

The Role of Individual Adaptability and Its Dimensions in Fostering Psychological Well-Being; A Case of Small Enterprise Employees in Uganda

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the role of individual adaptability and its dimensions in fostering psychological well-being of Ugandan small enterprise employees. A cross-sectional survey design using quantitative approach was used in this study. Data were collected from 726 employees of small enterprises in Uganda using a self-administered questionnaire. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists and uploaded into AMOS version 23. Hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling technique. Results confirm that individual adaptability and its dimensions enhance the psychological well-being of small enterprise employees. First, the sample of this study consisted of employees working with small enterprises in Uganda with different demographic characteristics; thus, the generalizability of these findings to other sectors or contexts needs to be established. This study has managerial implications in a way that Managers should have people management skills with a mental health component where they will be able to recognise the signs when an employee becomes less well. Small enterprise managers should also create a work climate that enables employees to be adaptive to changes.

Keywords: Psychological well-being, individual adaptability, small enterprises and Uganda

Introduction

Employee health and well-being are among the global critical factors for organisational success and performance (Bakker et al., 2019). Thinking, feeling and acting positively while working which we refer to as psychological well-being in this context increases productivity and competitive advantage for enterprises (Dennerlein et al., 2020). Small enterprises contribute towards the growth of national economies in terms of employment generation, growth of GDP and regional development which makes it vital to understand the nature of the working environment in such small enterprises (Mazzarol et al., 2021). Small enterprises are emotionally infectious and are characterized by long working hours, heavy job demands, work–life conflicts, stigma, frequent social interactions between employees with managers, fellow employees and customers which all influence how employees think, feel and act (Biggs et al., 2016; Peterson, 2010). This makes the study in a small enterprise context a significant concept to be explored and understood.

Work related psychological health issues in small enterprises especially stress, anxiety and depression have continuously become critical issues of concern to workplace well-being that has affected productivity of economies especially developing countries and Uganda is not exceptional. It is globally estimated that 3–4% of a nation's gross national product is spent on problems related to psychological health challenges within the work place especially stress, anxiety and depression. While global stress costs stand at \$1 trillion annually, it is projected to be \$ 60 trillion by 2030 in

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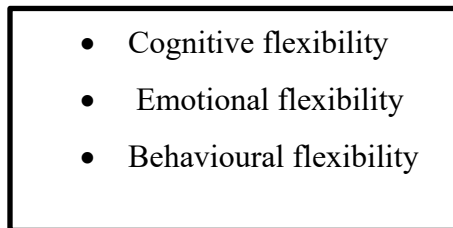
reduced productivity (WHO, 2019). Therefore, there has always been a call by the world health organisation to pay attention to psychological health concerns in the workplace.

In Uganda, specifically, despite the numerous efforts by governments and enterprises to help employees at the workplaces cope with stress, anxiety and depression such as health risk assessment, counselling, trainings, occupational health and safety programs, physical activity, nutrition programmes and financial literacy classes (Amir & Kihoro, 2014), the psychological well-being of small enterprise employees has become increasingly worrisome. It is estimated that 10-30% of Ugandan workers develop psychological health problems due to stressful working environments (Kasoma, 2023). Addressing this problem is not only essential to the affected individual employees but also to the overall productivity and growth of economies. Furthermore, majority of the previous studies on well-being have been conducted in large firms without sufficient evidence that psychological well-being factors in large firms reflect those of small enterprises (Cocker et al., 2013). Additionally, studies have revealed that the psychological well-being of small enterprise employees is generally worse compared to those in big businesses (Luo et al., 2012). Accordingly, scholars are recommending research on psychological well-being to be done among small enterprise employees (Maziriri et al., 2019).

Literature from the field of small business economies and cognitive psychology reveals high levels of psychological challenges among small enterprise employees which makes them more predisposed to job strain compared to employees of large firms (Saraf et al., 2019). This therefore calls for the need for further investigations into the psychological well-being phenomenon within small enterprise employees since they are considered to be a critical resource in organizational performance. In Uganda specifically, there is scanty literature addressing the psychological well-being of employees in small enterprises. Save for the research conducted by Kawalya et al. (2019) on happiness at the workplace, studies related to PWB have been conducted in non-working contexts for example among refugees (Balyejjusa, 2019), adolescents (Evarist, 2018), women in Acholi region (Horn, 2014), mothers (Singla et al., 2015), elderly care givers (Ssenigozi, 2009) and AIDS orphans (Atwine, 2016). The experiences of such people may be different from those in a working context. More so, the research by Kawalya et al. (2019) was done among professional nurses in public hospitals whose working conditions may be different from employees working with small enterprises who are the main focus of this study. Accordingly, there is scanty research on psychological well-being in the context of small enterprises in Uganda.

Thus, addressing these gaps, the study has four-fold objectives; First, to examine the path between individual adaptability and psychological well-being. Second, to examine the path between cognitive flexibility and psychological well-being. Third, to test the path between emotional flexibility and psychological well-being and finally to examine the path between behavioral flexibility and psychological well-being. The present study therefore brings together individual adaptability and psychological wellbeing literature and contributes to this line of inquiry by investigating the direct crossover from individual adaptability to psychological wellbeing. We therefore hypothesise that individual adaptability directly influences psychological well-being (H1), cognitive flexibility directly influences psychological well-being (H2), emotional flexibility directly influences psychological well-being (H3) and that behavioral flexibility directly influences psychological wellbeing (H4). The proposed research model is depicted in figure 1 below:

Individual Adaptability



Psychological well-being

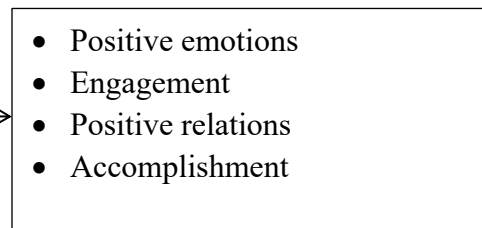


Figure 1: Research model

Source; literature review from the complex adaptive systems theory (McMillan, 2008; Seligman 2011; Martin et al., 2012).

Literature Review

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

Complex Adaptive Systems Theory (McMillan, 2008; Goldstein, 2010)

The complex adaptive systems theory assumes diverse components called agents that are interdependent, interacting with each other at multiple levels, self-organising, act as a unified whole, have the ability to learn from experience and to adapt to change in the environment (McMillan, 2008; Goldstein, 2010). The modern working environment is complex characterized by change, uncertainty, stress, non-linearity of events among others and therefore, individual adaptability is essential for adjusting to changes (La Greca et al., 2013; Salloum & Overstreet, 2012). To this effect, the complex adaptive systems theory is deemed relevant in this study.

Psychological Wellbeing

Psychological wellbeing is conceptualised as the employees' ability to think, feel and act positively while working (Farrington, 2017; Kinderen et al., 2020). Psychological wellbeing (PWB) involves cognitive aspects such as how well an employee thinks, reasons, remembers or learns, emotional aspects such as how well an employee feels, interprets and responds to positive or negative emotions and social aspects such as how well an employee relates with others (Amin & Akbar, 2013; Baldschun, 2014; Czerw, 2019; Fredrickson, 2018). It is operationalized in terms of positive emotions, engagement, meaning, positive relations and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011).

Individual Adaptability

As earlier noted, individual adaptability in the context of this study is conceptualised in terms of employees' ability to adjust thoughts, emotions and behaviors (Martin et al., 2012). It was operationalized in terms of cognitive, emotional and behavioural flexibility as discussed below.

Cognitive Flexibility in the context of this study is defined as the tendency to perceive difficult work situations as controllable and the ability to generate multiple alternative solutions to difficult work situations (Dennis & Vander Wal, 2011). Cognitive flexibility is regarded as an important mental ability that facilitates the learning of cognitive restructuring as a skill to increase adaptive functioning and the ability to adjust to changes (Johnco, 2014).

Emotional Flexibility in the context of this study refers to the ability to regulate both positive and negative emotions accordingly (Bonanno et al., 2004, Bonanno & Burton, 2013). It also involves

sensitivity to situational demands and the ability to regulate emotions accordingly (Bonanno & Burton, 2013).

Behavioral Flexibility in the context of this study means the employees' ability to adjust their behavior in order to cope with a given working situation (Gibbons & Rupp, 2009). It also means the ability to react to different demanding, dynamic, and competitive working conditions in order to bring about a change in an employee's regular behavior (Jaiswal, 2018). Relatedly, Lepine et al. (2000) and Pulakos et al. (2000) noted that it concerns the capacity of people to adapt to changing situations, or to exhibit appropriate behavioral repertoires under different situations.

Individual Adaptability and Psychological Wellbeing of Employees

Individual adaptability in the context of this study as earlier noted is defined in terms of one's ability to adjust thoughts, emotions and behaviors in situations of change and uncertainty (Martin et al., 2012). While psychological wellbeing is defined as the employees' ability to think, feel and act positively while working (Farrington, 2017; Kinderen et al., 2020; Wong & Bowers, 2018). Literature has revealed an association between individual adaptability and psychological well-being. For example, longitudinal studies by Martin et al. (2013) have indicated that individual adaptability is predictive of psychological well-being among adolescents. Moreover, Holliman et al. (2021) found out that individual adaptability contributes to a range of psychological well-being outcomes, including life satisfaction, flourishing and affect which helps employees to adjust to new and uncertain environments (Mackey et al., 2013). The above literature indicates that there is a link between individual adaptability and psychological well-being which leads us to hypothesise that:

H₁. There is a positive relationship between individual adaptability and psychological well-being.

Cognitive Flexibility and Psychological Wellbeing

Afrashteh and Hasani (2022) found a positive and significant relationship between cognitive flexibility and psychological well-being. It is also known that cognitive flexibility influences how a person interprets and responds to different situations thereby enabling individuals to embrace and acquire new knowledge and to have feelings of improvement in self-knowledge (Ayub & Iqbal, 2012). As a result, exercising flexible thinking enables employees to make appropriate changes to their behavior in order to achieve work goals. During challenging work situations, cognitive flexibility enables employee to perceive difficult work situations as controllable, perceive multiple alternative explanations to the problem and generate multiple alternative solutions to overcome work challenges. Cognitive flexibility also allows an individual to reframe their current understanding of a problem (as a controllable stressor) and reconsider behaviors that would help them mitigate a challenging context (Bonanno & Burton 2013). This means that changing how one thinks about a challenging work situation has a powerful influence on how employees respond to the situation. For instance, assessing the problem as nonthreatening and psychologically distancing oneself from the stressor may reduce fear or anxiety about a problem which eventually contributes to psychological well-being (Folkman et al., 1986). This is why we hypothesise that:

H₂; There is a positive relationship between cognitive flexibility and psychological wellbeing.

Emotional Flexibility and Psychological Wellbeing

Employees usually experience various emotions in the process of executing their duties and their ability to think, feel and act positively depends on their ability to regulate these emotions (Galatzer-levy, Burton, & Bonanno, 2012). Therefore, individuals need to increase their self-capability in facing more challenging situations and emotions (Makhbul & Rawshdeh, 2021). Literature indicates that people who have the ability to adjust their emotions (emotional flexibility) are able to choose coping strategies such as emotion focused coping which help in down regulating their negative emotions while maintaining their positive emotions (Ruiz et al., 2021). It is also noted that emotional adaptability equips employees with the needed skills and abilities to effectively cope with work tension, work hassles, exhaustion, frustration, fatigue and social interaction within their workplace (Extremera et al., 2018). Furthermore, scholars have found out that individuals with better emotion regulation skills experience less distress and fewer symptoms of depression hence contributing to psychological wellbeing (Bonanno, et al., 2004; Coifman, 2008; Coifman & Bonanno, 2010). This is why we hypothesise that:

H₃; There is a positive relationship between emotional flexibility and psychological wellbeing.

Behavioural Flexibility and Psychological Wellbeing

Change in behavior is not only for adjusting to the culture of the organization but also to a given situation related to behaviour adjustment (Olema, 2020). This requires employees to adjust their behavior to suit the new working conditions. Literature also documents that employees within work organizations face considerable environmental pressures requiring adaptive change. Although the environment may not have changed, a more adaptive person will recognize this and change his or her behavior to change the situation in the intended manner (Ployhart & Bliese 2006). This equates to behavioral flexibility. This is why we hypothesise that:

H₄; There is a positive relationship between behavioural flexibility and psychological well-being

Small Enterprises

The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives, Uganda views a small enterprise as a firm employing between 5-49 employees with total assets ranging between 10 m and less than 100 m. In most economies, small enterprises are the largest contributors to economic activity (Struwig & Lillah, 2017), economic growth and employment (Desiree & Kengne, 2016; Mafundu & Mafini, 2019; Oyelana & Adu, 2015). The current study focuses on small enterprises due to their contribution to the growth of Uganda's economy. Specifically, they contribute towards the growth of national economies in terms of employment generation, growth of GDP and regional development which makes it vital to understand the nature of the working environment in such small enterprises (Mazzarol et al., 2021). Given the above contribution of small enterprises to the economy, it is imperative that the psychological well-being of employees in these enterprises be studied, because they are considered to be a critical strategic resource (Roemer & Harris, 2018).

In relation to psychological wellbeing, small enterprises are emotionally infectious and are characterized by long working hours, heavy job demands, work –life conflicts, stigma, frequent social interactions between employees with managers, fellow employees and customers which all influence how employees think, feel and act (Biggs et al., 2016; Peterson, 2010). Furthermore, studies have shown that the psychological wellbeing of small enterprise employees is generally

worse than of those in big businesses (Luo et al., 2012). Therefore, scholars are recommending research on psychological well-being to be done among small enterprise employees (Maziriri, et al., 2019).

Methodology

Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design using quantitative approach was used in this study (Hair et al., 2014). Data were collected from 726 employees of small enterprises in Uganda using a self-administered questionnaire. It was correlational in nature in order to test the hypotheses by examining the relationship between variables

Population and Sampling Procedures

A study population consists of people who are members of the target of the study (Akuezilo, 1993). The population of study were employees of small enterprises in Uganda. This study considered 16,560 small enterprises based in Kampala (UBOS-COBE Report, 2018/2019). Applying the Yamane (1973) formula, our sample size was 391. We then applied proportionate sampling by dividing the number of small enterprises in each division by the total number of small enterprises and multiplying it by the sample size of 391 to get the number of small enterprises to be selected for each division. To determine which enterprise should be included in the sample, we then used systematic random sampling. The total number of enterprises selected was 391 and we conveniently selected 2 employees per enterprise to give us a total of 782 respondents. The researchers used a convenience sampling method because is a cost-effective and quick way to contact potential participants (Dillman *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, it is commonly used in well-being studies (Brown *et al.*, 2022; Sood & Kour, 2023).

Control for Common Methods Bias

In this study, we controlled for common methods bias using procedural remedies as recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003) to minimize the measurement errors. First, the questionnaire items from previous scholars were adapted to suit the current study context. We used diverse response scale categories that included; the confirming scale, frequency scale, numbers scale and truth scale. Items from the different constructs were mixed up across the various response scale categories based on their verbal anchors. In addition, we used codes to represent variable titles and their respective measures to encourage objectivity. In other words, the names of the variables and dimensions did not appear in the questionnaire.

Measures

Individual adaptability was measured using items adapted from the I-ADAPT scale by Ployhart and Bliese (2006) and the Adaptive performance scale by Marlow et al. (2015) using dimensions of cognitive flexibility, emotional flexibility and behavioural flexibility. The sample items were “I consider multiple options regarding my work before making a decision, “I am flexible enough to adjust to dynamic workplace requirements.

Psychological well-being was assessed in terms of positive emotions, engagement, positive relations and accomplishment with items adopted from the workplace PERMA profiler by Kern (2014) and Ryff’s psychological wellbeing scale (Ryff 1989). A sample item for positive emotions was “I feel contented with the work that I do

Factor Analysis, Reliability and Validity

Before factor analysis, the data was tested for sampling adequacy to confirm that it is suitable to give distinct and reliable EFA results. We used the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO). To confirm whether there is correlation between items, Bartlett test was used. For EFA to be performed effectively, KMO values should be above 0.7 (Kaiser, 1974). The Bartlett test values should be below 0.05 (Field, 2009). Table 1 shows the KMO and Bartlett’s test results for the variables under study.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett’s Tests –All Variables

Variable	KMO	Bartlett		
		X2	Df	Sig.
Psychological well-being	.881	12290.605	78	.000
Cognitive flexibility	.926	13578.085	91	.000
Emotional flexibility	.818	5212.135	15	.000
Behavioural flexibility	.836	9274.737	45	.000

Source: Primary data

From the table above, it is evident that all the variables have KMO values above 0.7 and the Bartlett’s tests are significant at .000 which is below the recommended 0.05. This means that the sample was adequate and data was suitable for factor analysis. To test for reliability, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was used to determine the internal consistency of the research instrument when used repeatedly under the same conditions. For all study variables in this study, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was determined and considered sufficient as follows: cognitive flexibility $\alpha = 0.887$, emotional flexibility $\alpha = 0.741$, behavior flexibility $\alpha = 0.863$, and psychological well-being $\alpha = 0.954$. Based on these results, the research instrument was considered reliable (Field, 2009).

For validity, we focused on content and construct validity. For content validity, the questionnaire was given to a panel of experts, and their responses were carefully incorporated. Construct validity was examined by carrying out convergent and discriminant validity (Blumberg et al., 2014). To ascertain convergent validity, we used communalities through principal component analysis to extract those items that highly converged to form all the variables under study. Items with factor loadings of 0.5 and above were considered appropriate (Field, 2009) (Tables 2 and 3). For discriminant validity (Tables 8 and 9), we used the rotated component matrix through principal component analysis as the extraction method and varimax with Kaiser normalization as the rotation method to identify the principal components. Factors with loadings of 0.5 and above and eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were retained (Field, 2009).

Table 2: Rotated component matrix for individual adaptability

Component	1	2	3	Communalities
bf4	.938			0.926
bf5	.936			0.936
bf3	.897			0.891
bf6	.886			0.863
bf2	.855			0.798

cf7		.945		0.946
cf5		.942		0.945
cf6		.931		0.927
ef7			.946	0.936
ef6			.931	0.941
Eigen Values	5.747	1.937	1.424	
% of Variance	57.470	19.369	14.236	
Total variance %	57.470	76.839	91.075	

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) = 0.836; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Approx. Chi-Square = 9274.737; df = 45; Sig = 0.000)

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

From the table above, the three factors for individual adaptability (cognitive flexibility, emotional flexibility and behavioral flexibility) were retained as they were considered distinct and loaded separately. The factors have eigenvalues 5.747, 1.937 and 1.424 respectively and the total variance explained is 91 % which was above the threshold of 50% as per the recommendations of Field (2009) and Hair et al. (2014). This implies that there's discriminant validity among the factors of individual adaptability.

Table 3: Rotated Component Matrix for psychological well-being

	1	2	3	4	Communalities
ac6	0.896				0.958
ac7	0.890				0.956
ac5	0.876				0.934
ac8	0.843				0.919
pr7		0.905			0.946
pr6		0.885			0.903
pr8		0.873			0.933
eng2			0.943		0.933
eng1			0.889		0.86
eng4			0.882		0.821
pe1				0.854	0.904
pe2				0.844	0.891
pe3				0.840	0.908
Eigen values	7.407	2.147	1.207	1.105	
% of Variance	56.980	16.517	9.281	8.502	
Total variance %	56.980	73.497	82.778	91.280	

KMO = 0.881; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, pprox. Chi-Square=12290.605; df=78, sig. 0.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Based on the table above, the four factors for psychological wellbeing (accomplishment, positive relations, engagement and positive emotions) were retained as they were considered distinct and loaded separately. The factors have eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and the total variance explained is greater than 50% as per the recommendations of Field (2009) and Hair et al. (2014). This implies that there's discriminant validity among the factors of psychological well-being.

Data Analysis and Results

To analyse our data, we used SPSS software to test the direct effect of individual adaptability and its dimensions on psychological well-being.

Results

Respondents' Demography

Results from table 1 indicate that out of the 726 respondents, majority of the respondents, 63.8 % were females while 36.2 % were males. Majority of the respondents were aged between 28-37 (45.0%). Most of the respondents were holding a diploma (35.8 %). Majority of them had spent 5-9 years working for the enterprise (52.9%) while majority of the respondents came from service enterprises (52%). Most of them did not hold any managerial position (63.6 %) refer to Table 4.

Table 4. Respondents' characteristics

Gender of respondents		
Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	263	36.2
Female	463	63.8
Total	726	100.0
Age of respondents		
age	Frequency	Percent
18 - 27 years	170	23.4
28 - 37 years	327	45.0
38 - 57 years	178	24.5
58- 67 years	44	6.1
68 and above years	7	1.0
Total	726	100.0
Education level		
Education Level	Frequency	Percent
primary	2	0.3
O level	21	2.9
A level	63	8.7
Certificate	115	15.8
Diploma	211	35.8
Bachelors'	260	29.1
Masters	54	7.4
Total	726	100.0

Employee tenure.

Years spent while working for this enterprise	Frequency	Percent
5-9 years	408	56.2
10-15 years	178	24.5
16-20 years	44	6.1
21-25 years	68	9.4
26-30 years	12	1.7
above 30 years	16	2.2
Total	726	100.0

Position held by the employee

Position held	Frequency	Percent
Non-managerial	462	63.6
Managerial	264	36.4
Total	726	100.0

Type of enterprise

Type of enterprise	Frequency	Percent
Trade	191	26.3
Manufacturing	213	29.3
Service	321	44.2
other	1	0.1
Total	726	100.0

Source: Primary data

Correlation Results

Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was used to determine the association between the study variables as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Correlation analysis between variables

VARIABLES	1	2	3	4	5
EMOFLEX (1)	1				
COGFLEX (2)	-0.042	1			
BEHFLEX (3)	.180**	.150**	1		
INDADAPT (4)	.595**	.748**	.439**	1	
PSYWELB (5)	.088**	.197**	.424**	.292**	1

N= 726, **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 5 reveals that emotional flexibility is positively correlated with psychological well-being ($r = .088$) hence supporting hypothesis 1. This means that positive changes in emotional flexibility is associated with positive changes in psychological well-being. The association between cognitive flexibility and psychological wellbeing was also positive and significant ($r = .197$, $P \leq 0.01$) hence supporting hypothesis 2. This means that an increase in cognitive flexibility is associated with

positive changes in psychological wellbeing. In addition, the association between behavioral flexibility and psychological well-being was positive and significant ($r = .424, P \leq 0.01$) hence supporting hypothesis 3. This means that an increase in behavioural flexibility leads to an increase in psychological well-being. Lastly, the association between individual adaptability and psychological wellbeing was positive and significant ($r = .292, P \leq 0.01$) hence supporting hypothesis 4. This means that an increase in individual adaptability is associated with an increase in psychological wellbeing.

Discussion

Results regarding HI reveal that there is a positive and significant association between individual adaptability and psychological well-being. These results imply that the higher the individual adaptability, the greater the chances of being psychologically well. This finding also implies that small enterprise employees who easily adjust their thinking, emotions and behaviour will always think, feel and act positively while working. The results concur with those by Ruiz et al. (2021), who found out that when employees put in considerable effort to adapt to different situations by making continuous adjustments and changes in their physical, emotional and cognitive states, they maintain their positive emotions while creating positive relations at their workplace. These findings render support to the complex adaptive systems theory, which assumes diverse agents with adaptive capacity to change in the environment (McMillan, 2008; Goldstein et al., 2010). Such findings suggest that employees are adaptive systems with the ability to change by making continuous adjustments in their relational boundaries to succeed at their work

Regarding hypothesis 2, results indicate a positive and significant relationship between cognitive flexibility and psychological well-being. This finding implies that exercising flexible thinking enables employees to make the appropriate changes to their behavior to achieve work goals. This finding also implies that employees who think flexibly perceive multiple alternative explanations to work challenges and are able to generate multiple alternative solutions to their work challenges which later influences them to think and act positively. This finding resonates with that of Wang et al. (2021) who noted that Entrepreneurs with cognitive flexibility realise that there are options and choices available in any given situation and are willing to act positively. Relatedly Moradzadeh and Pirkhaefi (2018) noted that individuals with cognitive flexibility are able to store and organize information in different ways, which translates into positive cognitions. This implies that cognitive flexibility enables small enterprise employees to restructure knowledge and be more effective in responding positively. These findings concur with those of Afrashteh and Hasani (2022) found a positive and significant relationship between cognitive flexibility and psychological well-being. To obtain such findings, this study focused on adolescents, elementary, first and second high school students in Zanjan, Iran. However, the current study was carried out among small enterprise employees in Uganda, a developing country. By so doing, the present study contributes to the existing literature by stating that cognitive flexibility enhances psychological well-being among small enterprise employees of Uganda.

This study results render support to the complex adaptive systems theory which assumes that humans are agents that have the ability to learn from experience and adapt to change in the environment. Indeed, employees are adaptive agents that need to think flexibly and adjust their thinking to suit the changing nature of their jobs such that the desired work goals are achieved. In this case, given the changing nature of jobs, employees of small enterprises should be prepared to

exercise flexible thinking during change and make the necessary adjustments in their work tasks by acting accordingly if they want to realize their work goals.

Furthermore, results regarding H3 revealed a positive and significant relationship between emotional flexibility and psychological well-being. These results imply that given the nature of frequent social interactions common with small enterprises, the employees are likely to face either positive or negative emotions when interacting with their co-workers, customers and managers which necessitates them to regulate these feelings accordingly in order to effectively accomplish their daily tasks. These findings also suggest that small enterprise employees with the ability to adjust their emotions are likely to associate well with fellow employees at work. This finding is supported by Klein et al. (2023) who noted that fully being in control of one's emotions, even when they involve negative reactions, can enhance psychological well-being. To obtain such findings, this study employed the psychological flexibility theory. However, the current study employed the complex adaptive systems theory. By so doing, the present study contributes to the existing literature by stating that emotional flexibility enhances psychological well-being for small enterprise employees of Uganda.

This study results provide support to the complex adaptive systems theory (McMillan, 2008; Goldstein 2010) which assumes that humans are agents that have the ability to adapt to change in the environment. Indeed, employees are adaptive agents that need to make the necessary work adjustments to suit the changing nature of their jobs such that the desired work goals are achieved. In this case, given the complex nature of social interaction among employees while working, there is a possibility of eliciting both positive and negative emotion therefore; employees of small enterprises should adjust their feelings in order to remain positive.

Lastly, this study established a positive and significant relationship between behavioral flexibility and psychological well-being. These findings suggest that small enterprise employees with the ability to adjust their behaviors in accordance with a given situation create positive relationships with others. These findings are supported by Olema (2020) who found out that Change in behavior is not only for adjusting to the culture of the organization but also to a given situation related to behaviour adjustment in order to achieve work goals

Conclusion

This paper examines the role of individual adaptability and its individual dimensions in fostering psychological well-being among small enterprise employees in Uganda. The findings reveal that individual adaptability and all its three individual dimensions (cognitive flexibility, emotional flexibility and behavioral flexibility) play a significant role in fostering psychological well-being. Thus, these findings increase the amount of empirical evidence on individual adaptability and psychological well-being, specifically from the setting of small enterprise employees in Uganda. These findings further confirm the many findings of previous studies, particularly in the field of industrial and organizational psychology. Subsequently, the study draws the following conclusion; Individual adaptability in form of adjusting emotions, thinking and behaviour to suit a given changing work situation is vital for psychological well-being.

Practical Implications

In practice, employees may benchmark on these findings by focusing on individual adaptability to nurture their psychological well-being. Specifically, employees of small enterprises should adjust their thinking, emotions and behavior to meet the changing needs of their work in order to achieve personal and enterprise goals. This is further supported by Ruiz et al. (2021), who noted that when employees put in considerable effort to adapt to different situations by making continuous adjustments and changes in their physical, emotional and cognitive states, they maintain their positive emotions while creating positive relations at their workplace.

Managerial Implications

Managers should empower their employees to develop and strengthen their personal resources such as individual adaptability through training. This is supported by Luthans and Youssef-Morgan (2017) and Maziriri et al. (2019) who noted that supporting employees to develop personal resources through training can be important for promoting PWB. Small enterprise owners and managers should also create a climate that fosters individual adaptability among employees to enhance their PWB. This is amplified by Choi and Lee (2014), who noted that organizational leaders should play a significant role in developing a positive organizational climate that fosters well-being. Small enterprise owners and managers should also prioritize the PWB of employees due to its long-term positive implications for physical and psychological health, which in turn leads to organizational effectiveness (Danna & Griffin, 1999).

Theoretical Implications

The current study provides a strong theoretical foundation by applying the CAST theory to confirm the role of individual adaptability in nurturing PWB of employees working with small enterprises. Secondly, the independent contribution of the different dimensions of individual adaptability to psychological well-being has not been closely examined in the context of a small enterprise. Specifically, in Uganda, this research did not find such a study. This was the greatest contribution of this study to literature.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The limitations of this study are discussed alongside the areas for further research. First, the sample of this study consisted of employees working with small enterprises in Uganda with different demographic characteristics where the model was tested. Thus, the generalizability of these findings to other sectors or contexts needs such as large enterprises in rural areas needs to be established. Secondly, the study used individual adaptability and its dimensions to predict psychological well-being, future studies can use different variables such as emotional intelligence to predict psychological well-being of small enterprise employees. Finally, the study was quantitative in nature. Perhaps, future studies could explore mixed methods to supplement and verify the results. Regardless of these limitations, the findings are applicable to related studies.

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