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WORK PASSION AND EMPLOYEES' CREATIVITY: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

This study empirically examined the relationship between work passion and employees' creativity. The sample for this study consists of 245 randomly selected academic members of staff (both teaching and non-teaching) from the five purposively drawn Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. A quasi-experimental research design was employed, and data was collected through a cross-sectional survey as it is the most appropriate for the administrative sciences. The Kendall Coefficient of Concordance using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15 were used for data analysis. The findings indicate the existence of a positive and statistically significant relationship between work passion and employees' creativity in Nigerian universities. Specifically, employees' harmonious passion for work was revealed to have a positive and significant influence on the various measures of employees' creativity (expertise, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively). Conversely, employees' obsessive passion for work was revealed to have a positive but weak and significant influence on the various measures of employees' creativity (expertise, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively). Based on these findings, the study concludes that employees' harmonious passion for work significantly enhances their level of creativity in the Nigerian university system. Conversely, the study concludes that employees' obsessive passion for work hinders their level of creativity in the Nigerian university system. Given the results and conclusions above, it behoves the management of Nigerian universities to continuously ensure and promote work passion among their employees as this can enhance and ignite the spirit of creativity within the university system. Other theoretical and managerial implications for managing employees' work passion and enhancing employees' creativity in the Nigerian university system are also presented.

Keywords:

Employees' Work Passion, Employees' Creativity, Harmonious Passion, Obsessive passion, Nigerian Universities, Niger Delta Region, Nigeria



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CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

Employee attitudes toward involvement in and satisfaction with the job as well as commitment to the employing organization have become of compelling interest to researchers and enterprise managers because of their impact on several work related behaviour and other desirable work related outcomes. This is particularly so as employee attitudes are reflected in tendencies to respond to the job and the organization and its people and situations either positively or negatively. Besides, attitudes tend to cluster and categorize themselves. As a person develops a favourable attitude toward one aspect of the job based on unique experiences, such a person is also likely to react favourably to various other related aspects of the job. Thus, employees who are involved in their job are likely to be satisfied with the job and by extension become committed to their organization. Similarly, employees who are dissatisfied with their job are likely to become less involved in the work and by extension less committed to their employer and organisation.

The argument here is that if employees are passionate about their work and about the company they work for they are much more likely to be productive, happy and less likely to leave than those who are disengaged and just does not care. It also obvious that the level of job involvement and by extension employees' level of productivity is directly proportional to the level of passion.

Employees' work passion (EWP) is defined as an individual's persistent, emotionally positive, meaning-based state of well-being stemming from continuous, reoccurring cognitive and affective appraisals of various job and organizational situations, which results in consistent, constructive work intentions and behaviours (Zigarmi, et al., 2011). Pati (2012) opined that work passion is the manifestation of an individual's purpose and its connection with the purpose of the firm, arising from an implicit connection with self-consciousness. The manifestation of employee work passion exudes lots of benefits to the organisation which include but are not limited to: commitment, citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, higher profit and growth, as well as reducing labour turnover rate. Passionate employees are focused, engaged, and committed to doing their best in everything they do. As a result, they deliver exceptional value to customers, whether they are external or internal customers. Passion contributes more towards value creation than any other human capability. The primary purpose of any organisation is to deliver value to their customers by offering quality products and services. Based on the above, it can be argued that the more passionate the employees are, the more value the organisation will deliver – value which their competitors cannot match. The Key Results Leadership Training Institute argues that having passionate and loyal employees bring an organisation as much benefit as passionate and loyal customers; passionate employees will stay with the organisation longer, work harder, are more creative, and will go the extra mile; and passionate employees create winning teams (www.keyresultstraining.com).

It is relevant to note that there is a difference between an engaged employee and a passionate one. Engaged employees are switched on: conscientious about their work, do everything that is expected of them and comply with policies and procedures to the letter. On the other hand, passionate employees do not just stick to the rulebook – they do whatever it takes to delight customers. These emotionally committed employees are passionate about their work, and the

organization they work for. Although several research findings continuously show that there is a direct link between employee engagement and higher performance, the fact is that employee engagement is just the starting point ... passionate employees take your organization to the next level. Enterprise managers must create a work environment where employees are not just engaged, but are actually passionate about the organization they work for and the job they do.

On the other hand, creativity is the production of novel and useful ideas in any domain. It is for this reason that organizations are seeking individuals who can bring their whole selves to work - individuals who are empowered to regularly engage different parts of their minds. In order to be considered creative, a product or an idea must be different from what has been done before. However, most creativity theorists argue that a creative idea or product must not necessarily be unique. But to qualify as been creative, the product or idea cannot be merely different for difference's sake. Rather, to qualify as been creative, the product or idea must also be appropriate to the goals at hand, correct, valuable, or expressive of meaning. This particular point emphasises the difference between creativity and innovation. As Amabile succinctly put it "innovation is the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organisation. In view of this, it will be safe to say that although creativity by individuals and organisations is a starting point for innovation, it is a necessary but not sufficient condition. Successful innovation depends on other factors, as well, and it can stem not only from creative ideas that originate within the organisation but also from ideas that originate elsewhere (e.g from technology transfer)."

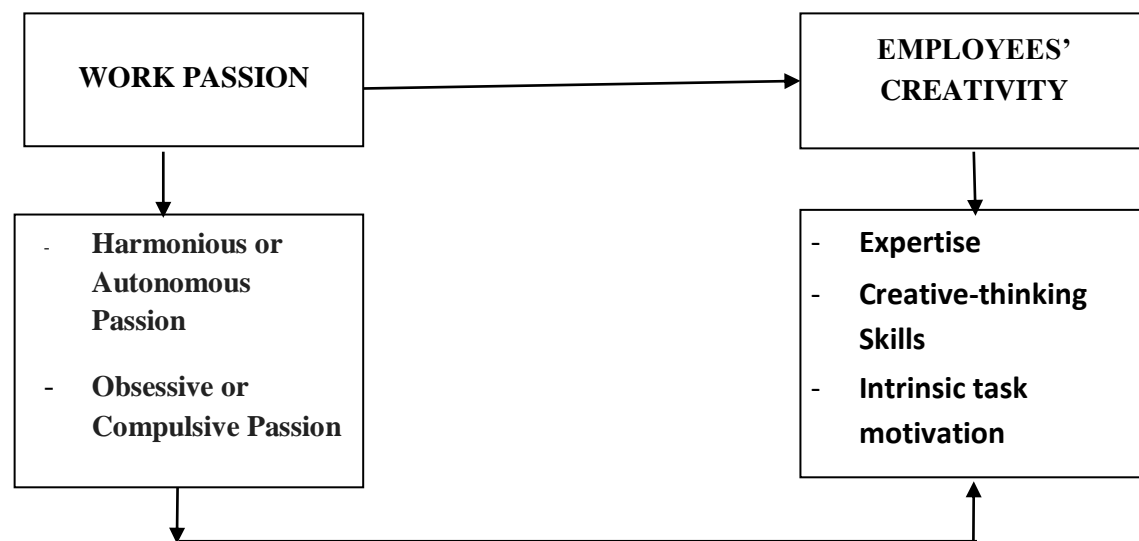
Given the significance of work passion and employees' creativity for today's organisations to survive their competition and succeed in achieving their set objectives, there have been lots of empirical research theorizing and suggesting various approaches and models in their different scholarships on how to enhance these concepts (work passion and employees' creativity) within the organisational context. While some researchers have considered them as antecedents of other organisational variables, others have used them as consequences of other organisational variables. For example, using a sample of information technology (IT) professionals from different IT companies located in Kerala State, Appu, and Sia, (2017) examined the antecedent role of self-efficacy in workplace creativity and found a significant predictive role of Self-efficacy towards workplace creativity. However this study further found that harmonious passion negatively moderates the relationship between self-efficacy and workplace creativity.

Using a sample of employees in a banking organization in Mozambique Clercq, and Pereira, (2019) examined the relationship between employees' knowledge-sharing efforts and creative behaviours; particularly, it addresses how this relationship may be invigorated by three resources that operate at individual (passion for work), job (time sufficiency) and organizational (procedural justice) levels and found that the usefulness of knowledge-sharing efforts for stimulating creative behaviour is greater when employees feel passionate about work, have sufficient time to complete their job tasks and perceive that organizational decision-making is fair.

Previous literature shows that both work passion and employees' creativity are constructs that are not yet fully defined or understood and whilst there are some existing links shown between these concepts with various other individual and organizational outcomes, the logic behind these concepts has not been fully explored. Second, there has been no known study that examined the relationship between work passion and employees' creativity. To fill this gap in the literature, examines the relationship between work passion and employees' creativity in Nigerian Universities.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 below presents the conceptual framework guiding this study.



Source: Conceptualized by the Researcher

Figure. 1.1: Conceptual Framework for Analysing the Relationship between Work Passion and Employees' Creativity as well as the Moderating Role of Corporate Culture

The dimensions of work passion are harmonious or autonomous passion and obsessive or compulsive passion; and they are based on the earlier study of Orgambídez, (2014) and Vallerand, (2003). On the other hand, the measures of employees' creativity adopted for this study are expertise or domain-relevant skills and knowledge, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation; and they are based on the earlier study of Amabile, (1997).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

EMPLOYEES' WORK PASSION

The concept of work passion has received increased attention in the field of organizational behaviour and management (McAllister, 2017). Passion is defined as a strong inclination toward an activity that people like, that they find important, and in which they invest time and energy. Thus, for an activity to represent a passion for people, it has to be significant in their

lives, something that they like, and something at which they spend time regularly (Vallerand, et al. 2003:757). Work passion is defined as an individual's persistent, emotionally positive, meaning-based state of well-being that arises from continuous cognitive and affective evaluations of job and organizational situations. This state of well-being leads to consistent, positive work intentions and behaviours (Zigarmi et al., 2011). Passionate employees are focused, engaged, and dedicated to performing at their best in all aspects of their work. Consequently, they provide exceptional value to both internal and external customers. Passion is a significant driver of value creation, surpassing all other human capabilities. Work passion can also be defined as a strong commitment to work, wherein individuals invest time, effort, and personal and organizational resources (Orgambidez, 2014; Vallerand, 2003). It is clear that people do not become passionate without reason. The truth is, people become passionate about things that are emotionally satisfying and that they consider meaningful, worthwhile, or rewarding. In other words, when people join an organisation with specific needs and view the organisation as a means to fulfill those needs, it can be argued that there are basic human needs that, when met, can ignite passion in individuals. This forms the basis of "The Passion Pyramid." The Passion Pyramid identifies five human needs that spark passion, the leadership skills required to fulfill each need, and the resulting benefits for the organisation. The Employee Passion Survey is rooted in the Passion Pyramid, so understanding the five levels will aid in interpreting the report.

Work passion can be defined as a strong inclination towards an activity that people find important and meaningful. It is distinguishable from the more routine concept of job satisfaction. Hence, a person can be satisfied with their job on the whole but at the same time feel relatively dispassionate about it. Work passion is said to have three components - it is comprised of an affective and emotional element, a cognitive element, and a motivational element. The affective element is a positive emotional state about a person's work, the cognitive element involves identifying with the job and the motivational element involves a willingness to expend effort in the role. As a motivational factor, work passion can stimulate creative behaviour because it enhances focus and increases available energy to perform tasks. Furthermore, passionate individuals are more likely to set high personal goals and take greater initiative in order to attain these goals. Following this rationale, the higher goal levels that passionate individuals set, the greater effort the individual is likely to exert and the more likely creativity will be enhanced. It is argued that passionately working individuals are more intrinsically motivated. This refers to engaging in an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence. Intrinsic motivation has long been linked with creativity. In an early review of this literature, Russ (1993) concluded that there is much correlational evidence to suggest that intrinsic motivation positively relates to creativity. However, the causal link was at that time only supported by experimental studies. Nonetheless, it is widely believed that intrinsic motivation is a cause of creativity. Therefore if it can be shown that passion increases intrinsic motivation, it can be suggested that this will lead to higher levels of creativity. Finally, Vallerand et al (2003) suggest that the third way passion can lead to higher levels of creativity is by fostering innovative thinking. This is defined as thinking that results in new and better solutions to problems. This is because passionate individuals are going to be more focused on achieving and if the task is meaningful to them, they are likely going to use the most effective and efficient means possible to complete the task. Moreover, it would not be consistent with their passion to shut off and settle for easy solutions.

Vallerand, et al. (2003:757) proposed two types of passion: obsessive and harmonious, that can be distinguished in terms of how the passionate activity is internalized into one's core self or identity. Harmonious passion (HP) according to Vallerand, et al. (2003:757) results from an autonomous internalization of the activity into the person's identity. An autonomous internalization occurs when individuals have freely accepted the activity as important for them without any contingencies attached to it. This type of internalization produces a motivational force to engage in the activity willingly and engenders a sense of volition and personal endorsement about pursuing the activity. Individuals are not compelled to do the activity but rather they freely choose to do so. With this type of passion, the activity occupies a significant but not overpowering space in the person's identity and is in harmony with other aspects of the person's life. Accordingly, harmonious work passion has been described in terms of joy that comes from the pursuit of challenging and uplifting goals (Smilor, 1997) and an enduring, positive, internalized state of contentment that results from favorable cognitive and affective work appraisals (Zigarmi et al., 2011).

By contrast, obsessive passion (OP) according to Vallerand, et al. (2003:757) results from a controlled internalization of the activity into one's identity. Such an internalization originates from intrapersonal and/or interpersonal pressure either because certain contingencies are attached to the activity such as feelings of social acceptance or self-esteem, or because the sense of excitement derived from activity engagement becomes uncontrollable. Thus, although individuals like the activity, they feel compelled to engage in it because of these internal contingencies that come to control them. They cannot help but to engage in the passionate activity. The passion must run its course as it controls the person. Because activity engagement is out of the person's control, it eventually takes disproportionate space in the person's identity and causes conflict with other activities in the person's life. This implies that obsessive passion arises from a forced and uncontrollable internalization of work into one's identity, leading the employee to have a compulsive drive to engage in the activity, even at the expense of other important areas such as leisure or family (Orgambídez, 2014; Vallerand, 2003).

The distinction between the two dimensions of work passion is that harmonious passion stems from the autonomous integration of work into one's identity, creating a strong desire to voluntarily immerse oneself in the work. The person acknowledges its relevance to their identity without having to constantly think about or work on it. This implies that harmonious work passion occurs when an employee is free to engage in his work or not, and as a result, attitudes and behaviours will be in harmony with other aspects of the employee's life (Vallerand et al., 2003). It develops when an autonomous internalization is orientated towards an activity that the person finds important and the best way to do so according to personal values and beliefs (Vallerand et al., 2003). Harmonious passion will lead to positive outcomes such as sustained effort and high performance, with a lower cognitive cost because the activity is freely accepted (Vallerand et al., 2003).

On the contrary, obsessive passion occurs when a person feels compelled or forced to work, finding it difficult to detach from work-related matters (Orgambídez, 2014; Vallerand, 2003). This implies that obsessive work passion occurs when a person is compelled to work because the activity has taken control over the individual's thoughts and feelings, it creates an internal pressure to work that the person cannot resist. This will result in an internal conflict within the individual because the activity has overtaken other valued aspects of life, and will show itself with an increase in work-related stress, with health and psychological symptoms (Vallerand et al., 2003).

Several studies have demonstrated that harmonious passion has positive effects on work motivation, psychological well-being, and the significance of tasks performed (Vallerand,

2019). This is because harmonious passion leads to positive emotions during work, which helps individuals concentrate, promotes absorption in their tasks, and improves their overall state of mind. As a result, individuals experience higher levels of intrinsic job satisfaction (Vallerand, 2019; Lavigne, 2014; McAllister, 2017).

Harmonious passion refers to a positive internalization of work and a genuine liking for one's job. It has benefits for both individuals and organizations. Employees who have a healthy and autonomous passion for their work are more likely to possess personal resources that enhance task performance. Furthermore, harmonious passion has been found to have a negative relationship with burnout and its consequences. For instance, Vallerand and Houliort (2019) discovered that harmonious passion can mitigate the impact of emotional exhaustion on psychological discomfort at work. Lavigne et al. (2014) observed that higher levels of passion were associated with perceiving greater resources to cope with work tasks and demands. Similarly, Trépanier et al. (2014) and colleagues found that harmonious passion increased the positive impact of personal resources on engagement and reduced the influence of job demands on burnout.

In a study with 748 front-line employees from service organizations in southern Spain (mean age = 35.51, standard deviation = 10.06, 52% women), Benitez et al. (2023) discovered that harmonious passion moderated the negative relationship between physical fatigue and intrinsic job satisfaction. Specifically, the study found that employees with high levels of harmonious passion at work reported higher levels of intrinsic satisfaction even when experiencing high levels of physical fatigue. In other words, these service employees remain satisfied with their work despite physical fatigue. The study argued that these findings extend the JD-R theory by recognizing harmonious passion as a motivational resource that reduces burnout in service employees. Therefore, promoting the autonomous internalization of work, such as through job enrichment, is crucial for developing harmonious passion and consequently increasing intrinsic job satisfaction.

In a different study with IT professionals from various IT companies in Kerala State, Appu and Sia (2017) found that self-efficacy positively influences employees' creative performance, and harmonious passion negatively moderates the relationship between self-efficacy and workplace creativity. Just recently, Smith, et al. (2022) made some interesting contributions to future research by suggesting some new sub-scales/sample items for operationalizing the concept of work passion and its dimensions in future research. These findings are presented in the appendix of this paper. In a sample of 400 employees working in 7 different large as well as moderately-sized manufacturing and engineering companies in and around Jamshedpur, India, Dey, Thakur, and Srinivas, (2015) examined the relationship between harmonious passion and creativity in the context of supervisory support among employees in manufacturing and engineering companies and found harmonious passion positively related to employee creativity, and work engagement partially mediated this relationship in a supportive atmosphere.

EMPLOYEES' CREATIVITY

The Componential Theory of Individual Creativity

Conventional wisdom suggests that creativity is something done by creative people. Even creativity researchers, for several decades, seemed to guide their work by this principle,

focusing predominantly on individual differences (Amabile, 1997:42). Although this person-centred approach yielded some important findings about the backgrounds, personality traits, and work styles of outstanding creative people (Baron, 1955, 1968), it was both limited and limiting. In contrast to the traditional approach to creativity, Amabile, (1997:42) postulated the Componential Theory of Creativity, which assumes that all humans with normal capacities can produce at least moderately creative work in some domain, some of the time- and that the social environment (the work environment) can influence both the level and the frequency of the creative behaviour (Amabile, 1997).

The theory includes three major components of individual (or small team) creativity, each of which is necessary for creativity in any domain: expertise, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation (Amabile, 1983b; 1997). The componential theory suggests that creativity is most likely to occur when people's skills overlap with their strongest intrinsic interest and deepest passion- and that creativity will be higher, the higher the level of each of the three components. This they referred to as the “creativity intersection” (Amabile, 1997:42).

Expertise

Expertise, according to Amabile, (1997:42) is the foundation for all creative work. It can be viewed as the set of cognitive pathways that may be followed for solving a given problem or doing a given task- the problem solver's network of possible wanderings (Newell and Simon, 1972:82). The expertise component of creativity includes memory for factual knowledge, technical proficiency, and special talent in the target work domain.

Creative-Thinking Skills

This component provides “that something extra” of creative performance. This is also referred to as creativity-relevant skills (Amabile, 1983) and creativity-relevant processes (Amabile, 1996). Assuming that a person has some incentive to perform an activity, performance will be “technically good,” “adequate” or “acceptable” if the requisite expertise is in place. However, even with expertise at an extraordinarily high level, the person will not produce creative work if creative-thinking skills are lacking. These skills include: a cognitive style favourable to taking new perspectives on the problem, an application of techniques (or “heuristics”) for the exploration of new cognitive pathways, and a working style conducive to the persistent, energetic pursuit of their work (Amabile, 1997:43). Creative-thinking skills depends to some extent on personality characteristics related to independence, self-discipline, orientation towards risk-taking, tolerance for ambiguity, perseverance in the face of frustration, and a relative lack of concern for social approval (Baron, 1955 in Amabile, 1997). However, creativity skills can be increased by the learning and practice of techniques to improve cognitive flexibility and intellectual independence (Amabile, 1997:43).

Intrinsic Task Motivation

Amabile, (1997) defined intrinsic motivation as the motivation to work on something because it is interesting, involving, exciting, satisfying, or personally challenging. There is abundant

evidence that people will be most creative when they are primarily intrinsically motivated, rather extrinsically motivated by expected evaluation, surveillance, competition with peers, dictate from superiors, or a promise of reward (Amabile, 1983; 1996; 1997). Interestingly, this intrinsic motivation principle of creativity applies not only to scientific creativity but to business as well. Often, financial success is closely tied to a passion for the work itself (Amabile, 1997:39).

According to Amabile, (1997), although the two skill components determine what a person is capable of doing in a given domain, it is the task motivation component that determines what that person actually will do. Motivation as used in this context, can be either intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is driven by deep interest and involvement in the work, by curiosity, enjoyment, or a personal sense of challenge. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is driven by the desire to attain some goals that are apart from or external to the job itself- such as achieving a promised reward, meeting a deadline or winning a competition. Although combinations of intrinsic or extrinsic motivations are common, one is likely to be primary for a given person doing a given work. Several studies have shown that a primary intrinsic motivation will be more conducive to creativity than a more primary extrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1997:44).

Task motivation according to Amabile, (1997:44) makes the difference between what an engineer can do and what he will do. The former depends on his level of expertise and creative-thinking skills. However, it is the task motivation that determines the extent to which he will fully engage his expertise and creative-thinking skills in the service of creative performance. To some extent, a high degree of intrinsic motivation can even make up for a deficiency in expertise and creative-thinking skills. A highly intrinsically motivated person is likely to draw skills from other domains or apply great effort to acquire necessary skills in the target domain (Harter, 1978; Dweck, 1986).

Although a person's development of expertise and practice of creative-thinking skills can be influenced to some extent by the social environment, the strongest and most direct influence of the environment is probably on motivation. Certainly, a person starts with a level of intrinsic motivation that depends on his/her basic enjoyment of the work, but experience has also shown how a person's basic motivational orientation for a task, and resulting creativity on that task, can be influenced by even momentary alterations in the work environment (Amabile, 1997).

According to Amabile's (1988) componential theory of creativity, intrinsic motivation, rather than extrinsic motivation, acts as a crucial conduit through which social context can impact individual creativity. Although early experimental studies provided convincing evidence for the positive effect of intrinsic motivation on creativity (Amabile, 1996), later creativity studies testing intrinsic motivation's mediating role between contextual factors and employee creativity yielded inconsistent results. For example, Shin and Zhou (2003) found a partial mediating effect of intrinsic motivation on the relationship between leader transformational behaviours and employee creativity, whereas no mediating effect was found in Shalley and Perry-Smith's (2001) study of expected evaluation by leaders and employee creativity.

Creativity is a complex phenomenon. It is catalyzed not only by the hierarchical organizational context that encourages out-of-the-box thinking and action but also by a person's characteristics that facilitate the development of novel ideas and processes (Shalley et al., 2004). Furthermore, harmonious passion has been theorized and confirmed as an underlying motivational conduit that reflects the degree of autonomy in one's motivation and therefore the quality of motivation (Vallerand et al., 2003; Vallerand and Miquelon, 2007). Additionally, positive mood has been found to result from harmonious passion in several studies (e.g., Philippe, et al. 2010; Vallerand et al., 2003), suggesting that harmonious passion is a more fundamental psychological mechanism underlying creativity than positive mood.

It has been traditionally argued that passion is implicit in the creative process of individuals (e.g., Goldberg, 1986). Scholars have also advocated that creativity will be maximized when individuals form a passion for their activities (e.g., Amabile and Fisher, 2009). We agree with these views totally and suggest two primary reasons for the positive harmonious passion-creativity relationship. One possible reason for this outcome may be related to the positive effect, excitement, and energy that are generated by harmonious passion (Amiot, Vallerand, and Blanchard, 2006; Mageau and Vallerand, 2007; Rousseau and Vallerand, 2008).

RESEARCH METHODS

Operational Measures of Variables: The independent variable in this study is employee work passion. The two dimensions of work passion that were adopted for this study are harmonious or autonomous passion (HP) and obsessive or compulsive passion (OP) (Vallerand, et al. 2003:757; and Orgambidez, 2014). Harmonious passion and obsessive passion at work were measured using the passion scale developed by Vallerand, et al. (2003:760) and adapted by Orgambidez et al (2014) and Smith, et al. (2022:60). The Passion Scale consisted of 21 items that reflect the definition of the two dimensions of passion. Nine items were used to operationalize Harmonious passion, while obsessive passion had 12 items. Respondents were asked to think about an activity “that was very dear to their heart.” They were then asked to list this activity and to complete the items while referring to this activity.

The harmonious passion items emphasise an active perspective where the person has control over the activity, personal volition allows him or her to engage in the activity fully, and the activity is in harmony with the person's other activities. Sample items are indicated in the appendix of this paper. On the other hand, the OP items emphasized a passive perspective where the person feels compelled to engage in the activity, the activity takes up a lot of space in the person's self, and conflict is experienced. Sample items are indicated in the appendix of this paper. All the dimensions of work passion were measured on a 5- 5-point Likert-type scale. The response mode ranges from 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2= agree, 3 = not sure/neutral, 4=agree, and 5= strongly agree. The reliability and validity of this measure have been confirmed by many studies covering various topics, such as interpersonal relationships, digital gaming, and psychological adjustment (e.g., Amiot et al., 2006). In this study, Cronbach's alpha for harmonious passion scale is 0.92 and 0.91 for obsessive passion.

On the other hand, the **dependent variable** in this study is employees' creativity. For this study, we adopt the Componential Theory of Individual Creativity developed by Amabile (1988, 1996, 1997:42). The Componential Theory of Individual Creativity assumes that all humans with normal capacities can produce at least moderately creative work in some domain, some of the time- and that the social environment (the work environment) can influence both the level and the frequency of creative behaviour. The theory includes three significant facets or components of individual (or small

team) creativity, each necessary for creativity in any given domain: expertise or domain-relevant skills and knowledge, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation (Amabile, 1997, 1983, 1983b). All the components of creativity were measured on a 5- 5-point Likert-type scale. The response mode ranges from 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2= agree, 3=neutral; 4=agree, and 5= strongly agree. Sample items are indicated in the appendix of this paper.

RESEARCH RESULTS

This section focuses on the statistical testing of the research hypotheses using the collected data. The results from our analysis will form the basis for the acceptance or rejection of the earlier formulated research hypotheses.

The analysis for this study started with an examination of the relationship between work passion and employees' creativity. The finding of this study revealed a strong positive and significant relationship between work passion and employees' creativity. Based on this finding, the study concludes that work passion enhances or promotes employees' creativity in Nigerian universities.

The relationship between the dimensions of work passion and the measures of employees' creativity was also examined in this study.

The formulated research hypotheses were examined, and inferences were determined in this section. The administered questionnaire was retrieved, and the responses gathered from the respondents were collated. The Kendall tau_b value, if positive, indicates a direct relationship, but if negative, indicates an inverse relation. A direct relationship implies that when one of the variables increases, the other variable will also increase; but an inverse relationship implies that while there is an increase in one variable, there is a decrease in the other variable. The Kendall tau_b values ranged between -1 and +1. The strength of each relationship depends on the correlation value as indicated by the Kendall tau_b correlation value. $\pm 0.00-0.19$ implies a very weak correlation, $\pm 0.20-0.39$, a weak correlation; $\pm 0.40-0.59$, a moderate correlation; $\pm 0.60-0.79$, strong correlation; and $\pm 0.80-0.99$, indicates a very strong correlation. The decision criteria for every bivariate relationship at a confidence interval of 95% or a significance level of 5% depends on the probability value. A $p < 0.05$ implies a rejection of the null hypothesis, while a $p > 0.05$ implies an acceptance of the null hypothesis.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix for Harmonious Passion and the Measures Employees' Creativity

Creativity

		Correlations				
			Harmonious	Expertise	Creative TS	Intrinsic TM
Kendall's tau_b	Harmonious	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.725**	.756**	.697**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	245	245	245	245
	Expertise	Correlation Coefficient	.725**	1.000	.617**	.639**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	245	245	245	245
	Creative TS	Correlation Coefficient	.756**	.617**	1.000	.630**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	245	245	245	245
	Intrinsic TM	Correlation Coefficient	.697**	.639**	.630**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	245	245	245	245

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Table above gives the statistical representation of the relationships that exist between the variables as hypothesised.

As shown in the Table above, harmonious passion was revealed to have a positive and significant correlation with the measures of employees' creativity in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: expertise ($\beta = 0.725$, $p < 0.05$); creative-thinking skills ($\beta = 0.756$, $p < 0.05$) and intrinsic task motivation ($\beta = 0.697$, $p < 0.05$). The positive correlation implies a direct relationship between the variables. The probability value of all three hypotheses was 0.000, which happens to be less than 0.05; therefore, null hypotheses one, two, and three (**H₀₁**, **H₀₂** and **H₀₃**) above which states that "there is no significant relationship between harmonious passion and the measures of employees' creativity (expertise, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively) in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria" is rejected. Since it is a two-way test, rejecting a null hypothesis implies the acceptance of the alternate form. On this premise, the alternate forms of the various hypotheses which states that "there is a significantly positive correlation between harmonious passion and the measures of employees' creativity (expertise, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively) in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria" is accepted.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix for Obsessive Passion and the Measures Employees' Creativity

		Correlations				
			Obsessive	Expertise	Creative TS	Intrinsic TM
Kendall's tau_b	Obsessive	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.385**	.422**	.367**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	245	245	245	245
	Expertise	Correlation Coefficient	.385**	1.000	.617**	.639**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	245	245	245	245
	Creative TS	Correlation Coefficient	.422**	.617**	1.000	.630**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	245	245	245	245
	Intrinsic TM	Correlation Coefficient	.367**	.639**	.630**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	245	245	245	245

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Table above gives the statistical representation of the relationships that exist between the variables as hypothesised.

As shown in the Table above, obsessive passion was revealed to have a significantly positive but weak correlation with the measures of employees' creativity in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: expertise ($\beta = 0.385$, $p < 0.05$); creative-thinking skills ($\beta = 0.422$, $p < 0.05$) and intrinsic task motivation ($\beta = 0.367$, $p < 0.05$). The positive correlation implies a direct relationship between the variables. The probability value of all three hypotheses was 0.000, which happens to be less than 0.05; therefore, null hypotheses four, five, and six (**H₀₄**, **H₀₅** and **H₀₆**) above which states that "there is no significant relationship between obsessive passion and the measures of employees' creativity (expertise, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively) in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria" is rejected. Since it is a two-way test, rejecting a null hypothesis implies the

acceptance of the alternate form. On this premise, the alternate forms of the various hypotheses which states that “there is a significantly positive correlation between obsessive passion and the measures of employees’ creativity (expertise, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively) in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria” is accepted.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION

Work passion is a powerful motivator that can drive individuals to achieve their goals and maintain high levels of performance in the workplace. However, understanding the distinctions between obsessive and harmonious passion is crucial for leaders to create a positive work environment that fosters positive motivation and creativity. Hence, this study sought to examine the relationship between work passion and employees’ creativity in Nigerian universities. The finding of this study revealed a positive and significant relationship between work passion and employees’ creativity in Nigerian universities. This finding implies that the level of creativity and by extension level of employees’ performance and organisational productivity is directly proportional to the level of passion exhibited by the concerned employee.

The relationships between the dimensions of work passion and the measures of employees' creativity were also examined in this study. The findings of this study revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between harmonious passion and the various measures of employees' creativity, creativity-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively) in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Based on these findings, the study ultimately concludes that harmonious passion plays a significant role in improving or fuelling employees' creativity in terms of their expertise, creativity-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. This finding may be explained by the fact that **given that** harmonious passion is implicit in the creative process. **Harmonious passion is a form of passion that** stems from the autonomous integration of work into one's identity, creating a strong desire to voluntarily immerse oneself in the work. The person acknowledges its relevance to their identity without having to constantly think about or work on it. This implies that harmonious work passion occurs when an employee is free to engage in his work or not, and as a result, attitudes and behaviours will be in harmony with other aspects of the employee's life, and it occurs when an individual autonomously internalizes an activity into their sense of self; it reflects a positive and harmonious relationship with an activity, where the person engages in it willingly and without any external pressure. Unlike **obsessive passion**, which can lead to burnout and negative outcomes, harmonious passion is associated with positive well-being and intrinsic motivation. It enhances perceptions of autonomy, which, in turn, improves individual adaptivity and proactivity in creativity. Employees with harmonious passion tend to feel competent in their jobs and view their work as important to their identities (Wang, Quang, and Quyang, 2021). When employees' passion for their tasks is harmonious, they are more likely to proactively challenge the status quo and make constructive suggestions (Wang, Quang, and Quyang, 2021). As expected, employees with harmonious passion are more likely to engage in innovative behaviors, such as creatively thinking about and experimenting with new ideas (Schenkel, Farmer, and Maslyn 2019). Employees who are harmoniously passionate about their work are more likely to engage in challenging tasks, which require innovative thinking and problem-solving skills. Moreover, **research evidence** has shown that employees who are harmoniously passionate about their work are more likely to experience flow, a state of deep concentration and enjoyment, which enhances their creative abilities (Zito et al.2022; Pollack et al.2020; Yadav & Dhar, 2021) Furthermore, earlier **studies** have substantiated the notion that employees who experience flow are more likely to exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation and a greater willingness to take risks, both of which are crucial for generating creative ideas ((Fishbach and Woolley2022; Basyouni & El Keshky, 2021) In addition, employees who are intrinsically motivated and willing to take risks are more likely to think outside the box and come up with unconventional solutions to problems. This ability to think outside the box or think beyond the confines of conventional paradigms and generate unconventional or unorthodox solutions is a key aspect of creativity and can lead to significant or groundbreaking innovation within an organization. Employees who are harmoniously passionate about their work are also likely to be more motivated to seek out new knowledge and skills that can enhance their creative abilities or expertise. This motivation to acquire new knowledge and skills or develop their

expertise is crucial for employees' creativity as it allows them to constantly adapt and improve their abilities to generate innovative ideas and solutions. Additionally, **studies** have found that employees who have a high level of harmonious passion are more likely to collaborate with others and share ideas, and are more inclined to take risks and explore unconventional approaches in their work, which can lead to breakthrough innovations (Yadav & Dhar, 2021; Luu2021; Amarnani et al.2020). Passion captures a deeper emotional state than what is traditionally defined in intrinsic motivation (St-Louis and Vallerand, 2015). Indeed, passion drives the emotional experience of the creative process. Being passionate is a specific relationship that is developed through innate talent, a desire to explore the talent, and opportunities to excel in the talent (Mageau et al., 2009).

Based on substantial research findings, harmonious passion has been shown as the preferred pathway to achieve success in such areas as the performing arts. The empirical evidence suggests that harmonious passion positively enhances innovative cognitive styles (Luh & Lu, 2012). Similar to the finding of the present study, it has also been shown in earlier studies to be related to the Big Five factor of openness to experience, a finding that reinforces its association with creativity. Dey, Thakur, and Srinivas, (2015) investigated the relationship between harmonious passion and creativity in the context of supervisory support among employees in manufacturing and engineering companies and found that when employees experience harmonious passion for their work, they are more likely to engage in creative thinking and generate novel ideas. Harmonious passion fuels intrinsic motivation, leading individuals to explore new possibilities and contribute innovative solutions. Creativity involves producing ideas that are both novel and useful, and harmonious passion plays a significant role in contributing to this process. Additionally, positive mood has been found to result from harmonious passion in several studies (e.g., Philippe, et al. 2010; Vallerand et al., 2003), suggesting that harmonious passion is a more fundamental psychological mechanism underlying creativity than positive mood. Therefore, it is not surprising that harmonious passion is once again found to play a robust and statistically significant role in improving employees' expertise, creativity-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. This finding is in line with the earlier finding of Amabile's (1988) componential theory of creativity, which suggests that intrinsic motivation, rather than extrinsic motivation, acts as a crucial conduit through which the social context can impact individual creativity. In essence, intrinsic motivation is the motivational path connecting environmental factors to creativity (Shalley et al., 2004; Zhou and Shalley, 2003). Given that harmonious passion is a form of passion that emerges when individuals or employees willingly engage in their work out of their genuine love for it, it is highly likely to foster or fuel creativity indicators such as intrinsic task motivation. Intrinsic task motivation refers to the type of motivation that originates from a profound interest and engagement in the work, propelled by curiosity, pleasure, or a personal desire for challenge.

On the other hand, the findings of this study revealed a positive but weak and significant positive relationship between obsessive passion and the various measures of employees' creativity such as expertise, creativity-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Based on these findings, the study ultimately concludes that obsessive passion plays a weak but significant role in improving or fueling employees' creativity in terms of their

expertise, creativity-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation in the Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. This finding suggests that obsessive passion which is a form of passion that emerges from a forced and uncontrollable internalization of work into one's identity, leading the employee to have a compulsive drive to engage in the activity, even at the expense of other important areas such as leisure or family, it is doubtful to foster or fuel creativity indicators such as expertise, creative thinking skills and intrinsic task motivation as much as its harmonious counterpart. Research studies have consistently shown that individuals with high levels of obsessive passion are more likely to experience burnout and have lower levels of job satisfaction. This suggests that the negative consequences of obsessive passion, such as burnout and low job satisfaction, can hinder employees' ability to be creative in their work. Furthermore, employees with high levels of obsessive passion may also face difficulties in maintaining positive interpersonal relationships and collaborating effectively with their colleagues, which can further impede their creativity. These difficulties in maintaining positive interpersonal relationships and effective collaboration can create a challenging work environment that limits employees' ability to express and explore their creative ideas. As a result, organizations may miss out on valuable insights and innovative solutions that could contribute to their success and competitive advantage.

Taken together, building on the dualistic model of passion which presents passion as either harmonious or obsessive (Vallerand et al., 2003), the earlier finding of Vallerand et al., (2014) that harmonious passion is more consistently associated with positive outcomes compared to its obsessive counterpart has been revalidated by the findings of the present study within the Nigerian context,. The findings of this study revalidated within the Nigerian context the fact that positive emotions reinforce and are promoted by harmonious passions. Likewise, negative emotions reinforce and are evoked by obsessive passions. Both the emotional states and the passion orientations influence performance, either positively or negatively, respectively (Vallerand et al., 2008). These dualistic passions delineate two pathways: one that moves directly toward goal mastery, deliberate practice, and successful performance, and the other that leads to goal avoidance, inefficient practice modalities, and poor performance (Vallerand et al., 2008).

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the results and conclusions above, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The management of Nigerian universities must consistently encourage and promote harmonious passion among their employees. This will enhance and ignite the spirit of creativity within the university system.
- ii. The management of Nigerian universities can encourage harmonious passion by fostering a work environment where employees find their tasks enjoyable, meaningful, and aligned with their identities. This, in turn, can lead to greater creativity and innovation within the workplace. (Gao, and Jiang, 2019; Wang, Quang, and Quyang, 2021; Schenkel, Farmer, and Maslyn 2019).
- iii. Harmonious passion positively influences creativity, especially when combined with work engagement and supportive supervision. This implies that managers of

Nigerian universities [can promote creativity by encouraging harmonious passion, providing autonomy, and fostering a positive work environment](#). Each workplace context may vary, but understanding the role of passion in creativity can guide organisations in nurturing innovative thinking among their employees.

- iv. Given the crucial role of harmonious passion in fueling employee creativity, Nigerian universities should adapt their recruitment and selection practices. They should also cultivate work environments that nurture employees' harmonious passion. They should look out for or emphasize candidates who have a higher tendency to seek interesting and challenging activities and take initiative to solve problems, and have a stronger autonomy orientation. They are more likely to become harmoniously passionate about their work, and therefore, more creative.
- v. Nigerian universities should emphasize flexible work designs and practices that empower employees. This will encourage them to take ownership and pride in their work and develop a sense of autonomy. An autonomy-supportive work environment can induce employees' harmonious passion for their work.
- vi. Nigerian universities should also develop and conduct training programs on team building, the benefits of open communication, and other related issues. These programs will educate managers and employees about the possible indicators and outcomes of harmonious passion in terms of emotions, thoughts, and behaviours. This will help promote harmony among both teaching and non-teaching employees.
- vii. Fostering harmonious passion among employees in the university system can create a positive work environment that drives performance and innovation. The management of Nigerian universities can adopt strategies such as granting employees and teams the necessary autonomy to complete their tasks, providing meaningful work to create a sense of purpose, offering recognition and rewards for achievements to foster ownership and pride, facilitating collaboration and mutual aid for learning and idea sharing, and promoting a corporate culture of trust and respect. (<https://fordhealth.com.au/obsessive-vs-harmonious-passion>). Collectively, these strategies can encourage harmonious passion in the workplace for both the management and employees.
- viii. It is important to note that failing to invest sufficient energy, time and other relevant resources as well as developing strategies and relevant policies, processes, and procedures in fostering creativity within an academic environment, such as the university system, where creativity is essential for success in achieving their core mandate of teaching, research, and learning, would be irresponsible. One can only imagine the potential level of creativity that even intrinsically motivated individuals could achieve if the environment were optimized to promote extrinsic motivation for creativity.

- ix. Going by the theory of autotelic creativity (Csíkszentmihály, 1997), where the intrinsic motivation for creativity is so high, that getting to be creative is a reward or succinctly put, for some employees' creativity can even be a reward of its own; it implies that providing the correct reward can be difficult. Rewards and compensation can decrease the motivation for creativity if they are presented in a controlling fashion (as in the case of obsessive passion for work), and they can increase the motivation if the individual feels they are a reward and recognition of competence (as in the case of harmonious passion for work). In other words, if the reward structure is built to force creativity, as in the case of an obsessive passion for work, it feels like a chore. This is particularly so as you cannot ask people to be creative on demand, just like you cannot force inspiration. However, if the compensation feels like a justified bonus for a creative effort, as in the case of harmonious passion, it works as a great extra incentive (Amabile, 2012) and becomes intuitively appealing, which in itself, is also a reward for creativity.

It is important to note that research evidence suggests that financial rewards or recognition may not be the sole forms of compensation. It appears that social recognition for creativity often serves as a significant reward (Insoll and Mäkiyö, 2018). Employees are more likely to engage in finding creative solutions when they anticipate a positive response to their creativity (Ford, 1996). This can take the form of a mere high-five, a pat on the back, or encouraging words from management. Research shows that for some employees, creativity itself can be a reward. This as pointed out earlier, has been described as autotelic creativity, where the intrinsic motivation for creativity is so high that the opportunity to be creative becomes reward in itself (Csíkszentmihály, 1997).

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study offers an opportunity for future research to enhance the understanding of these concepts and explore the connections between them and other individual and organizational outcome variables. The findings of this study have empirically revalidated in the Nigerian context, the claim that harmonious passion is more consistently associated with positive outcomes compared to its obsessive counterpart, subsequent studies could investigate the antecedents of harmonious passion in the Nigerian context. Future studies can also investigate the relationship between these concepts in other sectors or industries to ascertain whether or not the findings will vary according to industry or sector within the Nigerian context. An investigation of the variables that are likely to moderate the relationship work passion and creativity will also be a welcome development. We hope that this study on the correlation between work passion and employees' creativity can provide clear ideas and directions for future research in the field of organizational behaviour and management.

APPENDIX

WORK PASSION SCALE						
	Items	Strongly disagree =1	Disagree =2	Not sure/ Neutral=3	Agree =4	Strongly agree=5
	Harmonious Passion					
1	My work allows me to live a variety of experiences					
2	The new things that I discover within the confines of my work allow me to appreciate it even more					
3	My line of work reflects the qualities I like about myself					
4	My work is in harmony with the other activities in my life					

5	My work is a passion, that I still manage to control					
6	My work allows me to live memorable experiences					
7	I am completely taken with my work					
8	My work is well integrated in my life					
9	My work is in harmony with other things that are part of me					
Obsessive Passion						
10	I cannot live without my work					
11	The urge is so strong, I can't help myself from doing my work					
12	I have difficulty imagining my life without my work					
13	I am emotionally dependent on my work					
14	I have a tough time controlling my need to do my work					
15	I have almost an obsessive feeling for my work					
16	My mood depends on my being able to do my work					
17	I have difficulties controlling my urge to work					
18	Work is the only thing that really turns me on					
19	If I could, I would only work					
20	I have the impression that my work controls me					
21	Work is so exciting that I sometimes lose control over it					

Source: Smith, et al. (2022:60)

Note. Items Number 1-9 represent harmonious passion items; while items number 10-21 represent obsessive passion items.

Table 1: Sample items for Employees' Creativity Scale

S/N	Items		Strongly disagree =1	Disagree =2	Not sure/ neither agree nor disagree=3	Agree =4	Strongly agree=5
1	Expertise or Domain-Relevant Skills and Knowledge. <i>Adapted from Sawyer (1992)</i>	I am very clear as to the processes involved in the execution of my duties.					
2		I am very certain about the procedures I need to use in executing various aspects of my job.					
3	Creative-Thinking Skills and Processes <i>Adapted from Tierney (1997).</i>	I am confident in my ability to generate new ideas concerning the work I do and in the overall best interest of the organisation.					
4		I have confidence in my ability to do the right things in my work and to bring in new ideas.					
5	Intrinsic Task Motivation <i>Adapted from Eisenberger and Rhoades (2001).</i>	I find my present job to be interesting and enjoyable.					
6		My present job is rather unpleasant and boring. I wish I could be given another job.					

	Scale/Sample Items for Future Research						
S/N	Items		Strongly disagree =1	Disagree =2	Not sure/ neither agree nor disagree=3	Agree =4	Strongly agree=5
	Work Passion Facet	Sample Items					
	Harmonious Passion						
1	Autonomous Internalization	I work by choice rather than by need.					
2		I work because I love it.					
3		I choose to work because I enjoy it.					
4	Significant Part of Identity	I view my work as a part of who I am.					
5		Work is an important part of who I am.					
6		My work is a significant part of my identity.					
7	Positive Emotions	I experience pleasant emotions when I					

		work.					
8		I enjoy working.					
9		Working puts me in a good mood.					
	Obsessive Passion						
10	Controlled Internalization	I work because it is a means to an end.					
11		I feel an internal pressure to work in order to gain recognition from others.					
12		I feel pressure to work in order to build my self-esteem.					
13	Controls Individual	I cannot control my obsession with work.					
14		I have inner compulsions that force me to work.					
15		I have an internal obsession with work that controls me.					
16	Conflict with Other Activities	My work prevents me from doing other activities					
17		My work regularly gets in the way of my other responsibilities.					
18		My identity and my work are inseparably linked.					
19	Negative Emotions	Working puts me in a bad mood.					
20		I feel negative emotions when I am not working.					
21		Being prevented from working puts me in a bad mood.					

Source: Smith, R.W.; Min, H.; Ng, M.A.; and Haynes, N.J. (2022:67) "A Content Validation of Work Passion: Was the Passion Ever There?" *Journal of Business and Psychology*. PP.1-67

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