

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**The Three E's of Occupational Wellbeing:
A study of New Zealand Veterinary Nurse's Workplace Engagement, Exchange,
and Exhaustion**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at
Massey University, Albany, New Zealand.

Stafford W Kimber
2014

Declaration

I declare that this thesis represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Kimber', written over a solid horizontal line. Below the signature is a dotted horizontal line.

Stafford W. Kimber

Abstract

Occupational wellbeing is an ongoing concern for most employees and their organisations. Occupational stress research has been conducted for more than three decades, however its antipode, occupational eustress, has been present for half the time. Commonly researched manifestations of occupational distress and eustress are burnout and workplace engagement respectively, and both have been shown to occur in a range of roles and professions. Therefore, the goal of this research was to investigate work-related wellbeing among veterinary nurses, a relatively un-researched group, using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model.

A cross-sectional approach was used. Structural equation modelling was used to ascertain the JD-R model's motivational and health pathways among veterinary nurses. Data were collected by online survey, with the help of eight New Zealand tertiary providers and the New Zealand Veterinary Nurses Association. One hundred and eighty-two participants provided data.

The results show that a large proportion of participants displayed high levels of workplace engagement and high quality relationships among team members. In addition, most also saw their work as being of benefit to their family life, and reported feeling engaged with their work. However, the relatively high levels of reported job demands could be of concern, as high demands can lead to emotional exhaustion over time. This research identified reasons to expand the JD-R conceptualisation of job resources and provided a guide towards healthier workplace practices such as identifying ways to increase work-family balance, build solid team-member relationships, and provide adequate job resources to address times of high demand.

Acknowledgements

Success is not accomplished in a vacuum and this thesis could not have been completed without the ongoing support and help of so many people. In particular, I would like to thank Dr Dianne Gardner who gave me great support and much reassurance during the writing process. Our fortnightly meetings gave me the confidence and motivation in very stressful times, and I truly could not have pushed myself to accomplish so much in one year without your constant reassurance.

I would like thank the New Zealand Veterinary Nurse Association and New Zealand Tertiary Providers' who helped me find participants and supplied valuable information to help with this study. I would like to also thank the veterinary nurses who participated in the study. Over the course of a year I really developed true appreciation for what they do. They are all so caring, passionate and hardworking people – keep up the good work.

I would also like to acknowledge the friends and family who expressed their understanding, continual encouragement, and humour – you all kept me going in times of adversity. I especially thank my mother Mandy Kimber, her husband Brin Haward and my dear friend Adam Harrison – thank you all for the phone calls and visits while I studied; it truly helped me get through.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Sarah Coles for her support, love, understanding and sacrifice during the past two and a half years which have kept me going. I would not be the person I am today without you in my life. You have been my muse and the resilience, attention and passion you show as a veterinary nurse motivated this research. You are one of the amazing nurses that New Zealand has caring for its animals and we are lucky to have you – thank you.

Table of contents

Declaration	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of contents	iv
List of illustrations	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1. Background influences: New Zealand and its animals.....	1
1.2. New Zealand veterinary nurses	2
1.3. Rationale for the study	3
1.4. Purpose of the study.....	6
1.5. Thesis outline	6
Chapter 2: Organisational wellbeing	8
Introduction	8
2.1. Stress and wellbeing definitions	8
2.2. Burnout	9
2.3. Workplace engagement.....	12
2.4. Intention to leave.....	16
Chapter 3: Job Demands and Resources	18
3.1. Introduction	18
3.2. Conservation of resources	18
3.3. Criticisms of COR.....	19
3.4. Job demands–resources model	20
3.5. The health pathway	22
3.6. The motivational pathway	27
Chapter Four: Work–family balance and team–member exchange	31
Introduction	31
4.1. Work–family balance	31
4.1.1. <i>Theoretical underpinnings</i>	31
4.1.2. <i>Hypotheses and expected outcomes:</i>	33
4.2 Team–member exchange	35
Chapter 5: Method	39
Introduction	39

5.1. Participants	39
5.2. Measures.....	42
5.3. Data analysis	45
5.4. Model fit.....	49
Chapter 6: Results	52
Introduction	52
6.1. Descriptive statistics	52
6.2. Measurement models.....	55
6.3. Structural model	56
Chapter 7: Discussion	61
Introduction	61
7.1. Implications for research	67
7.2. Implications for practice	68
7.3. Limitations.....	70
7.4. Conclusion.....	70
References.....	72
Appendix A: Low Risk Notification Approval Letter	92
Appendix B: Copy of NZ Veterinary Nurse/Technician Wellbeing Survey 2013.....	93

List of illustrations and tables

<i>Figure 1: The Job Demands–Resources model (JD-R)</i>	22
<i>Figure 2: The expanded JD-R model (JD-Rs) with the work–family enrichment and team–member exchange concepts.</i>	37
<i>Figure 3: The expanded Job Demands–Resources (JD-Rs) model with work–family enrichment and team–member exchange included</i>	57
<i>Figure 4: The direct effects model (M2dir)</i>	58
<i>Figure 5: The partial mediation model (M2par)</i>	59
<i>Table 1: Means, standard deviations (SDs) and other descriptive statistics of participants</i> .	41
<i>Table 2: Frequencies and percentages for participants’ specified work roles</i>	41
<i>Table 3: Fit indices for the parameter–level measurement models</i>	45
<i>Table 4: Multicollinearity matrix for the variance inflation factor of each measurement variable</i>	48
<i>Table 5: Means, standard deviations (SDs) and Pearson’s correlations coefficients for study variables</i>	54
<i>Table 6: Fit indices for parameter–level measurement models</i>	55
<i>Table 7: Fit indices and differentials for the research measurement models</i>	56
<i>Table 8: Fit indices for the structural equation models</i>	58