about 20 students have registered but by the time they get to the second year that number will drop again.”* (Katrina, head of department for 8 years)

Katrina and Prince seemed to play down the negative impact the increase in student numbers had on their work pressure. However, they acknowledged that because of the support from the teaching assistants and service personnel, they were not under much pressure.

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the changes that have taken place in HEIs over time and how they have impacted on the participants' workplace well-being. A description of the changes in the political and the higher education work environment was highly persistent in the participants' stories. A dominant theme that came through in their stories was that most of the changes they were experiencing had affected them negatively compared to their past experiences. This was about their role, leadership changes, political interference, and the cap on the recruitment of new academic employees. The participants' accounts of the changes also disclosed their lack of autonomy to make decisions, the increased uncertainties about their roles and increased anxieties due to the lack of communication between them and their leaders. All these were linked to their negative workplace well-being experiences.

On the positive side, the participants showed their resilience, passion for their work, and excitement to be working as a team with their colleagues to make sure they were giving the best university experience to their students as well as the understanding and friendship that existed between them and their leaders. This positioned them in their eudaimonic well-being understanding of well-being. Finally, the results have explored the present and past experiences of the academic employees and the impact that these have had on their life and work-related well-being. The discussion of these findings with literature and theory to uncover what other studies have found in terms of what is unique and

important to the Ghanaian academic employees' during organisational and leadership changes is presented below.

#### **6.4 Discussion of the results for research question 3**

Overall, this study's participants' experiences of how the changes in the higher education sector overtime in their workplaces affected their well-being emerged with mixed experiences (positive and negative), see section 1.8 in chapter 1. On leadership changes, the participants' experiences showed a good working relationship with their leaders. This led to a positive work experience and a high sense of achievement. This implies that when leaders show empathy and support their subordinates at work, they feel appreciated and perform better. It could also arguably show that the previous leaders did not address issues appropriately and when new leaders took over, they had to address them. Similarly, it was shown in the participants' stories that the lack of autonomy and communication that existed between them and their past leaders at work led to frustration, a sense of doubt about the future of their work and feeling stressed. These results support the conceptual framework design from the literature review for this study previously presented in chapter 2.

Also, generally, it supports the eudaimonic theory adopted for this study, which argues that there should be a balance between an individual's resources pool and their challenges at work for positive workplace well-being experience such as growth, meaning and sense of achievement to be realised (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Seligman, 2002; Dodge et al., 2012). Likewise, the IPA for this study is about the lived experience of academics in their institutions (see sections 6.3.1-4 for the participants' stories, views and experiences previously presented).

The participants' past and current workplace well-being experiences seem to have impacted on their work in different ways. For example, there were positive

experiences in the past (the good working relationship between leaders and their subordinates) and negative experiences presently (lack of consultation on workplace issues). This suggests that the factors that impacted on the participants' well-being at work are multifaceted. The strategies to address this at work should be multifaceted, but should also consider the participants' psychological, physical and social needs (Diener et al., 1999; Dodge et al., 2012).

#### **6.4.1 The Participants' Past Experience of Organisational and Leadership Changes**

##### **6.4.1.1 Teamwork and autonomy at work**

From the perspective of eudaimonic theory, individual's sense of achievement at work can increase their workplace well-being experience positively (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Kashdan et al., 2008; Ryff, 2014). The findings of this study show that leaders who promote teamwork (regular communication and collaboration between colleagues and their leaders) and autonomy (freedom to decide on work schedules and provide resources to reach work targets) in their workplaces inspire their employee's well-being positively. Among all the issues associated with organisational and leadership change in HEIs, teamwork and individual autonomy at work were important to the participants' well-being.

Generally, on the participants' past experience of leadership change, the findings showed that they experienced a positive working relationship, teamwork, autonomy and support from their leaders. This support helped some of them to further their studies and also to take up leadership roles in their faculties to gain experience. This implies that for this study's participants, self-actualisation, self-interest and meaning at work were important to them. Their experience resonates with the eudaimonic well-being concept of "flourishing" (work relationship, growth and meaning at work), (Seligman, 2011).

Previous studies on employees' experience of leadership change at the workplace in Turkey (Ertureten et al., 2013), China (Tse et al., 2013) and Australia (Samad, 2015) have reported that a leadership style that promotes teamwork, individual growth, autonomy and communication between leaders and their subordinates at the workplace has a positive impact on employees' performance and well-being. Similar findings were reported by Hinds (2017) and Ngotngamwong (2014) on the impact of leadership changes on employees' performance.

The findings of this study's participants' experiences show that their past leaders were likely to inform them about any possible changes that were going to take place in their institutions. The reason is that they had different communication approaches and working relationships with them than their current ones. This is similar to the findings of other leadership and change management studies (Malos, 2012; Babalola et al., 2016; Mäkikangas et al., 2019). This suggests that when organisations pay more attention to individual factors such as a good working relationship (teamwork) and autonomy at the workplace, a positive work experience is likely to occur. Employees' positive work experience can, therefore, be attributed to a work environment that supports individual growth and encourages teamwork between senior management and their subordinates in HEIs in Ghana. This finding points to the need for institutions and their leaders to create a work environment that promotes positive experiences for the employees' well-being and productivity for the institution. For example, they should develop policies that prioritise skills development, implement cross-faculty training and mentoring programs and set up centres within the institutions to address work-related stress (see sections 6.2.5-6.3.1-2).

Most of this study's participants believe that their past leaders were committed to having an impact in academia in a developing country like Ghana, even though there were resources challenges. A possible explanation for this is that higher education lecturing jobs were less attractive to young graduates in the past due to poor remuneration. Therefore, these leaders might be trying to make the work less stressful and attractive to new employees. Another plausible explanation is that Ghana had a limited number of PhD degree holders in the public universities and, therefore, the leaders may be encouraging the new academics to get interested in higher education work. The study's finding on well-being implies that employees feel they are respected and valued by their leaders and the organisation, and this is likely to lead to their positive experience and well-being at work. These findings are also in correlation with other studies in the Australian universities (Samad, 2015) and in Estonia, India and China (Pihlak & Alas, 2012).

## **6.5 The Participants' Current Experience of Organisational and leadership changes**

### **6.5.1 Lack of communication and consultation**

Lack of consultation/communication between leaders and their subordinates at work was found to create anxiety and uncertainties. This was found to impact negatively on this study's participants' performance and workplace well-being. This is similar to some studies (Robson et al., 2006; Abugre, 2010, 2011; Boies, 2015; Ngotngamwong, 2014). This finding showed that effective communication between employees during a change process and employees who receive regular communication from their managers at work are less likely to feel anxious during the process. In contrast, Pihlak et al. (2012) analysed both qualitative and quantitative data from 177 interviews about organizational change management in Chinese, Indian and Estonian organisations. Pihlak and colleagues found leadership communication style and employee involvement to have a positive impact on the success of the change process in Estonia and India. However, a negative impact was found in China. This is not surprising as leaders in Chinese society distance themselves from their employees, which could make it difficult for their communication style to make an impact (Cheng et al., 2004; Duan et al., 2018). However, the findings from this study's participants showed the opposite as they wished they were regularly communicated to due to their cordial working relationship with their leaders. This would have helped them to be psychologically and emotionally ready for the change. This suggests that cultural context and location of organisations is likely to make a difference for the employees' lives during organisation and leadership change processes.

With regards to employees feeling anxious due to the recurring leadership changes, this study found a link to the lack of consultation and communication between the managers and their employees (Gallie et al., 2017). The

participants were less likely to feel anxious if they were asked to play roles in the change process. The participants who were lucky to have had a hint of the change process were those who were seen to have developed acquaintances with their leaders informally and, as a result, had some sort of information. This is similar to other studies in America and Australia, which found that colleagues' communication and supportive managers reduce the harmful effect of employees' anxiety and performance at work (Ford et al., 2011; McCarthy et al., 2016).

Employees who felt anxious due to the change process were likely to be absent from work due to the impact on their emotions and health, and this was likely to cost their institutions financially. The finding of this study is similar to those of other studies in the USA (Kessler & Greenberg, 2002, APA, 2012), Canada (Kocakulah et al., 2016) and Portugal (Souto et al., 2019). Even though some scholars argue that individual employees have the propensity to deal with work-related anxiety differently, workplace anxiety is generally on the rise (D'Mello, 2012). This study argues that it depends on the cause of the anxiety, the work environment and the location. The reason is that in a country like Ghana, where leaders scarcely interact with their subordinates as a form of showing power and authority, suddenly losing a leader who is supportive and understands teamwork without notification can be upsetting, creating high levels of anxiety which could lead to stress (Andoh & Ghansah, 2019).

This study's findings showed a link between the participants' levels of anxiety, uncertainty and low performance. The reason is that the feeling of uncertainty created doubts in the participants' minds about whether to continue working in their institutions or leave (see section 6.2.6). Anxiety and uncertainty at work have been found to impact employees' performance, health and well-being at

work negatively (Ford et al., 2011; Muschalla & Linden, 2012; Gomes et al., 2013; Eller et al., 2016). Nelson et al. (2013), in a longitudinal study of 397 employees working in organisations in the UK, found that uncertainty amidst a change in an organisation creates doubts on individual employment, work dissatisfaction and negative well-being experiences. This is not surprising as similar experiences were shared by the participants in this study. This suggests that irrespective of the job role, context and geographical location, frequent leadership changes at work with less employee involvement are likely to lead to dissatisfaction and low performance. However, what is important to this study's participants is their leaders' style during organisational change. The contributing factor to negative workplace well-being experiences of the participants in this chapter is, therefore, anxiety and uncertainty.

In a work environment where individuals feel anxious about their future, they are likely to seek gratification outside work. The reason is that individuals feel undervalued and not respected by their leaders. However, when individuals endure these challenges at work with the hope of making a difference in their work, such as imparting knowledge to their students or the desire to leave a legacy at work, as in this case of this study's participants, eudaimonic well-being experience is likely to occur rather than hedonic well-being (Seligman, 2011). The reason is that people with eudaimonic characteristics lead altruistic lives to make others happy in society (Hutta, 2016). Generally, the participants' past experiences were positive, while their current ones were negative. However, their negative experiences outshined their positive work experiences despite their hard work and sacrifices made in the past. This made them have a mindset change towards their institutions and leaders. The result is that the

participants are likely to be in a constant state of anxiety, which could lead to stress, resulting in negative well-being experience (Ofori & Antwi, 2020).

## **6.6 Changes in the Political Environments**

### **6.6.1 Political interference**

Political interference was another contextual finding in this study. This finding was seen to have a link to a cap on staff recruitment and an increase in student numbers. Politicians who had much power and influence were known to interfere more in the work of HEIs. Similarly, the politicians who do not have much influence and operate at the local level (i.e. live in the cities and towns where these institutions are situated) were known to also interfere, especially in student admissions and staff recruitment processes. These results align with the work of other studies conducted in South Africa and Kenyan universities (Watson et al., 2009; Ngambi, 2011; Sifuna, 2012), which showed that staff deployment, recruitment and promotion were strongly influenced by party politics. This could be because political parties want total control of key public institutions to gain insight into their activities, especially the decision-making process, to exert authority. For example, individuals with political party affiliations are easily promoted in public institutions and secure big government contracts and good jobs for themselves, friends and family members.

However, individuals with no political affiliation and those from opposition parties tend to struggle to get public sector jobs, admission for their children and promotion at the workplace. This, in turn, influences their livelihood and performance in imparting knowledge to students as academics. The effect of party politics on individuals is that power and influence become the means of getting people (whether qualified or not) into the top position in public institutions. A politically compromised higher education management cannot

promote and deliver quality education (Sifuna, 2012; Akomea-Frimpong & Olaniyan, 2019). Therefore, strategies to minimise political interference in the management and operations in HEIs in Ghana should include a cross-institutional collaboration between the Ministry of Tertiary Education, the University Councils and the government to champion a policy that will streamline public university management to attain some level of autonomy, if not complete autonomy. In this way, all decision-making concerning leadership and organisational changes will involve all parties to possibly reduce one-sided decisions, termed interference by the academics.

#### **6.6.2 High student numbers and a cap on recruitment**

The financial challenges of the central government were found to be the cause of a cap in recruiting new academic staff into the public HEIs, while institutional challenges in raising funds internally and government policy to increase access to higher education accounted for the increase in student numbers. With regards to the increase in student numbers, two key issues were related.

First was the institutions' internal policy of the fee-paying route used to admit students as a means of raising funds internally to support government funding. Second was the need for HEIs to support the government policy of increasing access to university education. Unfortunately, the HEIs became handicapped because they could not balance the increase in student numbers with their staff numbers. This led to the academic employees experiencing increased workload and working longer hours to meet tight deadlines. The effect of this is that the academics complained of fatigue, work pressure and stress related to workload. This finding aligns with other studies conducted in Europe and America (Winefield et al., 2003; Jacobs et al., 2005, 2007; Jung & Jung, 2014) which

showed that workload and pressure are associated with workplace stress in organisations. A similar finding was also found in other studies in HEIs in South Africa (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008), the UK (Tytherleigh et al., 2005), and Northern Ireland (Bell et al., 2012). Bezuidenhout (2015), in a quantitative study among academic employees working online in a South African university, found that workload and increased student-staff ratios contribute to academics stress at work.

This was surprising as one would have expected that work pressure and load would have been associated with formal teaching in the classroom. This contradicted earlier studies findings (Jacobs et al., 2007; Bell et al., 2012; Jung & Jung, 2014). Although the medium of delivery was different, the participants' jobs roles were the same. These findings possibly suggest that the factors that contribute to academics' work-related stress in HEIs go beyond the formal classroom teaching and laboratories work found in this study. This also shows that any measures to control workload and pressure at the workplace to reduce work-related stress should also target academic employees involved in online teaching. However, in a country like Ghana, where government control over HEIs is eminent, any management policy to curb the increase in student numbers will be catastrophic, as the higher education leaders could be tagged as working against the government. This raises questions about institutional and management autonomy in HEIs in Ghana in an era of democratic governance (Kopecký, 2011; Ofori & Antwi, 2020).

The restriction on staff recruitment was attributed to the financial control measures by the government of Ghana and their agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as previously indicated (Ministry of Finance, 2015; ActionAid Ghana, 2010:31-32; Fatunde, 2014). Unfortunately, no timeline

was provided on when the restriction will be lifted. This has created huge unrest for academics because the workload and work demand have continued to increase. This resulted in the academics showing negative signs of workplace well-being. Interestingly, the restriction on staff recruitment was found to have a strong correlation with workload, pressure and a mindset shift for academics' continuous employment in the HEIs (Ofori & Antwi, 2020). This is significant because previous studies (Jacobs et al., 2007; Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008; Wood, 2009; Atindanbila, 2011; Sang et al., 2013; Jung & Jung, 2014) discussed either workload, long working hours or work pressures and the relationship with stress as a single component or together, but not with cultural beliefs and influences as a component of an individual mindset shift.

Another plausible explanation could be that previous studies conducted in HEIs in other countries experienced less government involvement in their operations. Also, this study has revealed a link between organisational leadership, political interference and employees' mindset shift in association with employees' workplace well-being experience as a contribution to existing knowledge on workplace well-being theories and models. This study, therefore, proposes a change-effect model of workplace well-being in the developing country context of Ghana based on the findings and its impact on individual workplace well-being.

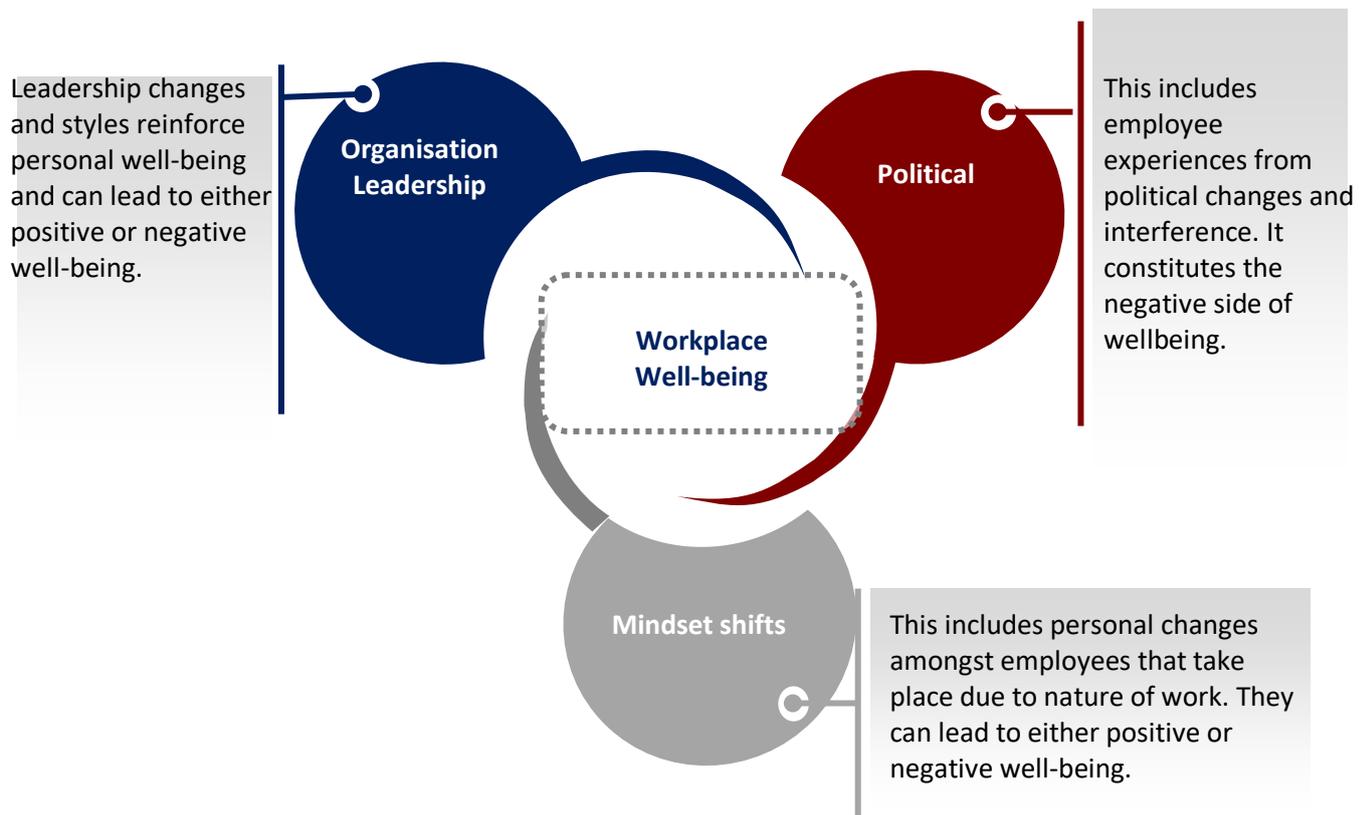


Figure G: A change-effect model on higher education employees' workplace well-being in Ghana.

Source: Ofori & Antwi, 2020

The model above is based on the analysis and discussion of the findings from research question 3 (see section 1.8 in chapter 1) The model presents a relationship between the three components with the argument that this study's participants' stories and experiences indicate a change effect, structural and administrative changes in HEIs, which can impact on the well-being of the academic employees. The details of the implication of this study's findings and its application are presented in chapter seven as a continuation of the discussion and this study's empirical contribution.

## **6.7 The Concept of Well-being Expressed in a Given Context**

Employees' workplace well-being issues have been a topical issue across the world recently. In the HE workplace, work-related stressors such as stress, work demand and long working hours are associated with academics' negative well-being experience. Research into policy on academic employees' well-being in HEIs is limited as most well-being intervention programmes focus on students. This approach by the leaders and managers of HEIs to academics' workplace well-being issues is deep-rooted in the positioning and understanding of academics' workplace well-being issues as "a second choice" and as an approach that should be disallowed and reduced. The negative and often philosophical viewpoints, approaches and understanding of employees' workplace well-being have been progressively debated and assessed by most researchers and research institutes in recent years. A growing number of academics have argued that introducing well-being programmes that meet the needs of employees in the workplace can promote positive change, such as high presentism, productivity and work efficiency, especially to the benefit of the employer. Other researchers have therefore concluded that workplace well-being is seen only in work outcomes by organisations (Harter et al., 2003; Raiden et al., 2019) and that it will take individual effort for that to change.

Most of the academic employees at all the three study sites described wide-ranging characteristics of the components of well-being concepts (see sections 4.1-3 in chapter 4). It could be argued that the findings of this study call for an appreciation of the subjectivity of each academic employee's understanding in terms of what they see and value as important to their well-being and its influence on their perceptions.

Seligman (2002) argues that there are three viewpoints in terms of how individual well-being is understood: determined and achieved-engagement (a good life), pleasure (a pleasant life) and meaning (a meaningful and fulfilling life) (Vella-Brodrick et al., 2009). Yet, the responses from the academic employees in the three HEIs contradict most of the studies reviewed in the non-higher education context in this study. The reason is that certain types of work in the non-higher education context may need the physical exertion of energy to carry out activities, such as construction workers and the police (see section 2.4.1 in chapter 2). This suggests the importance of recognising the job context, individual roles and occupational context. The context of the study can likely impact what is seen by the individual as a component of their well-being. In the occupational context, the physical aspect of well-being was stated together with the components and concepts of well-being from the area of psychology by most of the academic employees. Also, the socio-cultural aspect of well-being was implied. It appears that the social aspect of well-being was highlighted by the respondents more than the other components (see section 4.1- 4 in chapter 4). The reason is that the academic employees, whose work includes teaching, mentoring and managing responsibilities for their departments and staff, are also expected to ensure that their staff work together effectively and also maintain a good working relationship between their students and the non-teaching staff.

How well-being is embedded in the occupational context has been highlighted in the well-being literature in terms of its antecedents, but not its components. However, in terms of stress, Langan-Fox and Cooper (2011) recognise that some professions have specific stressors. In terms of well-being, Juniper et al. (2011) conducted a study using a survey to gather information from different

public sector organisations on what they see as essential to their well-being at work. The employees were asked to indicate what influenced their well-being most. The organisations (i.e., a hospital, library and a police service) stated varied work characteristics, suggesting that different professions and types of work will experience well-being differently. Juniper et al.'s study support what the academic employees said in this study as service workers (see section 4.2-3 in Chapter 4).

Based on the findings of this study, the academic employees described their experience of workplace well-being mainly in terms of eudaimonic well-being and as being interconnected with stress and low well-being, although hedonic experiences were occasionally expressed as well. The work environment of the academic employees could be described as stressful (long working hours, work overload, low staffing levels, lack of resources and delay in promotion). This was likely to impact their understanding in the absence of stress. The work environment of the academic employees that supported their eudaimonic well-being experience (for example, having autonomy) may have impacted their conceptualisation in terms of eudaimonic and hedonic well-being. Therefore, the characteristics of work and its context can have an impact on how well-being is experienced, seen and understood.

In the context of jobs where stress levels are experienced due to a lack of resources, workload, delayed promotion and difficulties in flourishing, eudaimonic well-being is likely to be understood, but not hedonic well-being. If individuals have to deal with workplace stressors, such as work overload, but cannot get teaching resources such as internet facilities, research grants and personal resources, such as self-efficacy (one's ability to accomplish a task), they are likely to show signs of anxiety, fatigue and negative affect, etc. The

participants' efforts to maintain their well-being may revolve around relieving fatigue and reinstating levels of positive affect. Thriving in terms of the participants' desire to achieve further growth and develop themselves is unlikely to be significant at this point.

Aside from job characteristics, individual job roles may also influence how workplace well-being is understood. Different workers and professionals may have different experiences and understandings of well-being as different workgroups use their work to identify themselves in different ways. For example, an administrative worker or knowledge worker, as in the case of this study's participants, may identify themselves through their work (the importance of their work), and they may see and understand workplace well-being more in terms of their eudaimonic well-being, which is consistent with the studies of Mannheim et al. (1997) and Doherty (2009).

On the one hand, to evaluate the well-being experience of a knowledge worker, one is tempted to look at the purpose of their work and how much they experience meaning at work. On the other hand, some knowledge workers may also see their work mostly in terms of making a living (work to live) and may develop their purpose and meaning outside of work (this relates to their hedonic understanding) as they experience positive affects more than negative affects at work. Nevertheless, in this study, the academic employees referred mostly to their eudaimonic well-being understanding in their descriptions, with several well-being indicators. The academic employees who were heads of department had more autonomy than those who were lecturers. This was reflected in their understanding of well-being. Through autonomy, for example, the heads of department were likely to experience eudaimonic well-being (see sections 4.2-4 in chapter 4).

Research on well-being and stress has been documented, particularly the role of context in understanding well-being (Karanika-Murray et al., 2012). For example, well-being interventions, the role of individuals, their work and characteristics, and organisational borders in which well-being and stress take place are the likely context factors that influence whether a well-being intervention will be successful or not. Karanika-Murray et al. (2012) suggest that research should not only concentrate on “what works” but also explore why as well as the setting.

As indicated earlier in this study, several researchers have emphasised the importance of context in investigating the phenomena of organisational behaviour (Rousseau & Fried, 2001; Johns, 2006; Bamberger, 2008). In support of these studies, a detailed analysis of the participants’ responses was conducted through a step-by-step analysis (see section 3.3.4 in chapter 3) to reflect the context of this study (a developing country context, Ghana) and its relationship to the participants’ behaviour and their work environment (higher education work environment). Also, it helps to differentiate the context of this study from other work environments and their contexts.

The findings of this study suggest that context is important in understanding the concept of well-being as it is deeply anchored in different areas: First, the profession (teaching might highlight the social aspect of well-being), second, the type of work and its context (faculty with high stress due to workload vs. low stress), and lastly, the role of the professionals (knowledge workers), the demands of their work and the work resources, which are dependent on the work role (heads of department vs. lecturers generally have diverse levels of autonomy and control) (Ofori & Bell, 2020; Ofori & Antwi, 2020). Finally, the findings of this study suggest that the context of the study is likely to be

influenced by the participants' understanding of well-being in the context of work. Thus, in terms of the characteristics of work and the work role, a universal conceptualisation of well-being is not suitable as a result of its contextual dependency (a developing country context, Ghana). Eudaimonic conceptualisation is, therefore, a useful basis for how the participants described their experiences.

## **6.8 Study Limitations**

This study set out to investigate academic employees' views, experiences and understanding of workplace well-being from three public HEIs in Ghana. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather the academic employees' past and present experiences, views and stories of workplace well-being (Smith et al., 2009). Interviews were perceived as ideal to gather the academic employees' experiences and to find differences and similarities in their stories (Pietkiewicz & Smith., 2014; Bertaux & Thompson, 1997). The interview technique was shown to be an effective data collection tool as the academic employees had the flexibility to talk at length and share their experiences on workplace well-being issues, their understanding and the challenges. Comprehensive and rich data were gathered from the academic employees, allowing insightful explanation to be made.

However, as indicated in the results chapters previously, some of the interviews were shorter. The challenges in conducting interviews and investigating people's experiences and stories have been found in past studies (Luttrell, 2003; 2014). Upon further consideration, it could have been useful to be more creative about the data collection tool used in this study. As Prosper (2007) explained, the interview technique leads to an obvious favouring of oral communication. Likewise, Wise (2001) recognises that the interview technique

assumes that people can express their feelings, share their views clearly and want to talk. Though the academic employees were asked different questions to capture their understanding and encourage discussion on the topic of workplace well-being, on reflection, it may have been useful to adopt an alternative approach. For example, case scenarios could have been included in the design of the interview guide to encourage more discussion (Moeta & du Rand, 2019). Considering creative research approaches is an important deliberation I have made and intend to implement in upcoming research. This study focused on the stories, views and understanding of academic employees' workplace well-being experiences in public HEIs and their participation has provided detailed accounts of their workplace experience.

As the first qualitative study focusing solely on investigating academic employees' workplace well-being from three selected public HEIs in Ghana, the findings are unique due to the data richness and context-specific nature. However, the application of the findings could be extended to other HEIs in other Sub-Saharan African countries because of the contextual and cultural issues.

Further, to contextualise the academic employees' workplace well-being experiences, particularly to policy, the involvement of private HEIs and their managers would have been useful. However, due to the limited time associated with the PhD research, the challenging task of arranging interviews and organising the data as well as analysing and financial difficulties, private HEIs were not included. The reason was an honest one as Neubauer et al. (2019) explained that one of the important objectives of conducting research that is influenced by interpretive phenomenology is to investigate the lived experience of individuals and that experience should be seen as valid in their world.

As the public academic employees were employed by the central government of Ghana, the fear of being expelled for providing information that may be seen as damaging to the government and the institution was envisaged. To reduce this study's limitation, I avoided asking a direct question about their employer in the interview. For example, instead of asking, "Does your employer provide workplace well-being policy at work?", I asked, "How are you supported in terms of your well-being at work?" The reshaping of the question was a way to open another avenue for more discussion on their understanding and experience outside their workplace. Interestingly, despite the attempt to avoid leading the academics' responses, they continued to talk about their experience outside their work and how that impacted on their well-being. Therefore, the academics inevitably constructed their stories and experience within the well-being dialogue.

## **6.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided a conceptual understanding of the phenomena of policy reforms and employee well-being with the argument that major policy reforms in HEIs in Ghana have caused organisational changes, and managing the processes effectively can easily influence the well-being of employees positively. This can, in turn, improve the performance of the employee. Again, the chapter has demonstrated that policy reform that requires structural and administrative changes should give priority to employees' well-being, and also employees should be informed early to prepare both physically and psychologically for the change.

Political influence, mindset shifts, and effective organisational leadership were found to be the most important factors that impacted both negatively and positively on employees' workplace well-being. These were also found to be

context-specific workplace well-being issues. Thus, organisational leadership, political interference and mindset shifts are common conditions that can impact on employee well-being, and like the 'butterfly effect', the initial small changes from experiences can lead to major differences in the well-being of employees in later stages. Further, the growth dimension of employees' workplace well-being was demonstrated and found not only to influence how individuals maintain their well-being but also how people understand what well-being means and what the components of their experiences are. Finally, the chapter has demonstrated that the organisational performance equation is incomplete without a focus on employee well-being.

## Chapter 7 **Conclusion and Contributions**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This final chapter is mainly the summary of the key findings, the conclusion drawn from this study as well as the contributions made to the body of intellectual knowledge. In this chapter, the main arguments underpinning this study are outlined, re-emphasising the importance of the study together with its aims. As a recap, this study investigated the following issues: how academic employees understood well-being in the workplace and what that means to them; and what constitutes well-being in the workplace and how changes in the higher education sector over time affected academic employees' well-being. To address these issues, study propositions were designed to support the three research questions with a theoretical approach and conceptualisation to help the pursuit for answers. This was important because there are conflicting views on the two main existing well-being theories, that is, hedonic and eudaimonic, and each has implication for individual well-being at work, and therefore, neither can be overlooked. This study also used semi-structured interviews alongside an interview guide to gather information from eighteen academic employees from three public universities in Ghana. The proceeding sections presents answers to the research questions and the study propositions put forward at the beginning of this study.

The remaining chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides a summary of the extent to which the research questions and the study propositions are achieved. The second section outlines this study's contribution to the well-being paradigm. This is succeeded by this study's practical and empirical implication for further studies. The final section ends the chapter with my study epilogue (what well-being is, the challenges of studying well-being in

organisations and how workplace well-being can be achieved), together with the closing remarks.

## **7.2 Summary of the key study findings and their implications**

Research question 1. How do academic employees understand well-being in the workplace and what does it mean to them?

Propositions:

- (a) Employees' understanding of workplace well-being can vary based on the study context.
- (b) The nature of work can influence what workplace well-being means to people.

Regarding research question 1, this study found that the academics' understanding of workplace well-being was placed into one of two halves, namely positive and negative. This was indicated in figure F in chapter 4. However, their negative experiences were more frequent than the positive ones, which resulted in complaints. This is in contrast to Diener's (2001) perspective of well-being that human beings enjoy more pleasure than pain. Pleasures in this sense mean anything associated with merrymaking and being stress-free, termed a hedonic well-being experience, while pain is linked to individuals' activities that involve struggles, making sacrifices and looking for ways to support others in society. These examples together with individuals making meaning of their work and life form part of the eudaimonic well-being attributes (Huta & Waterman, 2014). Huta and Waterman argued that although eudaimonic experiences take time to appear in a person's life, they mostly end in positive experiences which are long-lived. This has been demonstrated in this study's

participants' stories, as the participants' struggles finally ended up with high numbers of their students graduating and individual promotions.

Also, as shown in figure F, the participants' negative workplace well-being experiences were linked to delays in their promotion and the lack of teaching resources which are important for their work. As stated by Dodge et al. (2012), a lack of a resource pool at work affects an individual's physical, psychological and social well-being. This was seen in the participants' stories as the lack of resources affected their zeal to perform, resulting in negative experiences. It can be argued that the participants' desire to progress in their career and their determination to see their students progress made them persevere until their students graduated. This act of self-sacrifice and desire to contribute to their students' lives and working hard to earn promotion relate to their eudaimonic well-being and are part of Ryff's conceptualisation of well-being (Ryff, 1989; Huta, 2014).

Further, these experiences show the participants first-hand accounts and insight into what it is like to work in a HEI in a developing country like Ghana, which supports the interpretative phenomenology approach (IPA) adopted of this study. The participants' experience brings to the fore the issues of context and its influence in understanding a particular phenomenon. In this case, teaching resources, such as internet facilities, which other academics in developed countries such as the UK, USA and Canada etc. may see as "normal" and take for granted, could be a "game-changer" in another country context like Ghana. This suggests that context is important in understanding employee workplace well-being. Additionally, the participants' stories also revealed a varied understanding of well-being with a socio-cultural influence. This was linked to the participants' negative workplace well-being experience, which has been

demonstrated earlier under the importance of context in how individuals understand workplace well-being.

To conclude, this study's findings support the study proposition (a) stated above that the participants' understanding of workplace well-being may vary. The reason is that across the three study sites, the participants demonstrated different understandings (see the results presented earlier). The complexities in understanding well-being were also revealed, as the participants working in the same place with the same qualifications had different understandings and meanings (Fisher, 2010; Page et al., 2009; Cartwright & Cooper, 2009). Again, the evidence in this study supports the study proposition (b). This means that the nature of a person's work can influence the meaning they derive from their work either positively or negatively. In this study, positive meaning at work was linked to promotion, which brought the participants respect and recognition but came through struggle and determination. This is also linked to the participants' eudaimonic well-being experiences (Hutta, 2015; Huta & waterman, 2014).

Research question-2 What constitutes well-being in the workplace?

Propositions:

(c) Individuals' identities and sense of belonging can constitute their workplace well-being.

(d) Cultural values and norms can influence individuals' constituents of workplace well-being either positively or negatively.

Based on the previous discussion in chapter 5, this study found that the academic employees' constituents of well-being include their professional and social identities, sense of belonging and loyalty to their former universities and lack of well-being policies, programmes and support. Seeking help outside their institutions was linked to a lack of well-being programmes and policies, as

indicated in figure G. From this figure, the participants' constituents were diverse and sub-divided into positive and negative halves. The participants' identities, loyalty and sense of belonging constituted their positive well-being, as those who return to serve in their former universities are seen as patriotic and are highly regarded at work and in society. This was linked to their sociocultural influences. Seeking help outside their institutions constituted the participants' negative well-being experience. This was related to the lack of workplace well-being programmes, support, policies and pressure to maintain their professional identities by adhering to societal norms.

To conclude, the evidence from this study supports study proposition (c) that the participants' sense of belonging reinforces their professional and social identities. Again, the evidence supports study proposition (d) on both positive and negative constituents of well-being. This implies that depending on the context of study, the constituents of individual well-being can be positive or negative. This supports some of Ryff (1989) six-point conception of well-being components in the areas of forming relations with people in society, being able to manage external pressure from the Ghanaian society to maintain their identities, and to function well in life, as previously indicated and discussed in chapter 5.

In contrast to Ryff's conception, which draws on other well-being theories conceptualised by Jung, Rogers, Erikson, and Maslow (among others), the issues of cultural influence were silent in exploring the individual constituents of workplace well-being. Therefore, this study has revealed the importance of cultural belief as a context-specific phenomenon which should be considered to determine the individual components of well-being, especially in a developing country context like Ghana. From this perspective, cultural belief and influence

are deeply rooted in an individual component of well-being and as an attribute of eudaimonic well-being which is connected with a person's quest to achieve his/her goals and activities consistent with their identities and values (McGregor & Little, 1998; Waterman, 1993). This forms part of this study's contribution to the empirical evidence on the constituents and components of well-being when one is considering well-being studies in a developing country context.

Research question 3 How do changes in the higher education sector over time affect employees' well-being?

Proposition:

(e) Political interference can negatively influence employees' workplace well-being.

(f) Leadership and organisational changes can influence employees' well-being at work both positively and negatively.

The results that emerged from the research question asked earlier have been presented in figure H in chapter 6. Based on the results, the participants positioned their stories of the changes they have encountered over time into both positive and negative well-being experiences. These came from three perspectives: the first is political interference, and this constitutes an external influence on the organisation. This gives pressure to the academics to act on the demands of the politicians out of the fear of being tagged as working against the government in power.

However, within the organisational psychology and health literature, this factor appears to be insufficiently explored and discussed. The evidence from this study shows that politicians who initiate policy reforms do influence the implementation of the reforms with some level of interference. These may lead to the negative well-being of employees because the political interest is most

often results-oriented with less focus on the well-being of the employees. This evidence supports the study proposition (e) indicated above. However, if measures are put in place to curb political interference, academics can have full control and autonomy to do their work and this can result in positive workplace well-being experiences.

The second factor is the leadership changes, which constitute an internal influence and appears strongly in the organisational health literature (Keller & Price, 2011). Leadership change is a common phenomenon in change management and usually comes with inherent changes to leadership styles. The stories from this study's participants show that this can lead to both the negative and positive well-being of employees, depending on the leader and their style of leadership. The evidence as presented here supports study proposition (F) above, implying that leadership style is the main determining factor when it comes to changes in organisations and their impact on employees' well-being.

The third is a mindset shift, which constitutes personal changes and also situates strongly in the organisational health, education and society literature (Keller & Price, 2011; Ofori & Bell, 2020; Ofori & Antwi, 2020). This study finding suggests that individual mindset shifts constitute a predisposing factor for behaviour change. These changes are caused by work outputs, relocation of jobs, changing job schedules, etc. The study has shown that mindset shifts during a change management process can lead to both positive and negative well-being. Mindset shifts also address individual concerns in understanding changes in the workplace, and this is what workplace well-being strives to achieve.

Thus, this study suggests a reduction in the over-reliance on the two well-being concepts with less attention on mindset shift at the workplace. This is not to propose that the two well-being concepts should be disregarded. Rather, the proposal is to emphasise employees' mindset shifts, especially in developing countries where the concepts of well-being may be new with less information alongside socio-cultural and political influences (Ofori & Bell, 2020; Ofori & Antwi, 2020). In this way, individuals will gain a better understanding of workplace well-being issues, and this will motivate them to take part in well-being intervention programmes. Again, the key suggestion here is to encourage dialogue with well-being researchers to pay attention to context-specific issues when exploring employees' workplace well-being in developing countries. This will inspire institutions to design programmes that educate and sensitise their employees to achieve positive results. Therefore, this study proposes that individual mindset shifts should be seen as a component of the workplace well-being concepts/models developed by researchers when exploring the multifaceted nature of well-being.

### **7.3 Contribution to the Well-being Paradigm**

Primarily, this section outlines both the theoretical and empirical contributions made by this study. The key theoretical contribution is an effort to introduce a model (see figure H, p. 256) that will be added to the workplace well-being framework which can help in future research to effect a change in understanding workplace well-being concepts in a developing country context such as Ghana. The section explores how the different workplace models have focused on different issues and ignored individual mindset changes when exploring employees' well-being. Similarly, this study contributes to the

discourse about employees' workplace well-being models and their application in developing countries.

### **7.3.1 A change effect model for employees' workplace well-being application**

The main approaches to well-being studies are hedonic and eudaimonic approaches with their sub-categorisations, conceptions and models. The hedonic models are geared towards happiness and carefreeness both in life and at the workplace, while the eudaimonic models are more about striving and flourishing. What this means is that both models are aimed at highlighting individual well-being issues either positively or negatively. Interestingly, these models have led to conflicting research standpoints, which have degenerated into what has turned into conceptual battles. Instead of researchers focusing on areas such as individuals' cultural beliefs and influences (mindset shifts) in a specific country context (i.e, developing countries, like Ghana). This is where this study contributes theoretically to employee workplace well-being models when exploring issues in a developing country context, especially issues around leadership and organisational changes and their impact on employees.

A new way of incorporating a model into workplace well-being conceptualisation was found to be important, especially in developing countries (Ofori & Antwi, 2020). The importance of introducing a model to understand employee workplace well-being in developing countries is derived from the fact that the multifaceted workplace well-being models on their own have not effectively explained employees' mindset shift during leadership changes in institutions. Likewise, the specific context in which workplace well-being is applied in a developing country like Ghana calls for effort towards model conceptualisation. A summary of this study's empirical contributions, their practical applications

and recommendations in a developing country context, like Ghana. is presented below alongside my learning journey in conducting this thesis.

### **7.3.2 Empirical contributions of the study**

Aside from this study's theoretical contributions, a significant empirical contribution has also been made. Employees' workplace well-being issues in Ghana have not been carefully studied or documented. Limited studies have been published, but these are not enough to generate awareness and public discourse (see the research gap in chapter 2). Employees' workplace well-being issues continue to be ignored by employers, resulting in work stressors such as anxiety, high levels of stress and absenteeism. These are part of the concerns raised by the academic employees in this study. Therefore, this is the first study to inform policy and create awareness of the dangers, benefits and importance of employees' well-being issues in Ghana.

Likewise, this study provides explanations on why workplace well-being programmes and policies have been overlooked despite most of the HEIs managers and some academics experiencing their usefulness for employees' performance in developed countries. No study in Ghana has sought to explore employees' workplace well-being experience and explained them to inform policy. From this study, a micro policy domain of the educational sector in a developing country context has been realised, thereby indicating that workplace well-being policies for academics do not exist in HEIs in Ghana and could, therefore, not be applied. This study has provided the platform and a satisfying explanation for workplace well-being issues to be discussed and a basis for informed solutions.

This study's empirical findings have started the process of helping to fill a vast employee workplace well-being gap in Ghana. The lack of workplace well-being information, especially information relating to academic employees' well-being, has been a topical issue in Ghana for policy decision-makers and globally for policy institutes in education. Therefore, filling this gap is considered an important contribution to the workplace well-being discourse, especially in Ghana, since the results can form the foundation and reflection needed to support policy decision-makers to develop ground-breaking policies to manage employee workplace well-being issues in the context of Ghana and to align with global concerns for academics' well-being and mental health issues. Interestingly, and most importantly, part of these findings has been published and shared with the Ministry of Education through the Public Health Directorate situated at the office of the President in Ghana (Jubilee House). The Ministry of Education is currently reviewing the Higher Education Workers Bill.

#### **7.4 Practical Implication of this Study**

In addition to the empirical contributions this study has provided, this section outlines context-specific issues and recommendations. These include the provision of adequate teaching and research resources; clear guidelines on career progression; staff counsellors; and a stronger policy on student numbers and staff workload. Also, there is a need to create awareness of workplace well-being issues through education and policies to sensitise employees and to ensure that the leaders of institutions take responsibility with compliance. The policy implications of this study, which forms part of the recommendation, are outlined below.

#### **7.4.1 Provision of adequate teaching and research resources**

It emerged from this study that the lack of adequate teaching and research resources affected the participants' work and well-being. This study has demonstrated that most of the issues around teaching/research resources were attributed to the lack of leadership and clarity in decision-making at the senior management level on funding. Also, less involvement of the academics at the decision-making level on teaching resources was demonstrated. These issues can be addressed if management provides clarity on who takes direct responsibility to ensure lecturers have adequate resources. This is important because such individuals can be contacted by lecturers when issues arise to reduce delays in resolving them.

Regarding research resources, a lack of management initiative to support and motivate lecturers to conduct research emerged. This affected their promotion, self-image and well-being negatively. This point can be addressed by setting up internal research funds and groups within faculties with a leader. These leaders will organise meetings and take creative research ideas to management for funding and ensure that the research is conducted. Again, award schemes (for inspirational or creative researchers and with financial incentives) could be introduced to motivate lecturers who conduct studies that lift the image of their institutions and communities, aside from using such studies as part of an evaluation for their promotion. This is likely to motivate and promote lecturers' in-house research interest.

#### **7.4.2 Clear guidelines on career progression and staff counsellors**

Inconsistencies in applying guidelines on promotion were found in this study. These were found to include favouritism, “the whom you know tactics” and the male-dominant approach. To address this point, leadership should set up clear guidelines that encourage fair promotion devoid of the issues found in this study to reinstate the academics’ trust in the process. For example, external stakeholders such as representatives of the University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG), Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) could be invited to participate in the promotion process of academics to ensure that they are treated fairly. This could boost confidence in the process and ensure a satisfactory outcome.

A lack of workplace well-being counsellors was also found in this study to have impacted negatively on the academics’ workplace well-being experiences. This made the academics seek help externally from priests, friend or family members. To address this point, universities in Ghana should invest in the training of their staff as well-being counsellors and also set up well-being centres to support academics in times of need. These counsellors will understand their colleagues better and will find ways to deal with issues using non-judgemental and empathic ways to find solutions.

#### **7.4.3 A stronger policy on student numbers and staff workload**

Staff workload and high student numbers were other key findings that emerged in this study. High student numbers were found to have a direct link with staff workload. On high student numbers, this study found that academics were not involved in the recruitment of students and had to deal with any number provided for a class. To address this point, universities in Ghana should

strengthen their policies on student recruitment by specifying the numbers of students per class.

Also, recruitments teams should include an academic who monitors the process to ensure that the right numbers are enrolled per class throughout the recruitment process. Tuition fees could be increased gradually over time to balance the shortfall in student numbers. Although this may be challenging, as most universities depend on student numbers to generate additional income to support what is received from the central government, the downside is that the academics are overwhelmed. When university managers and academics work together on the suggested policy, the workload will reduce, contact time with students will improve, and this can lead to quality teaching and a positive well-being experience for academics.

#### **7.4.4 Creating awareness, education and sensitisation**

Lack of information, education and sensitisation on workplace well-being issues emerged from this study as one of the key areas of policy implications. This study has shown that the majority of the employees' workplace well-being issues in public HEIs in Ghana are a result of socio-cultural belief and influence and an uninspired attitude. These points can be addressed through seminars, in-house training and conferences to sensitise and educate employees to create the necessary awareness. Such education is important because most of the academic employees may not be aware of their employers' responsibility towards their workplace well-being or do not know what to do when issues arise.

A typical instance of socio-cultural influence is when one of the academics (Charles) said that he and his colleagues discussed issues that disturbed them

at work at one of their colleagues' wedding. During the discussion, they all shared common concerns and agreed to take them up with senior management. On reaching work the next day, no one seemed interested, with the excuse that "when you complain you will be tagged as the bad one". With sensitisation and education, all stakeholders should play a role. When the University Councils together with the University Teachers Association come together to initiate robust workplace well-being education campaign programmes, it is likely to affect a positive mindset change and the programme will be more successful and less costly.

#### **7.4.5 Ensure leadership responsibility and institutional compliance**

Eventually, whether workplace well-being policies and programmes will be successful depends on the decisions that the leaders of HEIs make. For the public HEIs, leaders who understand the importance of employee well-being but refuse to implement programmes and policies are due to an uninspiring attitude or a focus on students' numbers to generate huge profits. In such instances, although education and sensitisation may be useful, ensuring that leaders see well-being as a responsibility and will be held accountable for not introducing well-being programmes will help with compliance. If public HEIs introduce workplace well-being programmes for their employees, most work-related stressors that affect employees' well-being negatively will be reduced.

This is an area where the University Teacher Association in Ghana can make an important contribution to academic employees' workplace well-being policy and its application in Ghana HEIs. When public HEIs comply and implement policies successfully, this is likely to attract other institutions, especially private universities. Private HEIs leaders can comply because of the success of the public institutions they are affiliated to due to trust and confidence. The

succeeding sections consider my PhD journey (epilogue), what well-being is, the challenge of conducting well-being research in institutions, how well-being can be achieved in institutions, and future well-being research directions, with a closing remark on my PhD research journey.

## **7.5 Epilogue: My Learning Journey in Conducting this Thesis**

This study set out to explore how workplace well-being is understood by academic employees in HEIs in Ghana to gain insight into the significances of well-being to human lives and productivity. It also helps to understand the various well-being concepts in the context of this study. Aside from the empirical and theoretical contributions that have been outlined in this study, what I have learnt from this PhD journey also provides an understanding of the difficulties of conducting workplace well-being research and the likely future direction of workplace well-being studies. This PhD is an academic journey that lasted from 2016 to 2020, whereby I investigated the field of people's (academic employees) understanding of workplace well-being by engaging with their stories, views, experiences and conceptualisations.

During this period, I talked to academic employees (lecturers and researchers) with at least five years' experience of working in HEIs in Ghana on their understanding of workplace well-being and what it means to them. I not only learned about the topic of well-being but also gained an understanding of the challenges of workplace well-being, and future research directions have become clearer to me.

Reflecting on this whole PhD research journey and discussing my weakness with work colleagues' both in and outside my research field helped me to discover new ideas and philosophies that lay behind the different concepts and approaches that organisations use to maintain and improve individual well-

being at work. Thus, in this PhD journey, I reflected on my academic journey to understanding how individual workplace well-being can be improved, what it means, and explaining how the concept has developed within and beyond its field of academic research. This contributes to the findings of this study and the implications for future workplace well-being research. I have gained a deeper understanding of how workplace well-being is talked about by different presenters at conferences and by reflecting on this study's data collection process. My understanding has further deepened through reflection on my study sites, the participants, and their enthusiasm to be involved in this research, and through investigating how they understand well-being. Research is not always clearly defined as inquiries produce new questions that may necessitate further investigation when one decides to understand a multifaceted phenomenon such as well-being.

Additionally, research does not always turn out as planned, nor do single studies provide a complete understanding of what the researcher set out to do. Many opportunities to conduct this well-being study in different organisations in Ghana and well-being intervention programmes came my way during this PhD journey. However, I concentrated on organisations in which I saw that their employees can speak to reveal the components of individual workplace well-being and the context in which the study is situated. These issues are demonstrated in the subsequent sections of this chapter. Therefore, I will demonstrate my learning process based on the evidence presented in this study and other interactions with academics, both fruitful and unfruitful meetings, and the discussion that occurred during this PhD journey.

### **7.5.1 What is well-being?**

My journey in this PhD started with an experience I had working both in Ghana and the UK, as previously presented in chapter 1. However, my learning started when I came across two pieces of work on positive organisational behaviour (POB) and positive psychology (Cooper et al., 2001) and positive organisational scholarship (POS) (Cameron et al., 2003). Cooper and colleagues hinted in their work that individual well-being is about thriving, flourishing and not coping and that stress is somewhat different from well-being. After reading these two pieces of work and comparing their views, I realised that the definition of stress and its measurement and the definition of well-being are often used interchangeably. Also, factors that contribute to low stress were linked to well-being. A good example is a study by Sheldon et al. (1997) on the relationship between five personality traits and subjective well-being. They measured individual subjective well-being with five scale attributes: stress, depression, anxiety, authenticity and self-esteem. Sheldon and colleagues argued that their measurement of subjective well-being through negative and positive valence captured psychological and physical well-being.

Again, I realised that the concept of well-being is not new as it is seen as an extension of employees' motivation and stress research. The concept has again been researched in decades together with work constructs, for example, coping with job challenges and satisfaction. Individual's well-being research has always been of key interest to organisational psychologists before positive organisational behaviour was introduced, and more importantly, represents an aspect of a person's functioning and experience at work.

From my reading, I found several concepts to key research fields that are connected or have a similar relation to well-being; for example, employee

resilience is an area which has long been researched and has been likened to well-being by researchers, in terms of redefining the concept via positive psychology (Luthar, 2006). Others include employees' happiness, satisfaction and more. Although the beginning of research into employee resilience at work focused largely on risk factors, positive organisation behaviour (POB) now focuses more on the positive side.

Presently, there is more research that focuses on positive resources at work in developing resilience. For example, Luthans et al. (2007) argued that most organisations see employee resilience as psychological capital and that it helps employees to deal with challenges such as stress, anxiety and a lack of resources in the work environment and turning them to positive change (Siu et al., 2009). For this study, this meant that a wider search for literature that could reveal what the phenomenon of well-being encompasses. In addition to coming to terms with the task of reviewing the academic literature on workplace well-being and its components, I attended different conferences on well-being to get experts' views on how the concept is applied in organisations to help shape my understanding in introducing the concept to HEIs in Ghana. Details of the conferences attended throughout my PhD Journey, the knowledge and experience gained, and how that contributed to this study and my career are presented under the heading *How can well-being be achieved in an organisation* below, together with the challenges of conducting well-being research in an organisation.

### **7.5.2 The challenges of conducting well-being research in organisations**

Reflecting on the different areas that I could have followed in this PhD journey, and also to demonstrate my vision behind introducing well-being into HEIs in Ghana, I noticed that most organisations invest in workplace well-being for different reasons. For example, some invest to show the outside world that they are responsible for and care about their staff. However, in a developing country like Ghana, where employees barely discuss issues that affect them due to sociocultural beliefs alongside a lack of clear well-being intervention programmes, introducing this study to the HEIs was going to be a challenge.

Nevertheless, I approached a friend who is a dean of a public HEI in Ghana to discuss my research ideas and to seek her support to talk to her staff. My friend said she has not seen a policy or any well-being intervention program since she started working 8 years ago. She gave me a contact number of a colleague in another public HEI who was the head of department to get a balanced view on the topic across institutions. However, she said the public HEIs in Ghana all operate similar systems and believed their policies may not be entirely different. The person my friend referred me to asked me to speak to their human resource manager. Interestingly, the HR manager confirmed they did not have any well-being intervention programs or policies. However, they had staff welfare schemes such as health insurance, a contact person to support employees in cases of bereavement, childbirth and marriage ceremonies to which members can contribute to support each other, and a clubhouse for social gathering.

All these initial arrangements and contacts before my studies were promising as they started months before the start of the research and helped to shape my thoughts on the subject as a researcher. However, there were failures at my

third HEI; the contact person I was referred to, after listening to me, would not speak until he received permission from his head of department or HR manager. I contacted my friend again for her input to speak to the HR manager in the third HEI, but the manager refused to help. The manager's refusal was probably because she was not sure of what to tell me.

However, after some persuasion, she arranged a phone discussion to know more about my study. In our first phone conversation, the HR manager asked for my research questions and the people I wanted to interview. I explained my study and responded to her questions. The HR manager sounded keen about my project but would not give any information and said the office will get back to me. This caused some setbacks in the process. After two weeks, I received another call and was told I could go ahead and speak to any of the academics, and the HR manager also suggested the names of some heads of department who could help me.

When I asked HR if they had a well-being policy, the answer was, "we have staff welfare but is voluntary for members to join". This confirmed what the first HR manager and my friend who referred me said about the public HEIs in Ghana having similar systems and structures. The HR also wanted feedback from me after my interview to know what the academics thought about well-being. The questions asked how they understood well-being, its constituents and how their work environment impacted their well-being. The academic employees shared their stories and experiences (see the results chapters). However, they could not compare their experience with other public HEIs because their issues are somewhat similar in terms of well-being intervention programs and policies. A plausible reason is the lack of intervention programmes and, therefore, the concept was difficult to understand. This also

raised the question of how institutions and nations see the importance of well-being to their citizenry and workforce.

### **7.5.3 How can well-being be achieved in an organisation?**

I attended the Well-being in Education conference hosted by Sir Anthony Seldon (President of IPEN, and co-founder of Action for Happiness) in London on the 19th of October 2018. The participants were from schools, colleges, universities and small childcare businesses. The conference outline gave an idea of how workplace well-being might be understood by educational institutions (schools, colleges and universities). In this conference, the understanding of workplace well-being was linked to regular exercise programs i.e. going to the gym and walking and riding bicycles to keep fit and healthy. The workshops and presentations concentrated on how to maintain well-being at work to lower absence-related sickness. Throughout this conference presentation and workshop, reducing sickness related to stress and health was used as an indicator of effective well-being intervention. As stated in this study, workplace well-being has aspects of thriving and having the resources to effectively cope with stress. However, simply focusing on reducing absence related to sickness does not solve all the workplace well-being issues. Therefore, one is likely to ask if some employers have moved on from the concept of stress or have replaced this concept with the term well-being.

In this same conference, a presentation on well-being and work was given by Professor Martin Seligman, Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. He motivated the participants to introduce well-being interventions in their institutions by emphasising the link between ill-health, work, economics and social goals. From his presentation, I concluded that organisations only see well-being in terms of a healthy workforce and

productivity. It appears that the ways organisations see well-being is by investing in the physical health of their employees by promoting exercise schemes.

I attended another conference in Dublin, Ireland (Health Workforce Education and Research) from the 9th-10th January 2019. The participants were researchers, academics and PhD students mainly from the health, social care and medical schools but also including a few sociologists. In this conference, it became clear to me that drawing a line between personal life and work was becoming a challenge, and that people are seen as human resources to be drawn on by organisations. In one of the talks, the leader highlighted a case where employee well-being interventions were implemented by an institution with the idea that a person (an employee) who is ill is unable to be productive at work. This was another clear case of employers seeing workplace well-being in terms of work outcomes.

At a one-day seminar on “What Works Well-being” in London in July 2019, organised by IPEN, I had the chance to speak to one of the participants who is an employer in a reputable organisation in London. Most of his workers were young men and women. This person told me about his surprise when his workers said they were not interested in the workplace well-being programme designed for them. Also, when asked how the programme could be improved or changed, the workers would not provide any information. The things provided in the well-being programme for his employee included workout classes and yoga sessions, but these were of no interest to the workers. This experience was interesting as it points to the importance of context and employee involvement in designing and understanding well-being programs. It further helps to know

what the employees think will benefit them, as this will determine the effectiveness of the programme (Biron, 2012).

This was seen in the findings of this study where the participants said they have no idea of any workplace well-being programme in their institutions because they are usually not involved in any decision-making process concerning them (see the experiences of Charles and his colleagues in chapter 5). However, it is not only about developing workplace well-being programmes, rather it is about what the programme means to the employees in a specific work context. In this instance, providing an alternative such as a gym membership may have been more appealing to the male identities of the employees. Resources such as money and time could have been given as an alternative to the employees for them to decide how they would use them to improve their health and physical fitness.

Aside from attending conferences, I had the chance to meet a former rector of a university college in Ghana to discuss what he thinks about my research and its relevance to HEIs in Ghana. Even though he was not one of the participants, he was very much interested in my study and said this can be replicated in other sectors as the issues highlighted are serious enough to generate public discourse on workplace well-being policy for employees. However, he was quick to add that the social settings (attitudes of people, cultural values and norms) are the cause of the delays in developing most workplace policies. He shared his experience of introducing a health and safety programme to his staff. To his surprise, none of them would attend a briefing, and this made him stop. When I asked what he thinks is the reason for his employees' behaviour he said that one of the staff told him that health and safety are not important to their working life. What they need most is a leader who will support them to further

their studies, provide in-house training programmes, provide adequate resources to work and a good working environment. Again, he said, the employees said they are overburdened with work and do not have time for health and safety programmes.

From this conversation and experience gained, I concluded that location, work environment and cultural beliefs can influence certain research areas such as well-being either positively or negatively. The reason is that my experience working in the higher education sector in the UK shows that people pay attention to health and safety initiatives at work, such as the fire alarm and taking part in fire evacuation training programmes. These actions are likely to bring a positive outcome, which is different from the rector's experience. Also, different organisations and their leaders have somewhat different interests in workplace well-being programmes and initiatives, such as through preventive measures, such as providing hotlines services to support their staff, fitness classes and healthy eating habits. During our conversation, I realised he was not motivated to introduce well-being policies to his employees because of his experience.

Again, I contacted a friend who is a medical doctor in London Kings College Hospital to discuss my research ideas. I wanted to get his views on my research and how he understands the term well-being and what it means to him. This was done to get a practitioner's view of the term as well. We had an open discussion about well-being, what it means to him and if he thinks my idea is important in today's workplace. I also presented my research questions to him to get his opinion of its viability in the work context. As a medical doctor, the term well-being was not new to him. He simply said:

*Is something like the absence of a disease or stress in a person's life or the more common understanding is reducing work pressures, stress, exercise and maybe a good working environment. This is how I think most organisations see it too. But from what I do, personally, I think is about the feeling that your work has a purpose and meaning. So, for me, well-being is slightly different from happiness (Medical Doctor, Kings College, London).*

From our discussion, I realised that the practitioner saw well-being in terms of improving employee health and performance at work. His explanation and understanding are in line with the concept that healthy employees are productive and happy at work (Cropanzano & Wright, 2001). The concept of self-actualisation or eudaimonia, as commonly used by others, appears not to play a significant role in organisations because it relates more to individual employees than the entire organisation. This may be some of the reasons why eudaimonic well-being is not seen as very important in most workplaces.

This made me think about whether the concept of eudaimonic well-being would be useful for a whole workforce. The reason is that not every employee sees his/her work as a means to create purpose and meaning. In many organisations as in academia, most employees see work as a way to develop their skills and grow in their career (self-actualisation), (Steger & Dik, 2010) and also as part of their identity, affiliation and meaning (Doherty, 2009). However, it is important to realise that many people may work for different reasons. For example, for some people work is a means to earn a living, and for others, it is for their social identity and being able to carry out activities that are meaningful to them outside their work. What this tells me as someone researching on workplace well-being

is that it is not only about the questions we ask, but also who we ask and the context of their work.

However, based on the conferences I have attended, my reading of different workplace well-being research and the Higher Education Policy Institute UK (2020), CIPD (2001), and Institute of Directors UK (2006) publications, I argue that the motivations for organisations and their leaders to introduce well-being programmes to their employees appeared to be reducing work-related injuries, accidents and sickness to prevent the healthcare costs of the organisation. I have personally gained an insight into the way workplace well-being is researched and described (in academia and practice) as this has significance for people's work, life, and experience and whether preventive measures will make a difference. Although an organisation may invest in their employees' well-being on the grounds of productivity and profitability, investing in an individual's well-being at work should not only be a means to earn but rather a way to assess the meaning we derive from the work, the quality of our culture, and the strength of our relationship with the wider society. Improving individual well-being should not be the sole responsibility of organisations but also that of governments through policies.

Lastly, the understanding of well-being differs across organisations, academic disciplines and practitioners (professional groups). Therefore, incorporating the current and past well-being research on work-related stressors and how to enhance employees' well-being will provide a complete understanding of the composition of how the individual experience of workplace well-being can be assessed and maintained based on the work context. Also, individual meaning and flourishing in the conceptualisation of workplace well-being appeared to be

limited in the intervention programmes by most organisations, which this study has demonstrated.

Another aspect of well-being that became clear in this study was that most well-being studies are longitudinal in terms of how to measure individual well-being at work, its relationship to the changing work environment, and the different definitions of the term well-being. An example of this was a study conducted on Australian youth workers (see the literature review section). However, as this study is not longitudinal and not based on the measurement of individual well-being at work but rather experience and understanding, I tried not to dwell on these. Nevertheless, an explanation is provided in chapter six to capture how well-being has changed over time in the participants' lives and if the changes have influenced their understanding of well-being.

Finally, the method used in any research design is important as it reflects what the study sets out to achieve and deduce. Thus, some researchers argue for longitudinal research for well-being studies, but one must be aware of the limitations, such as the authenticity of the research process. Also, a good number of researchers see the importance of adopting qualitative methods in psychology together with a recognised quantitative method.

In organisational psychology (OP), researchers who conduct qualitative research inspire do their best to explain, describe, decode and interpret the meaning of a phenomenon at work for both employers and their employees. These researchers concentrate on describing the nature of specific things (the antecedents to assessing). They argue that in trying to determine what workplace well-being means to individuals, interviews are mostly useful (Banister et al., 1994). Using a qualitative method in this study has provided rich and fairly unrestricted stories of how the participants understand and

experience workplace well-being. This may be a useful opportunity for future workplace well-being research as what well-being means to the participants through their stories could clarify how the concepts of well-being could be combined. Data from qualitative research also provides detailed insight into the connection between well-being and its components. For example, in the stories of individuals who work, how their location and work influence their understanding of well-being and other aspects of their work could be explored.

## **7.6 Further Research**

This study has highlighted numerous areas in which future study could be appreciated. First, as this study investigated only academic employees with specific qualifications in public universities, future research could do the same in private universities and compare their findings with those of the public ones. This will help to have a holistic understanding of academics' workplace well-being issues to generate a database which can be used as a benchmark for other workplace well-being studies in Ghana.

Second, future studies should consider using more qualitative research approaches and expand the scope to include all academics as current studies are largely quantitatively focused. This will help to provide a contextual understanding of academic employees' workplace well-being issues to produce rich data on the human experience. This can also be extended to other workplaces in Ghana.

Third, this study has also drawn attention to political interference in public HEIs and its impact on academic employees' well-being. A future study could explore the level of political interference on employees in other workplaces and the impact on individual well-being.

Finally, future studies should explore resources challenges and frequent leadership changes in all public HEIs in Ghana and their impact on academic employees' well-being. In this case, strategies can be put in place to address these challenges in the long term. This is likely to reduce the negative impact on employees' work, health and well-being.

## **7.7 Closing Remarks**

This long and exhausting PhD journey through investigating the views, understandings and experiences of academics employees' workplace well-being in Ghana through their stories has ended. Having worked in Ghana, a developing country, and interacted with health professionals and academics, my sense of what it is like to experience work stressors alongside limited resources was revived. This rejuvenation brought important but unnerving questions to my mind. Insistently, I yearned strongly to find answers and I finally realised that the best way to get answers and discover employees' workplace well-being phenomenon in Ghana was through research. Personally, this journey has been daunting but insightful. One of the important lessons learnt from conducting this study is that the concept of well-being is complex. This is not about the term alone but also about its components and related constructs. Again, I have realised that the concept is more westernised and that applying the western conceptualisation to a developing country like Ghana makes the approach not prudent for understanding workplace well-being.

Therefore, the theoretical paradigm adopted for understanding well-being should progress toward the key contextual phenomenon to encompass specific developing country issues. A commitment by social science researchers in developing countries to highlight key contextual issues in understanding well-being for the attention of the western world is important. Regarding the context

in which employees' well-being is understood or applied in Ghana, this study found that the problem is not solely due to the employers and policies, but also due to cultural beliefs and mindset changes. In western countries, the ideology of safety and wellness has been projected so much that it has become part of people's everyday discussion at work and in their homes. This approach is what is missing in the Ghanaian work context, leading to high stressors because of the non-existence of policies.

As demonstrated in this study, the continuous adaptation of western conceptualisation with its emphasis on eating healthy and attending gyms undermines the fundamental issues of the contexts and socio-cultural beliefs of individuals. What is needed is to create an environment that supports, educates and promotes awareness for the working community in terms of their well-being. Without any hesitation, efforts must be made to introduce workplace well-being policies and programmes – if not to attain a perfect policy, then at least to start and make both employers and employees aware of its benefits to human lives.

The specific recommendations presented above based on this study's context are ideas that, once considered and put into action through willpower, will cause employees' workplace well-being initiatives in Ghana to become a reality and not mere rhetoric. In this way, workplace well-being problems will be reduced and employees in Ghana will be treated properly to attain the workplace decency that is attributed to all human health and wellness. At this point, I end my PhD journey and my stories on investigating academic employees' understanding of workplace well-being in HEIs in Ghana, acknowledging that an imperfect study in an imperfect world cannot attain perfection through an imperfect person (a novice researcher). Therefore, my contribution should be seen as the beginning and not as a perfect end.

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## Appendix 1



### Participants Information Sheet

**Why have you been invited to participate in this research?**

You have been asked to take part in the study as you are either a lecturer or researcher in higher education workplace in Ghana and have worked for more than five years. Also, you have the experience that the study wishes to investigate, so I will like to hear your view and experience.

**Who is doing the research?** My name is Dudley Wisdom Ofori and I am a PhD student at the University of Hull and this study is part of my course.

**What will it involve?** If you agree to take part in the study, you will be interviewed. The interview will cover your experience of work, changes that have occurred at the workplace over time, your understanding of workplace wellbeing, what well-being mean to you at the workplace and your understanding of positive wellbeing at the workplace.

**What if I change my mind during the study?** You can stop taking part in the study at any time without giving a reason. You can do so by contacting me (details below). You also have the right to choose not to answer a specific question, pause or stop the discussion at any time.

**What will happen to the information from the study?** All the information you provide will be kept in the computer and locked with a password. Recordings from the interview will be transcribed and all personal details will be destroyed once the study is complete. The information will be written up, but any names or identifying information will be changed or removed. The final results will appear in a report and papers may be submitted for publication. But no information included in any report or publication will identify you. However, if you decide to withdraw at any stage of the process, your information will be traced during the data analysis stage and removed or destroyed.

**What if I need support or someone to talk to during the interview?** If the interview process brings up issues or concerns that you would like to talk to about, I will be available to offer support or to help access support specific to your issue.

**Can I find out about the results of the study?** If you will like to find out about the results of the study, please contact me and I will discuss them with you.

**What if I have further questions?** You can text, call or email me

Call or text me: +44(0)7884286\*\*\*\*

Email: D.W.OFORI@2015.HULL.AC/UK

## Appendix 2



### Participants Consent Form

The aim of the study: To investigate higher education academic employees views understanding and experience of workplace well-being.

Kindly read the information provided carefully and then sign the form if you agree to take part in this study.

- I understand the purpose of the study and why I have been asked to take part.
- I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during the interview without giving a reason and without cost.
- I agree that to take part in the study and I understand that I will not be identified personally in any of the reports that are written as a result of what I say or write.
- I understand that the interview will be recorded through digital recording device and a mobile phone and these recordings will be destroyed after the project.
- I have the chance to ask questions and I agree to take part in this study.

Participant's Name: .....

Signature:

Date:

Researcher's Name: .....

Signature:

Date:

Name of the researcher: Dudley Wisdom Ofori, a PhD student at the University of Hull.

For further questions about the research please contact me on:

Phone: +44(0)78842865\*\*\*

Email: D.W.OFORI@2015.HULL.AC/UK

## Appendix 3



### Interview Guide

1. Please can you tell me a bit about yourself?

Topics: i.e. work history, qualification, specialism etc.

2. Why did you choose to work at this university?

Topics: i.e. prestige, less work, imparting knowledge, money, etc

3. What does workplace well-being mean to you?

Topics: i.e. work satisfaction, autonomy, happiness, progress, collaboration, work environment,

4. How do you understand the constituents of individual workplace well-being

Topic: i.e. mastery,

5. Can you share your views on the changes that have taking place in this university since the last five years you started working here?

Topics: leadership's changes, political, structural changes, student's intake etc.

6. How do these changes affect your well-being at work?

7. How would you describe your experience working at this university?

Topics: I.e. stress, workload, excitement, supportive leadership, etc.

## Appendix 4



School of Education and Social Sciences,  
University of Hull,  
Cottingham Rd.,  
Hull HU6 7RX

25th May 2017

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to confirm that data collection for the research project, 'Exploring Higher Education Academic Employees Experience of Work: An Interpretive Study in the Ghanaian Higher Education Context', has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Education and Social Sciences for the period of June 2017–September 2018. The project leader is Dudley Ofori.

If you have any questions about the approval for the project, please feel free to contact me using the details below

Yours faithfully,

Dr Iain Brennan AFBPsS  
Director of Research  
School of Education and Social Sciences

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## Appendix 5 Participants background information, length and location of the interview

| <b>The participant's background information, the length and location of the interviews</b> |                        |                         |                    |                            |                              |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Participants</b>  | <b>Discipline</b>      | <b>Years in Service</b> | <b>Ranks</b>       | <b>Length of interview</b> | <b>Location of interview</b> |
| Charles  | Medicine and Dentistry | 7                       | Lecturer           | 1 hour                     | Participants office at night |
| Katrina  | Gender studies         | 8                       | Head of Department | 1 hour 20 minutes          | Under trees                  |
| Jack   | Medicine and Dentistry | 15                      | Head of Department | 1 hour 45 minutes          | Under summer hut             |
| Agnes  | Medicine and Dentistry | 9                       | Head of Department | 1 hour 15 minutes          | Participants home            |
| James  | Chemical Engineering   | 6                       | Lecturer           | 50 minutes                 | Participants office          |
| Cynthia  | Food Science           | 11                      | Head of Department | 45 minutes                 | Participants office          |
| Paul   | Physic                 | 7                       | Lecturer           | 40 minutes                 | Café                         |
| Jane   | Medicine and Dentistry | 8                       | Lecturer           | 55 minutes                 | Participants home            |
| Peter  | Chemical Engineering   | 15                      | Senior Lecturer    | 1 hour 10 minutes          | Participants home            |
| Frank  | Chemical Engineering   | 6                       | Lecturer           | 42 minutes                 | Café                         |
| Stanley  | Biochemistry           | 7                       | Lecturer           | 55 minutes                 | Participants office          |
| Patricks   | Gender Studies         | 9                       | Lecturer           | 45 minute                  | Participants office          |
| Daniel   | Food Science           | 11                      | Senior Lecturer    | 50 minutes                 | Participants home            |
| William  | Medicine and Dentistry | 7                       | Lecturer           | 38 minutes                 | Participants office          |
| Chris  | Law                    | 5                       | Lecturer           | 50 minutes                 | Participants office          |

|         |              |    |          |                   |                     |
|---------|--------------|----|----------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Andy    | Nursing      | 8  | Lecturer | 40 minutes        | Participants office |
| Anthony | Biochemistry | 10 | Lecturer | 30 minutes        | Office Café         |
| Prince  | Physics      | 9  | Lecturer | 1 hour 25 minutes | Participants office |