

12-31-2024

Fostering Sport Employees' Passion and Enhancing Organizational Success in Intercultural Sporting Events

Young Do Kim

Elon University, ykim4@elon.edu

Chanwook Do

Texas A&M University - College Station, chanwook.do@tamu.edu

Paul Yuseung Doh

pdoh1209@tamu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jasm>Part of the [Business Commons](#), [Education Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kim, Young Do; Do, Chanwook; and Doh, Paul Yuseung (2024) "Fostering Sport Employees' Passion and Enhancing Organizational Success in Intercultural Sporting Events," *Journal of Applied Sport Management*: Vol. 16 : Iss. 4.

<https://doi.org/10.7290/jasm16orze>

Available at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jasm/vol16/iss4/5>

This article is brought to you freely and openly by Volunteer, Open-access, Library-hosted Journals (VOL Journals), published in partnership with The University of Tennessee (UT) University Libraries. This article has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Applied Sport Management* by an authorized editor. For more information, please visit <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jasm>.

Fostering Sport Employees' Passion and Enhancing Organizational Success in Intercultural Sporting Events

Young Do Kim

Elon University

Chanwook Do

Texas A&M University

Paul Yuseung Doh

Texas A&M University

Please send correspondence to Chanwook Do, chanwook.do@tamu.edu.

Abstract

This study emphasizes the role of sport employees' passion in intercultural sporting events, specifically within professional sport leagues in the United States. The proposed framework identifies key factors that shape employee passion and explore its impact on organizational success, highlighting how fostering passion enhances innovative work behavior, intercultural communication effectiveness, task performance, and psychological well-being. Additionally, this research highlights the importance of cultural intelligence and meaningful work within the conceptual framework. The study offers strategies for sports organizations to cultivate passion, thereby strengthening employees' work behavior in intercultural sporting contexts.

Keywords: sport employees' passion, intercultural sporting events, cultural intelligence, psychological well-being, meaningful work

Professional sport leagues in the United States have made sustained efforts to expand and grow their fan bases on a global scale. As part of these efforts, more international games have been added to the leagues' pre- and regular season schedules and played in countries worldwide. Over the past three decades, Major League Baseball (MLB, n.d.) has hosted more than 200 international games across 11 different countries. In the 2024 season, the National Football League (NFL, n.d.) organized five international games taking place in diverse cities across the world. These organizations will continue to expand their international markets and increase the number of international games in future seasons (Patra, 2024).

Another proactive intercultural sporting event is the celebration of cultural heritage through theme nights. These international-themed events are designed to embrace diverse cultural traditions and make fans from various ethnic backgrounds feel valued and respected. For example, the Los Angeles Lakers have been hosting Noche Latina (Latin Night) to celebrate Latin American and Hispanic cultures among their fans and players (McMenamin, 2010). The primary objective of the aforementioned global engagement efforts (i.e., intercultural sporting events) is to diversify international fan bases, thereby increasing brand visibility and generating new revenue streams through media rights and sponsorship opportunities (Schwarz, 2017).

The ongoing globalization, digitalization, and commercialization of the sport market are reshaping professional sport organizations (Wohlfart et al., 2020). Sport managers aiming to thrive in targeted international markets need to possess cultural intelligence (Holcomb, 2023). Cross-cultural skills are essential for sport employees to organize impactful intercultural sporting events and cultivate a global fanbase and business partnerships (Johnson et al., 2019). In this context, employees' passion, driven by an individual's intrinsic interest and sense of obligation (Vallerand & Houlfort, 2003), functions as a key driver of both personal and organizational performance. For sport organizations, enhancing employees' passion, "leading to greater creativity and effectiveness, and to higher performance under challenging situations" (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2016, p. 386), results in sport managers experiencing a sense of meaningfulness in their work (Baer et al., 2024).

Although several studies have examined employees' passion in relation to job involvement (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2016) and its influence on job satisfaction and engagement (Schuetz et al., 2022) within the general sport workplace, research on employees' passion within the context of intercultural sporting events remains absent from the existing literature. To address the research gap, this study proposes a conceptual framework exploring the following research questions:

1. What are the key antecedents, mediators, moderators, and outcomes of sport employees' passion within the context of intercultural sporting events?
2. How does sport employees' passion contribute to both personal and organizational performance?

Hence, the purpose of this article is to examine the impact of sport employees' passion within the context of intercultural sporting events. Specifically, the proposed framework identifies the antecedents and outcomes of sport employees' passion and the mediating and moderating effects of unique factors explaining the relationships between sport employees' passion and its outcomes.

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

Sport Employees' Passion

Passion refers to a strong inclination toward an activity that individuals enjoy, view as important, and consistently invest their time and energy in (Vallerand, 2012). To better understand this driving force, self-determination theory further explains that a person's psychological growth is driven by satisfying three essential needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Based on this feature, the dualistic model of passion was developed, consisting of harmonious passion and obsessive passion, to more effectively comprehend how passion serves as a key energy source for achieving personal goals (Vallerand et al., 2003). Harmonious passion stems from intrinsic interest, whereas obsessive passion arises from a sense of obligation driven by external pressures or expected outcomes (Vallerand & Houlfort, 2003). Given this consideration, passion has been explored in research across various life domains, including work, education, and sport (Curran et al., 2015).

Especially in sport workplaces, numerous scholars have explored the role of employees' passion in helping them experience a positive work–life balance (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2016) and in shaping their workplace attitudes and behaviors. However, there is limited understanding of their passion for the process of carrying out specific projects. Professional sport organizations conduct a variety of intercultural sporting events during the pre- and regular season schedules. To successfully implement these events, sport employees need a passion for understanding multicultural settings and for designing effective approaches to executing the events. For employees to have this passion, it is imperative for organizations to consistently support their actions (Sindhura, 2022).

Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support can be defined as the degree to which employees perceive that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Because organizational support can encourage employees to develop interests and focus on their work, organizations consider various ways of supporting employees both internally and externally to foster their motivations (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Gagné & Deci, 2005). However, employees' passion for their work goes beyond their internal motivation; they perceive meaningful work and part of their identity as a passion (Vallerand, 2012). To better understand the features of employees' passion, it is also necessary to explore the role of organizational support that fosters their passion at the workplace.

In sport management, perceived organizational support is an essential resource for sport employees to achieve organizational goals and personal well-being (Spoor & Hoye, 2014). Additionally, it fosters a positive orientation toward the organization (e.g., motivation; Livingston & Forbes, 2016) and influences behavioral outcomes (e.g., citizenship behavior; S. Kim et al., 2022). However, limited research exists on sport employees' personal reasons for their work orientation. To successfully organize intercultural sporting events, organizations need to support their employees by providing opportunities to understand multicultural settings and showing care for their opinions. Thus, sport employees are likely to enhance their passion for the work when they perceive their organizational support.

P1: Perceived organizational support will positively influence sport employees' passion.

Task Performance and Psychological Well-Being

Task performance refers to the proficiency and effectiveness with which individuals execute the core technical tasks central to their job (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Because task performance is closely linked to employees' work abilities—such as work quantity, quality, job skills, and knowledge—organizations need to provide a conducive work environment for their employees. To enhance task performance, sport organizations have emphasized sharing their vision, fostering work engagement, and promoting employees' positive emotions and job satisfaction. Despite these contributions, there remains a limited understanding of how organizational efforts translate into sport employees' resources that enhance their work abilities. Regarding employees' attitudes toward their work and their performance at the workplace, several scholars have discovered positive correlations (Vallerand et al., 2007). When employees have an energetic inclination for their work, they are likely to enhance their task performance. Therefore, the enthusiasm of sport employees will have a positive effect on how well they perform their tasks.

P2(a): Sport employees' passion will positively influence their task performance.

Psychological well-being refers to the overall effectiveness of individuals' psychological functioning, including how well they cope with life's demands and maintain emotional balance (Ryff, 1995). Employees' psychological well-being is positively associated with both mental and emotional health (Huppert, 2009) and improved organizational performance (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). Consequently, numerous scholars explored ways to foster employees' psychological well-being in the sport context (e.g., M. Kim et al., 2019). Although existing studies have emphasized the role of intrinsic factors (e.g., psychological capital) in fostering psychological well-being, few studies have examined the relationship between sport employees' passion and their well-being. When employees are deeply passionate about their work, this passion can act as a protective factor against stress, promoting resilience and emotional stability in the face of workplace challenges (Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2019). When sport employees perceive a strong passion for organizing intercultural sporting events, they are likely to experience greater enjoyment in both their work and life.

P2(b): Sport employees' passion will positively influence their psychological well-being.

Innovative Work Behavior and Intercultural Communication Effectiveness

Innovative work behavior refers to employees' behavior to create, introduce, and apply new ideas at work contributing to group or organizational performance (Janssen, 2000). Because innovative work behavior drives the survival and success of organizations, it has received attention for enabling companies to stay ahead in rapidly changing markets (AlEsa & Durugbo, 2022). Given this consideration, scholars in sport management have explored the role of innovative work behavior as a critical driver for finding novel solutions for organizations (Hill et al., 2024; Svensson et al., 2021). Furthermore, engaging in innovative work behavior encourages employees to perceive higher levels of autonomy and environmental mastery, which are central to psychological well-being (Ryff, 1995). To generate sport employees' innovative work behavior, numerous studies examined job engagement (Hill et al., 2024), shared leadership (Svensson et al., 2019), and organizational culture (Eskiler et al., 2016). Thus, employees who exhibit innovative work behavior when implementing intercultural sporting events, acting as a mediator between passion and task

performance, are more likely to see tangible improvements in their work outcomes, along with an increase in their overall psychological well-being through the mastery of new skills.

P3(a)–(b): Sport employees' innovative work behavior mediates the relationship (a) between their passion and task performance and (b) between their passion and psychological well-being.

Intercultural communication effectiveness is associated with an individual's ability to communicate with others from different cultural backgrounds (Ruben & Kealey, 1979). Given that such an ability facilitates knowledge and information sharing, organizations consider intercultural communication effectiveness essential for thriving in a diverse and globalized business environment (Griffith et al., 2001; Mei et al., 2004). This is particularly relevant in the sport industry, where organizations strive to connect with and understand diverse fan groups to expand their fan base (Wang, 2021). In intercultural sporting events, sport employees are tasked with conveying the unique atmosphere of the destination or themed country to their fans. To ensure successful event execution, it is critical for these employees to possess the enthusiasm needed to interact with local fans and communicate effectively with teammates. However, although extensive research has explored how passion for work influences work-related outcomes, limited research has examined the role of intercultural communication effectiveness in mediating the relationship between employees' passion for work and their job effectiveness.

Additionally, effective intercultural communication can encourage individuals to build positive relationships and social networks across different cultural groups (Griffith & Harvey, 2001). When sport employees' passion for hosting intercultural sporting events leads them to communicate with the international fan community to prepare for intercultural sporting events, they are likely to perceive a sense of belonging with the fans and enhance their confidence in understanding different cultures.

P4(a)–(b): Sport employees' intercultural communication effectiveness mediates the relationship (a) between their passion and task performance and (b) between their passion and psychological well-being.

Meaningful Work

Meaningful work refers to work that an individual perceives as especially important and personally meaningful (Rosso et al., 2010). Because it plays a critical role in linking individual accomplishment to organizational performance, meaningful work is seen as an essential source of motivation for employees (Lysova et al., 2019). With this in mind, many scholars in sport management have examined how meaningful work can help sport employees cultivate passion and a sense of purpose in their work-related efforts (Baer et al., 2024; Oja et al., 2023). In this context, when sport employees successfully manage intercultural sporting events and experience positive psychological well-being through a sense of belonging with individuals from diverse backgrounds, they are likely to perceive their work as meaningful. Moreover, this outcome can ultimately ignite passion for their future work.

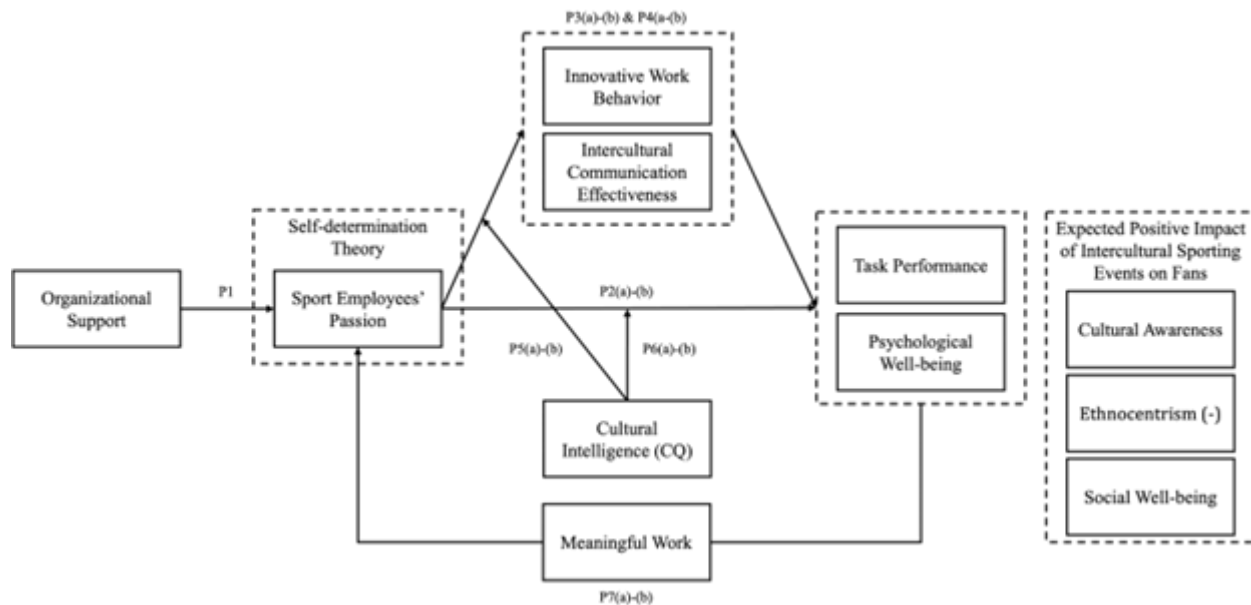
P7(a)–(b): Sport employees' meaningful work mediates the relationship (a) between their task performance and passion and (b) between their psychological well-being and passion.

Discussion

We developed a conceptual model to describe the mechanisms that foster employees' passion for their work, addressing factors ranging from antecedents to expected outcomes within the context of intercultural sporting events (see Figure 1). To gain deeper insight into how sport employees' passion can enhance their well-being and drive positive outcomes for both individuals and the organization—contributing to a more meaningful life—an empirical study is needed to map the process of nurturing this passion and examine its effects on sport employees. Furthermore, hosting intercultural sporting events can positively influence sport consumers by increasing cultural awareness, potentially reducing ethnocentrism, and enhancing the social well-being of sport fans. In sum, promoting passion among sport employees within intercultural sporting events not only strengthens organizational outcomes but also facilitates a deeper cultural exchange, ultimately benefiting both employees and sport consumers.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model of Sport Employees' Passion



References

- AlEsa, H. S., & Durugbo, C. M. (2022). Systematic review of innovative work behavior concepts and contributions. *Management Review Quarterly*, 72(4), 1171–1208.
- Anagnostopoulos, C., Winand, M., & Papadimitriou, D. (2016). Passion in the workplace: Empirical insights from team sport organisations. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 16(4), 385–412.
- Ang, S., & Van Dyne, L. (2015). *Handbook of cultural intelligence: Theory, measurement, and applications*. Routledge.
- Baer, N. R., Zvosec, C. C., & Oja, B. D. (2024). Exploring sport employees' conceptualizations of meaningful work. *Journal of Sport Management*, 1, 1–13.
- Borman, W. C., & Motowidlo, S. J. (1993). Expanding the criterion domain to include elements of contextual performance. In N. Schmitt & W. C. Borman (Eds), *Personnel selection in organizations*.

Jossey-Bass.

- Curran, T., Hill, A. P., Appleton, P. R., Vallerand, R. J., & Standage, M. (2015). The psychology of passion: A meta-analytical review of a decade of research on intrapersonal outcomes. *Motivation and Emotion*, 39, 631–655.
- Doh, P. Y., Kim, M., & Nite, C. (2024). Leveraging the cultural intelligence of sport employees in the globalized sports industry. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 1(1), 1–21.
- Earley, P. C., & Ang, S. (2003). Cultural intelligence: Individual interactions across cultures. *Stanford University Press*.
- Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71(3), 500–507.
- Eisenberger, R., Rhoades Shanock, L., & Wen, X. (2020). Perceived organizational support: Why caring about employees counts. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 7(1), 101–124.
- Eskiler, E., Ekici, S., Soyer, F., & Sari, I. (2016). The relationship between organizational culture and innovative work behavior for sports services in tourism enterprises. *Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research*, 69(1), 53–64.
- Funk, D. C., & James, J. (2001). The psychological continuum model: A conceptual framework for understanding an individual's psychological connection to sport. *Sport Management Review*, 4(2), 119–150.
- Gagné, M., & Deci, E. L. (2005). Self-determination theory and work motivation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26(4), 331–362.
- Griffith, D. A., & Harvey, M. G. (2001). Executive insights: An intercultural communication model for use in global interorganizational networks. *Journal of International Marketing*, 9(3), 87–103.
- Hill, J., Kim, M., Oja, B. D., Kim, H. S., & Lee, H. W. (2024). Innovation is the key: Identifying factors to increase career satisfaction and psychological well-being in millennial and generation Z sport employees. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 14(3), 360–379.
- Holcomb, R. (2023). Cross-cultural management: Insights and innovations in international business. *Journal of Research in International Business and Management*, 10(5), 1–2.
- Huppert, F. A. (2009). Psychological well-being: Evidence regarding its causes and consequences. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-being*, 1(2), 137–164.
- Janssen, O. (2000). Job demands, perceptions of effort-reward fairness and innovative work behaviour. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 73(3), 287–302.
- Johnson, L. M., Choi, K. H., & Kim, E., Pitts, B. G., & Zhang, J. J. (2019). Globalized sport management in diverse cultural contexts: An introduction. In James J. J. Zhang & B. G. Pitts (Eds.), *Globalized sport management in diverse cultural contexts* (pp. 1–26). Routledge.
- Kim, M., Kim, A. C. H., Newman, J. I., Ferris, G. R., & Perrewé, P. L. (2019). The antecedents and consequences of positive organizational behavior: The role of psychological capital for promoting employee well-being in sport organizations. *Sport Management Review*, 22(1), 108–125.
- Kim, S., Liu, J., Love, A., & Park, S. (2022). Organizational citizenship behavior in sport: Scale devel-

- opment and validation. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 17(5), 1018–1032.
- Livingston, L. A., & Forbes, S. L. (2016). Factors contributing to the retention of Canadian amateur sport officials: Motivations, perceived organizational support, and resilience. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 11(3), 342–355.
- Lysova, E. I., Allan, B. A., Dik, B. J., Duffy, R. D., & Steger, M. F. (2019). Fostering meaningful work in organizations: A multi-level review and integration. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 110, 374–389.
- Major League Baseball. (n.d.). Live events. Retrieved October 20, 2024, from <https://www.mlb.com/international/events>
- McMenamin, D. (2010, March 22). *Los Lakers participate in Noche Latina*. ESPN. <https://www.espn.com.au/los-angeles/nba/news/story?id=5016873>
- Mei, Y. M., Lee, S. T., & Al-Hawamdeh, S. (2004). Formulating a communication strategy for effective knowledge sharing. *Journal of Information Science*, 30(1), 12–22.
- National Football League. (n.d.). *NFL international games*. Retrieved October 20, 2024, from <https://www.nfl.com/international/international-games>
- Oja, B. D., Gordon, B. S., & Hazzaa, R. N. (2023). Navigating psychological membership in sport organizations: Exploring sport employees' identities. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 35(2), 202–223.
- Patra, K. (2024, September 6). *NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell aims to expand league's international effort: This game is destined to be global*. NFL News. <https://www.nfl.com/news/nfl-commissioner-roger-goodell-aims-to-expand-league-s-international-effort-this-game-is-destined-to-be-global>
- Rosso, B. D., Dekas, K. H., & Wrzesniewski, A. (2010). On the meaning of work: A theoretical integration and review. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 30, 91–127.
- Ruben, B. D., & Kealey, D. J. (1979). Behavioral assessment of communication competency and the prediction of cross-cultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 3(1), 15–47.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78.
- Ryff, C. D. (1995). Psychological well-being in adult life. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 4(4), 99–104.
- Schuetz, L., Oja, B. D., Dahlin, S., & Romano, A. B. (2022). The influence of emotions in the collegiate sport workplace: An analysis of sport employee pride, passion, and engagement. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 15(1), 627–646.
- Schwarz, E. (2017). Marketing implications of playing regular season games in international markets. In M. Dodds, K. Heisey, & A. Ahonen (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of international sport business* (pp. 79–86). Routledge.
- Sindhura, K. (2022). Perceived organizational support and employee engagement: Mediating role of work passion of the employees. *Manager-The British Journal of Administrative Management*, 58(156), 210–223.

- Spoor, J. R., & Hoye, R. (2014). Perceived support and women's intentions to stay at a sport organization. *British Journal of Management*, 25(3), 407–424.
- Svensson, P. G., Jeong, S., Shuck, B., & Otto, M. G. (2021). Antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement in sport for development. *Sport Management Review*, 24(4), 673–696.
- Svensson, P. G., Kang, S., & Ha, J. P. (2019). Examining the influence of shared leadership and organizational capacity on performance and innovative work behavior in sport for development and peace. *Journal of Sport Management*, 33(6), 546–559.
- Vallerand, R. J. (2012). The role of passion in sustainable psychological well-being. *Psychology of Well-Being: Theory, Research and Practice*, 2(1), 1–21.
- Vallerand, R. J., Blanchard, C., Mageau, G. A., Koestner, R., Ratelle, C., Léonard, M., Gagne, M., & Marsolais, J. (2003). Les passions de l'ame: On obsessive and harmonious passion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85(4), 756–767.
- Vallerand, R. J., & Houliort, N. (2003). Passion at work: Toward a new conceptualization. In D. Skarlicki, S. Gilliland, & D. Steiner (Eds.), *Research in social issues in management* (pp. 175–204). Information Age.
- Vallerand, R. J., Salvy, S. J., Mageau, G. A., Elliot, A. J., Denis, P. L., Grouzet, F. M., & Blanchard, C. (2007). On the role of passion in performance. *Journal of Personality*, 75(3), 505–534.
- Wang, Y. (2021). Building relationships with fans: How sports organizations used Twitter as a communication tool. *Sport in Society*, 24(7), 1055–1069.
- Wohlfart, O., Adam, S., García-Unanue, J., Hovemann, G., Skirstad, B., & Strittmatter, A. M. (2020). Internationalization of the sport management labor market and curriculum perspectives: Insights from Germany, Norway, and Spain. *Sport Management Education Journal*, 14(2), 129–141.
- Wright, T. A., & Cropanzano, R. (2000). Psychological well-being and job satisfaction as predictors of job performance. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 5(1), 84–94.
- Yukhymenko-Lescroart, M. A., & Sharma, G. (2019). The relationship between faculty members' passion for work and well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 20, 863–881.