

# THE ROLE OF MISSION ORGANIZATIONS IN MISSIONARY WELL-BEING

Why the Organization-Member Relationship Matters

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## PRESENTATION SUMMARY

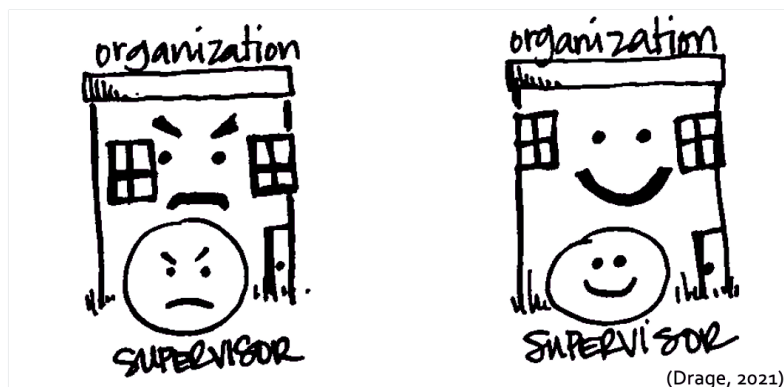
### INTRODUCTION

Missionary well-being is often framed in terms of external stresses from cross-cultural living or in terms of internal psychological needs. Yet, there is a strong body of evidence within both psychology and management literature pointing to the role of organizations themselves in contributing to the well-being of their employees.

### RESEARCH ON ORGANIZATIONS & EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

#### Organizational Support Theory

We tend to personify organizations depending on our experiences with the people and culture within them. Feeling supported by your organization is usually associated with a greater sense of well-being at work. (Kurtessis, et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002)



## Effective Leadership

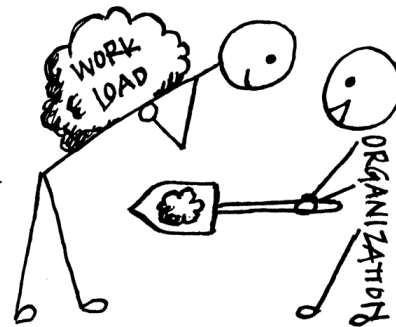
Effective leadership plays a key role in well-being at work. (Fisher, 2010; Kurtessis, et al., 2017; Luchman & Gonzalez-Morales, 2013, Modini, et al., 2016; Parker, et al., 2003; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) This is especially true when it comes to communication, both in pointing people to initiatives aimed to improve well-being and in showing that leadership values well-being. (Grawitch, 2006)



(Drage, 2021)

## Job Demands Resource Model

Every job has a unique set of stressors associated with it. Organizations have the capacity to add demands (increase stress) or lighten the load by providing resources (reducing stress). (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Luchman & Gonzalez-Morales, 2013).



(Drage, 2021)

## Summary of Organizational Factors Supporting Employee Well-Being in Management Research

- Feeling Like the Organization is Supportive of You
- Effective Leadership
- Making Work Less Stressful
- Allowing Autonomy
- Providing Social Support
- Providing Training & Development
- Encouraging Work-Life Balance



All of these factors point to the...

**ORGANIZATION-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP**

But what does this look like in missions?

## RESEARCH AIM

This research project explored the role of mission organizations in influencing the well-being of cross-cultural ministers they send.

## METHODS

Data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with eight active missionaries serving with eight different organizations in Africa, Asia or Europe. Each participant was given the opportunity to answer questions related to a time when they liked their work (positive affect) and a time when they did not like their work (negative affect). They also provided a self-report of their energy level (activation) during the reported time period. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and designated with a well-being category based on Warr's Model of Well-being using self-reported affect and activation levels. The data was further analyzed through systematic coding of interviews. Finally, I analyzed the data aiming specifically to explore themes and patterns related to the role organizations played in the well-being of respondents.

## RESULTS

### Mission Organizations Played a Key Role in Missionary Well-Being

Missionaries experienced well-being enhancing, well-being neutral and well-being diminishing inputs from their organizations during time periods associated with engagement, burnout and workaholism. In 11 out of 16 reported time periods, respondents indicated that their organizations were directly involved in what they liked or didn't like at work.



### Organizational Inputs & Well-Being

Analysis of participant stories led to the identification of themes related to organizational inputs and their impact on well-being.

	Well-Being Enhancing	Well-Being Neutral	Well-Being Diminishing
Training & Development	Relevant, effective training.	Ability to choose trainings.	Irrelevant or lack of training.
Social Support	Facilitating belonging, prayer support, helping each other.		Perceived inequality, isolation, unresolved conflict.

(Continued from previous page)	<b>Well-Being Enhancing</b>	<b>Well-Being Neutral</b>	<b>Well-Being Diminishing</b>
<b>Organizational Responsiveness</b>	Active responses to distressing situations.	Organization not involved.	Intervention that increased distress.
<b>Work-Life Balance</b>	Active endorsement of WLB through encouragement, policies, training or retreats. Clear boundaries.	No organizational involvement.	Unresolved emotional strain from work or work relationships. Increased work pressure or no boundaries.
<b>Organizational Job Demands &amp; Resources</b>	Provided resources that lightened demand	Few resources or demands.	Made demands beyond resources or that hindered resources.
<b>Effective Leadership</b>	Close relationship, empowering.	Physically distant, irrelevant.	Absent or involved in a disempowering way.
<b>Administrative Services</b>	Consistent administrative services.	Optional administration services.	Ongoing administration problems.
<b>Organizational Gatherings</b>	Gatherings that built relationship, equipped or gave voice.		Gatherings that used up resources with little perceived benefit.
<b>Member Care</b>	Built trust, relevant, available.	Present, but not addressing stress.	Made individuals feel like a project.

### Autonomy Played a Key Role in Missionary Well-being

Freedom granted by organizations allowed many of the participants to fulfill a sense of calling, which led to a sense of satisfaction in job fit as well which enhanced well-being. For seven out of eight participants autonomy in determining their work contributed to the enjoyment of the time period characterized by engagement. There were also instances where too much autonomy was diminishing for well-being. Variation in experiences related to autonomy highlights the tension organizations face in providing both autonomy and support for workers. Organizations took a high-involvement or low-involvement approach in engaging their members.

#### LOW-INVOLVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- Few touch points with the organization
- Few expectations
- Expect workers to initiate their own ministries

#### HIGH-INVOLVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- Expect regular contact with the organization (teammates, supervisor, organizational gatherings)
- Active in equipping people to do the work before them well & safely
- Active in providing accountability
- Active in providing mental health services

Each of these approaches had the potential to be well-being enhancing or diminishing.

## CONCLUSION

Well-being enhancing roles tended to involve strong organizational connectedness, which was supportive of missionary aims or low organizational involvement that was clearly communicated and aligned with missionary expectations. Well-being diminishing roles tended to involve high organization involvement that was perceived as irrelevant or costly (taking resources away from missionary aims) or low organizational involvement that left missionaries feeling isolated or unsupported.

	<b>Well-Being Enhancing</b>	<b>Well-Being Diminishing</b>
<b>High Organizational Involvement</b>	High involvement that felt supportive to missionary aims	High involvement that hindered or frustrated missionary aims
<b>Low Organizational Involvement</b>	Low involvement clearly communicated and aligned with missionary expectations.	Low involvement leading to a sense of isolation or lack of support

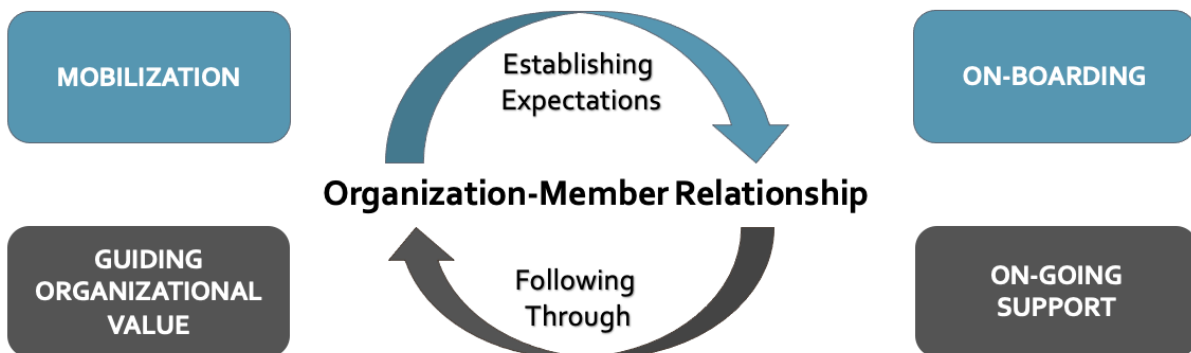
## RECOMMENDATIONS

Both members and organizations come to a partnership with hopes and expectations as well as commitments and responsibilities. Viewing the various contributions of organizations (communication, policies, trainings, engagements with supervisors, etc.) in terms of relatedness, equips us to anticipate what is needed to enhance well-being. This perspective also has the potential to enliven organizational inputs with spiritual meaning as organizations aim to embody the gospel for those they are helping to send.

Honor the...

## ORGANIZATION-MEMBER RELATIONSHIP

As with any relationship, this starts by setting expectations and then doing what it takes to follow through with those commitments.



This table is a starting place for thinking about your own organization in light of the Organization-Member Relationship. Every organization is different and what it means to honor the Organization-Member Relationship will have its unique expression in your particular context. Here are some examples of how low- and high-involvement organizations might engage the Organization-Member Relationship.

<b>Supporting Well-Being in the Organization-Member Relationship</b>		
	<b>Low-Involvement Organizations</b>	<b>High-Involvement Organizations</b>
<b>Mobilization</b>	Intentionally recruit independent, entrepreneurial workers.  Be transparent about the level and style of support your organization offers.	Recruit people who want engaged support Be clear about the level of freedom workers will have to follow their calling.  Be transparent about the level and style of support your organization offers.
<b>On-Boarding</b>	Focus on introducing clear avenues for workers to know about and access resources when they need them.	Focus on inviting workers into the culture of your organization, clarifying organizational expectations and establishing a foundation for two-way communication and partnership.
<b>Guiding Organizational Value</b>	Freedom Entrepreneurship	Connection Equipping
<b>Ongoing Support</b>	Faithfully deliver the services you have offered to workers.  Carefully consider the implication of any policies that would stand in tension with the culture of freedom you are building.	Faithfully deliver the services you have offered to workers.  Develop a strategy of on-going connectedness with workers, so you can provide support that is received as relevant and empowering. This might involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing clear avenues for workers to share their ideas and concerns with their teams and the wider organization.</li> <li>• Training for supervisors so they can carry out their role in a way that truly provides support.</li> <li>• Relevant training and development opportunities.</li> <li>• Cultivating an ongoing sense of belonging and support in the organization.</li> </ul> Consider all policy decisions in light of how they empower and support workers callings. Be intentional with communication related to any policy decision, helping workers understand the benefit to them and their work.

When you are ready to move forward in honoring the **Organization-Member Relationship**, there is support:

- Resources & organizations that are aimed at supporting organizations like yours.
- Emerging conversation around this topic.
- You can contact me via [LinkedIn](#), [SentWell.org](#), or by email at [Kimberly.Drage@novo.org](mailto:Kimberly.Drage@novo.org)

As you influence organization decisions going forward, may you be empowered by this question:

***What are the implications for the Organization-Member Relationship in this situation?***

**MISSIONS SPECIFIC RESEARCH**

Drage, K. (2021) 'The Role of Mission Organizations in Missionary Well-Being', *Evangelical Mission Quarterly*, 57(3), pp. 26-29.  
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Please feel free to contact me for more information or follow up questions.  
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