THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUAL ENGAGEMENT AND THE NEED FOR RECOVERY FROM WORK AMONG ADJUNCT FACULTY AT ONLINE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

David P. Moser



Chair, Dissertation Committee

Member, Dissertation Committee

Member, Dissertation Committee

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# Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the impact of spiritual engagement, particularly Sabbath rest, as a resource for adjunct faculty in higher education institutions to mitigate work-related stress and burnout. Despite extensive research on work engagement and recovery from work, there remains a significant gap in understanding the role of spiritual resources in non-ministerial professions. This study aims to address this gap by examining how Sabbath rest, as a form of spiritual engagement, can serve as a protective factor against the adverse effects of job demands.

A quantitative research design will be employed to achieve this objective. This study will involve a survey administered to a sample of adjunct faculty members across various higher education institutions. The two validated instruments, Spiritual Engagement Instrument (SpEI; Roof, Bocarnea, & Winston, 2017) and the Need for Recovery Scale (NFR; Stevens et al. (2019), will measure levels of work-related stress, burnout, and the extent of spiritual engagement focused on Sabbath rest. Data will be analyzed using statistical techniques to identify correlations between spiritual engagement and work-related outcomes.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the literature on work engagement by highlighting the importance of spiritual resources in promoting well-being and reducing burnout among adjunct faculty. By integrating spiritual engagement into the discourse on work stress and recovery, this study aims to provide a holistic understanding of employee well-being and offer practical implications for higher education institutions to support their adjunct faculty more effectively. This study sets the stage for future research on the role of spirituality in workplace settings and its potential benefits for diverse professional groups.

## Keywords

Spiritual Engagment, Sabbath rest, Need for Recovery, adjunct faculty.

# Acknowledgments

Personally acknowledge your chair, professors, mentors, and colleagues who assisted you in your dissertation journey at OGS.

# Dedication

You may optionally dedicate your dissertation to an individual or organization.

# Epigraph

You may optionally include a quote or statement applicable to your dissertation.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Stress and burnout are pervasive issues across professions in America, with work-related stress impacting a significant portion of the workforce. According to the American Psychological Association's (APA) 2021 Work and Well-being Survey, 79% of U.S. employees reported experiencing work-related stress in the month preceding the survey. Technological advancements have intensified this issue, contributing to employees' physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion. Burnout, defined by Maslach and Leiter (2016) as the erosion of value, dignity, spirit, and will, is becoming increasingly common in a society that prioritizes profit and efficiency over well-being.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting 'Great Resignation' have highlighted the problematic working conditions of the 21st century, prompting many to reevaluate the meaning of work. Higher education institutions (HEIs), in particular, have seen a growing reliance on adjunct faculty, who face heightened stress due to increased job demands, limited opportunities for advancement, low pay, and job insecurity (Spinrad et al., 2022; Spinrad & Relles, 2022; Danaei, 2019). The shift to remote work has further blurred the boundaries between work and home life, increasing the strain on these educators.

Organizational psychology offers two dominant models to address work engagement: the Job-Demands Resources (JD-R) model and the Job-Crafting Theory. The JD-R model balances job demands and resources from an employer's perspective. On the other hand, the Job-Crafting Theory empowers employees to reshape their work environment proactively. However, both models have limitations. The JD-R model presumes a top-down, employer-driven approach, often discounting the internal motivations of employees. The Job-Crafting Theory requires employees to be proactive; therefore, the theory is ineffective for employees lacking proactive personality traits. Additionally, job crafting opens employees to organizational exploitation (Kim et al., 2020).

Amid these secular approaches, there is a notable gap in integrating spiritual resources into workplace strategies. Spiritual engagement, mainly the Sabbath rest, can provide a unique means of recovery from work-related stress. Sabbath rest, a break from labor to focus on faith and family, offers a spiritual resource that could benefit adjunct faculty in higher education (Gallagher, 2019).

This study aims to fill the gap in research by examining the effects of spiritual engagement among adjunct faculty. While extensive research exists on the spiritual resources for clergy, similar studies for adjunct faculty are scarce. This research will explore how Sabbath rest, as a form of spiritual engagement, can help adjunct faculty manage work demands and recover from stress.

By integrating spiritual engagement into the workplace, this study offers an alternative to the dominant secular models, providing Christian employees with resources aligned with their worldview.

## Statement of the Problem

The problem is that adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions experience a high need for recovery from work and lack adequate spiritual rest (Varga & Denniston, 2022; Han et al., 2020; Bennet, 2003; Walker & McPhail, 2009; Chickering, Dalton & Stamm, 2015).

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

## Significance

This study aims to address a significant gap in research by examining the effects of spiritual engagement on adjunct faculty in higher education. While there is considerable research on spiritual resources for clergy (Büssing et al., 2013; Chandler, 2009; Chandler, 2010; Hough et al., 2019; Terry & Cunningham, 2020), similar inquiries have not been extended to adjunct faculty (Bolitzer, 2019). This lack of research leaves a notable void in understanding how spiritual practices, such as Sabbath rest, can serve as a resource for these professionals to recover from work demands.

Christian social researchers have not sufficiently explored the use of spiritual resources to help employees manage work-related stress, forcing many to rely on resources derived from incompatible worldviews. Over the past four decades, secular research has predominantly focused on material and temporal resources within a humanistic worldview, excluding spiritual resources. While some studies have shown the benefits of mindfulness on work engagement (Doig et al., 2023; Baker & Lee, 2020), rooted in pantheistic views, there is little investigation into the role of spiritual engagement for adjunct faculty.

Spiritual resources, which stem from a connection with the divine being, offer employees a different support dimension. Unlike workplace spirituality, which focuses on creating a supportive organizational environment, spiritual engagement emphasizes individual practices. For example, Sabbath rest involves taking a break from work, altering daily routines, and focusing on faith and family, providing a crucial means of recovery from work-related stress.

This study will contribute to understanding how spiritual engagement, particularly the practice of Sabbath rest, can aid adjunct faculty in managing work demands, thus filling a critical gap in empirical research and practical applications for integrating faith into professional settings.

## Background of the Problem

Work-related stress is at an all-time high across various professions in America. According to the American Psychological Association's (APA) 2021 Work and Well-being Survey, 79% of U.S. employees experienced work-related stress in the month preceding the survey, with nearly 60% reporting negative impacts. Maslach et al. (2001) define burnout as a severe disruption between individuals and their work roles, eroding employee value, dignity, spirit, and will.

Several social and economic factors contribute to the current state of high work-related stress. First, modern American society, prioritizing profit and efficiency over well-being, has heightened the prevalence of burnout (Gallagher, 2019), particularly among Millennials and Generation X employees. The capitalist economic system in Western societies emphasizes productivity and efficiency, often at the expense of employee well-being (Obrenovic et al., 2020). This focus on economic gain ties individual identity and worth to their economic contributions, with consumerism becoming a key marker of social status and well-being (Balabanis & Stathopoulou, 2021). Second, decades of technological advancements have further exacerbated the strain on employees, leading to physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion and, ultimately, burnout (Marsh et al., 2022). Third, the 'Great Resignation' of 2021, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, reflects a societal reevaluation of work's meaning, with many employees resigning to avoid health risks and reassess their work-life balance.

Trends in higher education have complicated the situation for adjunct faculty. Higher education increasingly relies on adjunct faculty rather than full-time tenured professors for course delivery (Murray, 2019; Spinrad & Relles, 2022). This trend results in heightened stress and exhaustion among adjunct faculty due to increased job demands, low pay, limited career advancement opportunities, and job insecurity (Han et al., 2020). Adjunct faculty also face additional challenges when working remotely, as telework blurs the boundaries between home and work life, further increasing work-related stress (Varga & Denniston, 2022).

Two dominant models in organizational psychology address work engagement: the Job-Demands Resources (JD-R) model and the Job-Crafting Theory. The JD-R model categorizes job characteristics as either demands or resources, with job demands increasing strain and potential burnout and job resources fostering motivation and engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001; Zhang & Parker, 2019). On the other hand, the Job-Crafting Theory emphasizes employee-initiated changes to their tasks, relationships, and cognitive boundaries to enhance work engagement (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Oprea et al., 2019). Both models have limitations, particularly from a Christian worldview perspective, where the JD-R model presumes a discrepant employer-employee relationship, and the Job-Crafting model relies on a proactive employee disposition.

Recent research suggests categorizing spiritual resources as a subset of personal resources within work engagement models (Bickerton et al., 2014). Spiritual resources, such as attachment to God, collaborative religious coping, and a sense of calling, significantly impact work engagement and can buffer against job demands (Hashemi et al., 2017). Studies show that these spiritual resources enhance employee well-being and job satisfaction, reducing burnout (Arokiasamy & Tat, 2020; Nwanzu & Babalola, 2021; Hashemi et al., 2017; Roof, 2015; Roof, 2016; Roof et al., 2017). However, traditional JD-R models do not include personal resources like spirituality, focusing instead on organizational characteristics (Demerouti et al., 2001). At best, research by Xanthopoulou et al. (2009) show a dynamic, but not causal, relationship between work and personal resources. Therefore, it remains inconclusive to suggest that personal resources could be integrated into the Job-Demands Resources model.

Given adjunct faculty's high stress and burnout levels, particularly in online environments, HEI administrators should consider promoting spiritual engagement to improve well-being and reduce burnout. Spirituality in the workplace fosters a sense of connection, meaning, and hope, which can positively impact work engagement and satisfaction. Emphasizing spiritual resources can offer adjunct faculty an additional tool for recovery and resilience, addressing the gap in the literature on adjunct faculty's spiritual engagement and its effects on work-related stress.

## Research Questions

This study will examine the relationship between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work. The following quantifiable research questions will guide this study:

RQ1: What relationship exists, if any, between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions?

RQ2: What relationship, if any, exists between spiritual rest and years of teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions?

RQ3: What relationship, if any, exists between the need for recovery from work and years of teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions?

This study formulates specific hypotheses to guide the investigation of the relationships between spiritual rest, the need for recovery from work, and teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online HEIs. These hypotheses aim to determine whether statistically significant relationships exist between these variables, thus providing an understanding of the potential impacts of spiritual rest on faculty need for recovery from work. This study seeks to generate empirical evidence that can inform faculty practices, HEI policies, and support systems designed to enhance the overall work experience for adjunct faculty. The following section details the hypotheses to be examined.

## Hypotheses

The hypotheses are aligned with the study's research questions. The following hypotheses will be examined in this study:

H01: No statistically significant relationship exists between spiritual rest subscale scores and the need for recovery from work scores among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha1: A statistically significant relationship exists between spiritual rest subscale scores and the need for recovery from work scores among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

H02: No statistically significant relationship exists between spiritual rest subscale scores and years of adjunct teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha2: A statistically significant relationship exists between spiritual rest subscale scores and years of adjunct teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

H02a: No statistically significant relationship exists between spiritual rest subscale scores and faculty length of employment among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha2a: A statistically significant relationship exists between spiritual rest subscale scores and faculty length of employment among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

H03: No statistically significant relationship exists between recovery from work scores and years of adjunct teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha3: A statistically significant relationship exists between recovery from work scores and years of adjunct teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

H03a: No statistically significant relationship exists between recovery from work scores and faculty length of employment among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha3a: A statistically significant relationship exists between recovery from work scores and faculty length of employment among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

### Hypotheses for "Other Findings" (Indirectly Related to RQs)

The following hypotheses, though not directly related to the research questions, will be examined for other findings:

H04: No statistically significant difference exists in spiritual rest subscale scores between retired and non-retired status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha4: A statistically significant difference exists in spiritual rest subscale scores between retired and non-retired status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

H05: No statistically significant difference exists in spiritual rest subscale scores between full and part-time status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha5: A statistically significant difference exists in spiritual rest subscale scores between full and part-time status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

H06: No statistically significant difference exists in recovery from work scores between retired and non-retired status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha6: A statistically significant difference exists in recovery from work scores between retired and non-retired status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

H07: No statistically significant difference exists in recovery from work scores between full and part-time status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha7: A statistically significant difference exists in recovery from work scores between full and part-time status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

The following section outlines the research methodology and design that will be employed to investigate these relationships. This study adopts a quantitative approach, utilizing correlational methods to analyze the data gathered from adjunct faculty in online HEIs. By employing validated instruments and statistical techniques, the study aims to investigate the potential connections between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work and how the length of teaching experience may influence these variables. The following section will elaborate on the quantitative methods and specific design elements used to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

## Research Methodology and Design

This study will utilize quantitative research methods to gather and analyze data, focusing on the relationship between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work among adjunct faculty in online HEIs. The study will employ the Spearman rank-order correlation to examine the relationships between these variables, measured on an ordinal scale. Spiritual rest is the predictor variable, while the need for recovery from work is the outcome variable.

Quantitative correlational research seeks to establish relationships between variables within a population by using numeric data to describe attitudes, behaviors, or opinions. This approach emphasizes objectivity and independence from the subjects, ensuring that the theoretical framework accurately reflects the examined constructs. Using validated and reliable instruments ensures that the variables are measurable and the results are statistically robust.

The target population comprises adjunct faculty in online HEIs in the United States. These part-time faculty members often work at multiple institutions to achieve full-time workloads. Convenience sampling will ensure participants meet specific criteria: part-time, non-tenure track faculty teaching exclusively online. The study excludes those teaching hybrid, blended, or on-campus formats and those employed outside of higher education or with tenured/tenure-track status. A sample size of 55-100 participants will be targeted, with recruitment permission obtained from the institutional review board.

The study will use two validated instruments: the Spiritual Engagement Instrument (SpEI) and the Need for Recovery Scale short-form (NFR). The SpEI measures spiritual engagement across four dimensions: worship, meditation, fasting, and spiritual rest. This study will focus on the spiritual rest subscale, which captures perceptions of spiritual practices within a participant's faith tradition. The NFR instrument assesses employee exhaustion and the need for recovery from work, consisting of three items that measure aspects of post-work fatigue and recovery.

The research questions align with the constructs measured by these instruments, seeking to determine the relationships between spiritual rest, need for recovery from work, and years of teaching experience. The validity and reliability of the instruments are supported by high Cronbach alpha values, indicating strong internal consistency and construct validity.

Data will be collected via an online survey over a six-week period, with participants completing demographic and assessment surveys through Survio survey software. Unique identifiers will ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Data preparation will involve cleaning and organizing quantitative data, followed by statistical analysis using the Spearman rank-order correlation to test the hypotheses and explore the relationships between variables.

This methodological approach allows for a rigorous examination of the theoretical relationships between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work, contributing valuable insights to adjunct faculty's well-being and job satisfaction in online higher education settings.

## Operational Definitions

Definitions are provided for the study's variables, key terms, and concepts. The following definitions are referred to throughout the study:

*Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs)* – Higher educational institutions include not only universities and colleges but also various professional schools that provide preparation in such fields as law, theology, medicine, business, music, and art, as well as teacher-training schools, junior colleges, and institutes of technology" (Britannica, 2024).

*Academic capitalism* – Academic capitalism is the application of capitalism within higher education institutions (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

*Adjunct faculty* – Any faculty member, instructor, or lecturer who is part-time and off the tenure track. Adjunct faculty are defined as part-time employees who are classified as nontenured or non-permanent, paid per a yearly contract or by course (Caruth & Caruth, 2013; Kezar, 2012). This may include part-time non-tenure track faculty and lecturers.

*Spiritual resources* – Spiritual resources are beliefs, practices, and experiences resulting from a connection to the divine, including a secure attachment to God, collaborative religious coping, and calling (Hashemi et al., 2017; Bickerton et al., 2014). Spiritual resources are a subcategory of personal resources within Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory.

*Sabbath rest* - Sabbath rest is a spiritual discipline practiced daily to "create space for God" and as an "attitude of orientation towards the living God in each day, and as a sacred time to pursue God in each week" (Gallagher, 2019, p. 143). Sabbath is a preparation for eternity that involves mystical, spiritual discipline separate from regular activity, aligning oneself to God's timing (Heschel, 1951; Gallagher, 2019). Sabbath involves family worship, remembering God's nature and activity, and appreciating the connection between God, self, and others. This study views Sabbath rest as spiritual rest firmly within the Judeo-Christian context.

*Recovery from work* - Recovery refers to "unwinding and restoration processes during which a person's strain level that has increased as a reaction to a stressor or any other demand returns to its prestressor level" (Sonnentag et al. 2017, p. 366). Job strain symptoms include anger, distress, anxiety, fatigue, exhaustion, and a depressed mood.

*Stress* – In a generic sense, stress is defined as "the nonspecific response of the body to any demand," and more specifically, within the behavioral sciences, stress is the "perception of threat, with resulting anxiety, discomfort, emotional tension, and difficulty in adjustment" (Fink, 2010, p. 5).

*Burnout* – "Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy" (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 397).

*Self-Determination Theory (SDT)* – Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a motivation theory that focuses on the individual's ability to remain motivated at work within specific environmental factors such as management style and support (Rigby & Ryan, 2018).

*Effort recovery model* – The Effort Recovery Model (ERM) provides another theory of human motivation that connects physiological and psychological systems. Three components of the Effort-Recovery Model: 1) employees use psychological resources to deal with work-related activity; 2) resource usage leads to task performance and resource decline; and 3) recovery can begin when the work-related demands end (Meijman & Mulder, 1998).

*Theology of work* – A theology of work is a theological framework built on the concept that God designs human work to bring restoration to all of creation (Volf, 2001; Diddams & Daniels, 2008; Griesinger, 2010).

## Scope and Delimitations

This study will examine the impact of spiritual engagement, particularly Sabbath rest, as a spiritual resource for adjunct faculty in higher education institutions in the United States. The primary focus will be on understanding how spiritual engagement can serve as a mechanism for recovery from work-related stress and burnout. The study is grounded in adjunct faculty who often face challenges such as low pay, lack of job security, and insufficient institutional support.

The objectives of this study will be to:

* Investigate the relationship between spiritual engagement and the need for recovery from work among adjunct faculty.
* Identify the role of Sabbath rest in mitigating work-related stress and enhancing overall well-being.
* Contribute to the existing body of literature by integrating faith-based perspectives into work engagement and recovery discussions.

Data will be collected through surveys with adjunct faculty members currently employed at various higher education institutions across the United States. The study will utilize quantitative methods to understand the research problem. The time frame for the study includes data collection over six weeks, followed by analysis and interpretation of results.

This study is delimited to adjunct faculty in higher education institutions within the United States, excluding full-time, tenured, or tenure-track faculty. The focus on adjunct faculty is due to their distinctive employment conditions and the heightened stress they experience compared to their tenured counterparts. The study will explore the practice of Sabbath rest as a form of spiritual engagement, excluding other forms of spiritual practices that may also contribute to stress reduction and well-being. This choice is justified by the need to focus on a single, well-defined spiritual resource.

The study is further delimited by not aiming to compare the effectiveness of Sabbath rest with other secular or religious stress management techniques, nor does it address broader organizational strategies for reducing work-related stress. Instead, it concentrates on the individual practices of adjunct faculty and how these practices influence their recovery from work demands.

Furthermore, the study is constrained by the availability and willingness of adjunct faculty to participate in the research. The findings may be influenced by self-reporting biases and the specific characteristics of the sampled population, which may limit the generalizability of the results to all adjunct faculty members in the United States.

## Limitations

This study was limited due to the sampling technique and study design. Convenience sampling may not represent the population sample; therefore, generalizability will be limited. Also, the sample size is limited to adjunct faculty from a select number of higher education institutions in the United States, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other career fields. The self-reported nature of the survey data introduces the potential for response bias, where participants might provide socially desirable answers rather than their true experiences. Additionally, the study focuses specifically on the practice of Sabbath rest, excluding other spiritual practices that could also impact work-related stress and recovery. The reliance on self-reported measures for assessing stress and spiritual engagement may lead to subjective interpretations of these constructs.

Another limitation is the study's cross-sectional design, which captures data at a single point in time and does not account for changes over time or long-term effects of spiritual engagement. Finally, the study's findings are context-specific and may not apply to adjunct faculty outside the United States in different cultural or institutional settings.

Finally, this study acknowledges the potential limitations in integrating faith-based perspectives into broader organizational and psychological theories, recognizing that the findings may primarily resonate with those who share similar theological beliefs.

## Assumptions

Several assumptions underlie this study on the effects of Sabbath rest as a spiritual resource for adjunct faculty. First, it is assumed that participants will provide honest and accurate responses to the survey questions regarding their experiences with work-related stress and spiritual engagement. This assumption is critical, as the reliability of the data depends on the truthfulness of the participants' self-reports. Second, it is assumed that participants understand the survey questions and have the ability to reflect on and report their experiences accurately. This assumption is important to ensure that the data collected is meaningful and interpretable.

Third, the instruments used to measure stress, burnout, and spiritual engagement are assumed to be valid and reliable. These tools have been previously validated in similar studies, and their use in this research assumes that they accurately capture the constructs of interest. Fourth, the study assumes that the Self-Determination Theory's framework and the Sabbath rest are appropriate for examining the relationship between work-related stress and spiritual engagement among adjunct faculty.

Finally, it is assumed that the conditions under which the study is conducted are stable and not significantly influenced by external factors such as institutional policies or economic changes that could impact the participants' experiences of stress and spiritual engagement.

## Summary and Conclusion

This chapter establishes the foundation for investigating the role of Sabbath rest as a spiritual resource for adjunct faculty experiencing work-related stress and burnout. The pervasiveness of work-related stress is evidenced across various professions in America (APA (American Psychological Association), 2020). Notably, there are heightened stress levels among adjunct faculty in higher education (Varga & Denniston, 2022; Han et al., 2020). Work-related stress significantly impacts mental and physical health, decreasing productivity and increasing medical costs. The problem is further aggravated by the growing reliance on adjunct faculty, who often face job insecurity, low pay, and limited career advancement opportunities (Spinrad et al., 2022; Spinrad & Relles, 2022; Danaei, 2019).

The study's theoretical frameworks are the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and the Effort-Recovery Model (ERM). SDT emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 1985). It provides a lens to understand how adjunct faculty can achieve greater work engagement and satisfaction through these psychological needs. On the other hand, the Effort-Recovery Model focuses on the balance between work effort and recovery, highlighting the need for adequate recovery periods to prevent stress and burnout (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). Both models, however, have limitations in addressing spiritual resources and personal agency from a Christian worldview perspective.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the gap in research on the effects of spiritual engagement on adjunct faculty. While there is extensive literature on workplace stress and recovery, most of it is framed within secular worldviews that do not consider spiritual resources. This study aims to integrate faith into the discussion by identifying Sabbath rest as a valuable spiritual resource for adjunct faculty. Sabbath rest, defined as a commitment to stop work and focus on faith and family, is suggested to help mitigate work-related stress and burnout, thereby enhancing overall well-being.

This study will delve deeper into the literature on work-related stress, burnout, and recovery strategies in the following chapters, explicitly focusing on adjunct faculty. It will then present the research methodology, including the design, sample selection, and data collection procedures. The results of the study will be analyzed and discussed, highlighting the impact of Sabbath rest on reducing work-related stress and burnout among adjunct faculty. Finally, the dissertation will conclude with implications for practice, recommendations for higher education institutions, and suggestions for future research.

# Chapter 2

## Introduction

The need for recovery from work is an increasing topic of research in human resource management, organizational leadership, and work psychology (Sonnetag et al., 2022). Spiritual engagement available to employees and workplace spirituality promotes job satisfaction, meaning, and work engagement (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Literature on the relationship between spiritual engagement and an employees’ need for recovery from work is lacking (Büssing et al., 2013; de Diego-Cordero et al., 2021). The problem of the study is that adjunct in online higher education institutions (HEIs) experience a high need for recovery from work and lack adequate spiritual rest (Bennet, 2003; Walker & McPhail, 2009; Chickering, Dalton & Stamm, 2015; Han et al., 2020; Varga & Denniston, 2022). Adjunct faculty have grown to approximately over 48 percent of instructional appointments for HEIs (Colby, 2023). The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work among adjunct faculty in online HEIs.

The relationship between the need for recovery from work and spiritual engagement should be examined to offer insight into spiritual resources for adjunct faculty. Research has not examined the relationship between the need for recovery and spiritual engagement among adjunct faculty (Kühnel, Sonnentag, & Westman, 2009; Bolitzer, 2019). Evidence reveals a positive relationship between an employee’s need for recovery and their work engagement (cite source). Further research should include spiritual engagement among adjunct faculty. The literature search strategies, background of the problem, theoretical framework, sociological perspectives, faith perspectives, synthesis of current literature, variant perspectives, gap in the literature, and a summary are discussed.

## Literature Search Strategy

Developing a thorough literature review requires identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing the context of the study by consulting major published works on a topic (Terrell, 2022). The literature review was obtained from journals and books at the National Library of Congress, the Akron University Bierce Library, the Youngstown State University Maag Library, and Omega Graduate School. Systematic bibliographic searches were performed to find relevant English language, peer-reviewed, studies from several databases including but not limited to SAGE, Springer, Science Direct, Elsevier, PsychINFO, ERIC, ProQuest, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar.

Abstracts, titles, and keywords of studies were searched using combinations of the following terms: *self-determination theory, conservation of resources, work engagement, spiritual resources, spirituality at work, spiritual engagement, adjunct faculty, job resources, need for recovery, theology of work,* and *Sabbath rest*.

A search of article bibliographies identified additional current scholarly, peer-reviewed articles. A refining process was used to research search engines e.g., Google Scholar and Google Books. The library databases used include ERIC, JSTOR, SpringerLink, Elsevier Science Direct, Emeral Insight, EBSCOHost, ProQuest Dissertations, ProQuest Research Library, and SAGE Journal.

## Background of the Problem

Stress is experienced across professions at an all-time high percentage in America. According to the American Psychological Association’s (APA) 2021 Work and Well-being Survey of 1,501 U.S. adult workers, 79% of employees had experienced work-related stress the month before the survey. Nearly 3 in 5 employees reported negative impacts of work-related stress (APA, 2020). Work-related stress leads to physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion and burnout (Danauskė, Raišienė, & Korsakienė, 2023; Maslach et al., 2013; Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Exhaustion and burnout from work-related stress in the United States are linked to serious health conditions, even disease (APA, 2020). Against these societal conditions, higher education relies more on adjunct faculty than full-time tenured faculty to deliver course instruction (Murray, 2019; Spinrad & Relles, 2022). There is heightened stress and exhaustion experienced by adjunct faculty due to the increased job demands and reduced career advancement (Han et al., 2020).

Examining the macro- and micro-level stress factors associated with the experience of adjunct faculty provides a comprehensive understanding of the problem. The macro-level stress factors include academic capitalism, the post-COVID-19 workplace, and the online course delivery format. The micro-level stress factors include the adjunct faculty’s role and the adjunct faculty’s psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These macro- and mico-level stress factors converge, creating an increased need for recovery from work-related stress among online adjunct faculty. Figure 1 details the macro- and micro-level stress factors contributing to adjunct faculty stress. The macro-level stress factors are in the red-shaded boxes, and the micro-level stress factors are in the purple-shaded boxes.

**Figure 1:** Macro & Micro Factors Contributing to Adjunct Faculty Stress

Stress &

Need for Recovery

Online Format

Post-COVID-19

Academic Capitalism

Adjunct Role

Psychological Needs

Macro factors

Micro factors

Impact on faculty

### Macro-Level Stress Factors

The first macro-level stress factor involves academic capitalism, which applies capitalistic practices and tendencies of the larger economy. Academic capitalism is “the pursuit of market and market-like activities to generate external revenues” (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Before delineating the specific nature of academic capitalism, it will be helpful to provide a general analysis of capitalism’s effect on employe well-being. In modern American culture, which values profit and efficiency over well-being, employees are more prone to burnout (Gallagher, 2019). Capitalism heavily emphasizes productivity and efficiency, often at the expense of employee well-being (Daniel, 2019; Isham, Mair, & Jackson, 2020; Obrenovic et al., 2020). American society locates an individual’s identity and worth on their contribution to economic gain. Consumerism has become the vehicle for social status and an external marker of well-being (Balabanis & Stathopoulou, 2021).

Academic capitalism is the application of capitalism within higher education institutions. Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) point out that the “traditional tripartite faculty role of teaching, research, and service…during the period from 1980 to 2004” has shifted from a preference for teaching to researching (p. 25). HEIs created intellectual property offices to manage faculty research and patenting. Thus, by the late 1990s, organizations and associations, e.g., Association of University Technology Managers, were created to promote intellectual property as a new revenue source for HEIs (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Etzkowitz (1993) first coined the term “entrepreneurial university” to describe the growing shift in HEIs looking to promote economic development through faculty research. In the evolution of HEIs developing entrepreneurial attitudes and practices, universities became brokers of knowledge, innovation, and marketable technology (Etzkowitz, 2019; Feola et al., 2021).

Jessop (2018) points out that entrepreneurial HEIs have found five ways to increase revenues. Three of the five ways to increase revenue relate to adjunct faculty, i.e., new methods of teaching that “seek to cut costs and boost efficiency by standardizing and commoditizing education” (Jessop, 2018, p. 107), new markets for university goods through online course and program offerings, and third, new supply sources of faculty to leverage a competitive edge by “maximizing managerial control while curbing labor autonomy” (Spinrad et al., 2022, p. 922). Together, these findings help explain how entrepreneurial approaches to managing HEIs have resulted in adjunct faculty constituting about 70% of instructional staff. One outcome of a progressively entrepreneurial approach to higher education is outsourcing instruction to non-tenure track adjunct faculty (Spinrad & Relles, 2022). Adjunct faculty are tasked with teaching in the new markets of online courses that reach new students. Spinrad et al. (2022) suggest that HEIs review entrepreneurial attitudes and practices from multiple perspectives to serve educational equity and justice.

A second macro-level stress factor is the post-COVID-19 socio-economic environment in America. The ‘Great Resignation’ of 2021 accelerated by the global COVID-19 pandemic is a societal reaction to the problematic working conditions of the 21st century, namely high levels of burnout and an inability to rest from work-related stress (Sheather & Slattery, 2021). Some interpret the workforce reaction as a refusal to work amid COVID-19 health risks (Tessema et al., 2022). Alternatively, it may be possible to classify the large-scale resignations as a reevaluation of the meaning of work for the individual in a post-pandemic era (Sull et al., 2022). The coronavirus pandemic required an immediate shift to remote learning for HEIs. “When organizational change happens quickly, as was the case throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, occupational stressors increase the stress response in employees” (Koster & McHenry, 2023).

Regarding adjunct faculty, it becomes difficult to measure the economic impact of COVID-19. The American Association of University Professors published a report, *The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession, 2020-21*, that provides employment and salary data for 929 HEIs. The report acknowledges the difficult in measuring the financial status of adjunct faculty post-COVID-19:

Any researcher who tries to quantify the economic impact of COVID-19 on contingent faculty members— particularly adjunct faculty members—will quickly discover an ugly secret in higher education: colleges and universities are not required to report detailed employment data on contingent faculty members. (The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession, 2020-21, 2021, p. 12)

Though detailed data is difficult, nevertheless, the challenges noted above concerning the post-COVID-19 work environment would easily apply to adjunct faculty. Bosley and Custer (2021) explain that adjunct faculty receive less than minimum wage per course if time for grading and course preparation are factored. Many adjunct faculty, due to course load maximums, teach at multiple HEIs to financially make ends meet (Koster & McHenry, 2023; Bosley & Custer, 2021; Bickerstaff & Ran, 2020).

The third macro-level factor contributing to adjunct faculty stress is the online course delivery format. Since the emergence of online distance learning began in the late 1990s and recently has become a primary mode of course delivery accounting for 28% of undergraduate students completing online only programs and 61% of undergraduate students taking at least one online course (Kentnor 2015; National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). The proliferation of online course delivery has exacerbated unique stress among adjunct faculty called *technostress*. The term *technostress* was first coined by Brod (1984) to describe the difficulty workers faced managing new computer technology applications in the workplace.  Mahapatra and Pati (2018, as cited in Taser et al., 2022) stated that technostress can lead to employee burnout without proper self-management strategies. Technostress leads to greater need for recovery from work-related stress (Andrulli & Gerards, 2023).

Adjunct faculty face technostress related to educational technology tools, such as Zoom, Learning Management Systems, virtual office hours, emails, and productivity tracking software such as Microsoft Teams, or Salesforce. Technological advancements have significantly strained individual employees (Chen et al., 2009; Harris et al., 2022; Marsh et al., 2022). Working remotely from home, telework presents online adjunct faculty with additional work strain by “blurring boundaries” between home and work life (Varga & Denniston, 2022). The advantages presented by teleworking may become counterproductive by increasing work-related stress (Widar et al., 2022).

### Micro-Level Stress Factors

The first micro-level stress factor related to stress is the role adjuncts play in HEIs. Adjunct faculty face challenging factors endemic to their role as non-tenure track professors, e.g., low pay, lack of institutional support, intense workloads, and often balancing multiple positions at various HEIs (Anthony, 2020; Caruth & Caruth, 2013). Adjunct faculty dissatisfaction has been linked to limited opportunity for advancement and job autonomy, in addition to low pay and job security (Bolitzer, 2019; Maynard & Joseph, 2008; Spinrad et al., 2022). Adjunct faculty are often left without institutional support systems that would engage them in professional development, program evaluation, and curriculum development (Danaei, 2019).

Another micro-level stress factor is unmet psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Adjunct faculty are sacrificing individual psychological needs for the sake of the increased demand. Deci and Ryan (1980) maintain that individuals are highly motivated when their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met in the workplace. In a qualitative study, Koster & McHenry (2023) reveal three significant concerns among adjunct faculty e.g.: work-life imbalance, unmet administrative or colleague support needs, and a lack of psycho-emotional well-being. In the absence of face-to-face interactions, faculty feel disconnected from their students and colleagues (Didenko et al, 2021; Nenakhova, 2021). Adjunct faculty needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are challenging to satisfy online (Masalimova et al., 2023). Faculty cite an imbalance between work-life and loss of control over job tasks as primary reasons for leaving the profession (Flaherty, 2022).

The current adjunct model also has severe human and moral costs, e.g., faculty members often live on poverty wages without benefits, job security or career trajectory. The dominant workplace models, Job Demand-Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001) and Job-Crafting Theory (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), fail to integrate spiritual engagement adequately and thus can only offer a partial remedy. Moderate to high need for recovery results in burnout, a psychological condition characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2001). Adjunct faculty are experiencing exhaustion, burnout, and greater degrees of work-family conflict. White-Lewis et al. (2023) cite the top reason adjunct faculty departures as lack of administrative support and unmet needs that align with self-determination theory.

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundations of the study involves multiple theories each adding a nuance on the need for recovery from work-related stress experienced by online adjunct facult. First, self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan 1980) provides the psychological motivations for employees. Second, the Effort-Recovery Model (Meijman & Mulder, 1998) reveals the processes behind adjunct faculty experience stress in higher education. Finally, a theology of work rooted in a Judeo-Christian perspective provides a spiritual grounds for healthy views of work and worker well-being. Figure 2 shows the relationship between the theoretical foundations explored in the study.

**Figure 2:** Conceptual Framework

### Self-Determination Theory

Deci & Ryan (1980) developed the concept of self-determination theory. This study is framed by Deci and Ryan’s (1980) Self-determination theory (SDT), which offers a robust understanding of human motivation in the workplace (Deci & Ryan, 1980; Gagne et al., 2022; Hobfoll, 1989; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). SDT is a motivation theory that focuses on the individual’s ability to remain motivated at work within specific environmental factors such as management style and support (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). SDT stands in contrast with top-down organizational models such as Job-Demands Resources (Demerouti et al., 2001) which assumes that the organizational leadership is primarily responsible for employee motivation and job satisfaction. Rigby and Ryan (2018) describe this shift from externally regulated motivational models to intrinsically regulated to be a “Copernican Turn” in human resource management.

Applying motivation models which measure employee experiences will greatly enhance organizational culture and improve human resource management (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Self-determination theory emphasizes individual needs involving multiple motivational drivers for employee behavior, i.e., autonomy, competency, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci et al., 2017). SDT has been studied in various contexts, e.g. as education, parenting, healthcare, sports, psychotherapy, and remote work (Deci & Ryan 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Deci et al. define autonomy as “characterized by people being engaged in an activity with a full sense of willingness, volition, and choice” (2017, p. 20). Organizations can impact internally regulated motivation by helping employees understand their jobs' purpose and worth, allowing employees to feel more ownership in executing their jobs, providing objective feedback, and offering support (Deci et al., 2017). Internally regulated motivation can include intrinsic and extrinsic motivational mechanisms. SDT focuses more on the “conditions that elicit and sustain, versus subdue and diminish” intrinsic motivation rather than on the causation of intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70).

SDT as a framework for examining non-tenured adjunct faculty has significant relevance to adjunct faculty’s ability to meet their workplace autonomy needs. Deci et al., (2017) state that “…some work environments foster more autonomous motivation and engagement in their employees, whereas others have them focused more on external contingencies or managers’ approval” (p. 22). HEIs notoriously manage non-tenure adjunct faculty through external mechanisms, e.g., lower pay and benefits, less representation in governing, short-term contracts, often leaving faculty feeling disconnected from the organization (Crick et al., 2020). Ryan and Deci’s (2000) study found that external regulators, e.g., compliance, rewards, punishments, reduce an employee’s intrinsic motivation. Situated within the context of non-tenured adjunct faculty, this study examines the relationship between an employee’s practice of spiritual rest and their need for recovery from work.

### Effort-Recovery Model

The Effort-Recovery Model (Meijman & Mulder, 1998) provides another theory of human motivation that connects physiological and psychological systems. Three components of the Effort-Recovery Model: 1) employees use psychological resources to deal with work-related activity; 2) resource usage leads to task performance and resource decline; and 3) recovery can begin when the work-related demands end (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). There are four classic recovery experiences: a) psychological detachment, which is not thinking about work during nonwork hours; b) relaxation, which is having a low activation level; c) mastery, which is facing a positive challenge to learn something new; and d) control, which is having a feeling of control over nonwork time (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007; Bennett, Bakker, & Field, 2017). The roots of the ERM can be found in several developments in organizational psychology. First, Lazarus & Folkman’s (1984) distinguished work explains that job demands can either be challenge demands or hindrance demands. Crawford et al. (2010) support these findings in their study. The stress-appraisal approach (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) shows that work demands could be positive or negative and helps recategorize work characteristics as challenge demands, hindrance demands, and job resources (Cavanaugh et al., 2000). Challenge demands include time constraints and workloads, which become stressful but also contribute to employee self-efficacy (Bennett, Bakker, & Field, 2017), autonomous motivation, and increased work engagement in a problem-solving activity. However, problem-solving rumination during nonwork time is negatively related to psychological detachment (Querstret & Cropley, 2012). Employees struggle to find relaxation experiences. Podsakoff, LePine, & LePine (2007) demonstrated that work characteristics are positively related to long-term effects such as burnout and performance but have less to do with employee affect and energy resources. Emphasis is placed on employees’ need for recovery after work to manage short-term effects of fatigue, exhaustion, and vigor. Short-term effects vary daily (Sonnentag, 2012; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). There is a negative relationship between the need for recovery and employee well-being (Andruilli & Gerards, 2023; Sonnentag & Zijlstra, 2006).

### Theology of Work

Contemporary research describes spiritual rest in terms of practicing mindfulness, developing work-life balance, and deepening awareness of work as meaningful to one’s inner life (Mhatre & Mehta, 2023; Singh & Singh, 2022; Rathee & Rajain, 2020; Marschke, Preziosi, & Harrington, 2009). This study proposes an interdisciplinary theology of work developed through examining social sciences, organizational psychology, and the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Spiritual rest in the Judeo-Christian context is defined as a Sabbath rest. Spiritual rest is necessary for developing a proper theology of work. Gallagher (2019) describes Sabbath rest as a spiritual discipline practiced daily to “create space for God” and as an “attitude of orientation towards the living God in each day, and as a sacred time to pursue God in each week” (p. 143). A Hebrew perspective of time is offered by Rabbi Heschel (1951). Sabbath is a preparation for eternity that involves mystical, spiritual discipline separate from regular activity, aligning oneself to God’s timing (Heschel, 1951; Gallagher, 2019). Sabbath involves family worship, remembering God’s nature and activity, and appreciating the connection between God, self, and others. Eugene Peterson (1989) describes the Sabbath from a Hebrew perspective, ordered with an evening-to-morning orientation. Peterson (1989) states, “We wake into a world we didn’t make, into a salvation we didn’t earn” (p. 69).

In this way, Sabbath rest becomes a holistic way to orient human activity beyond a work stoppage. Sabbath rest enables a person to discover meaning in work and work’s proper relationship to life (de Villiers & Marchinkowski, 2021). Marschke, Preziosi, and Harrington (2009) make the same claim of workplace spirituality; however, they do so without reference to a Judeo-Christian heritage. Workplace spirituality is “the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community” (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000, p. 137). The critical difference between a secular workplace spirituality and a Sabbath rest lies in the source. Sabbath rest contrasts workplace spirituality, which emphasizes increased moral values in the workplace and encourages employees to nourish their inner life (Mhatre & Mehta, 2023; Singh & Singh, 2022; Rathee & Rajain, 2020). Additionally, Sabbath rest seeks a rest in the divine, not the self (de Villiers & Marchinkowski, 2021). The transformative nature of Sabbath rest can be accessed when the practice goes beyond a stoppage of work and becomes a regularly scheduled time set aside for reflection on the meaning of life and work (Diddams et al., 2004).

The function of Sabbath rest is to create space for God’s presence to obtain a proper perspective on work (Gallagher, 2019). A proper theology of rest finds its culmination in Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of God’s Sabbath law as the (Möller, 2019; *New International Version*, 2011, Matthew 5:17). Christ embodies the Sabbath by returning the Sabbath to its original role of creating freedom rather than a socio-economic system of oppression (Brueggemann, 2021; Andreasen, 2019). Christ offers himself as the Sabbath (Matthew 11:29-30). Observing Christ’s activities on the Sabbath provides readers with a balanced understanding of the role of the Sabbath in an individual’s life. Christ taught, participated in synagogue, gathered food, healed the sick and oppressed on the Sabbath (Mark 1:27-28; Mark 2:23-28; Mark 3:1-6; Mark 6:1-2; Luke 4:16; Luke 13:10-17; and John 5:5). Through these controversial actions on the Sabbath, Christ demonstrates that the Sabbath is designed for the benefit of the people, specifically to restore the marginalized in society (Brueggemann, 2021; Gallagher, 2019; Andreasen, 2019).

MacCarty (2011) claims that “true Sabbath observance joins God in the work of redemption, relieving the burdens of the oppressed…” (p. 65). However, it would be an inaccurate conclusion to view Christ as always working on the Sabbath. Christ regularly teaches the value of physical and spiritual rest throughout the Gospel teachings (Luke 5:15-16; Mark 1:35-45; Matthew 14:13-23). Christ teaches a proper balance between work and rest in God’s kingdom. Work and rest are not viewed as mutually exclusive. Both need to be rightly ordered. Sabbath liberates humans from the burden of not perpetual work (Muller, 1999). God offers Sabbath as a counter-cultural practice of rhythmic work and rest in contrast to the imbalance of work until exhaustion and burnout (Gallagher, 2019; Breuggemann, 2014).

## Sociological Perspectives

Several motivation theories within organizational psychology inform workplace management. Each motivation theory is built on prior assumptions of general human behavior. This section examines the dominant workplace motivation theories.

### Motivation Theory in the Workplace

**Deci & Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory.** Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of basic human needs has fundamentally shaped motivation theories in psychology. Deci and Ryan contextualize Maslow’s theory in the workplace to describe employee needs. By studying employee behavior, Deci and Ryan (2000) have determined that employees have innate psychological needs, i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The degree to which the needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met will determine the degree of employee job satisfaction, performance, and well-being (Goštautaitė, Bučiūnienė, & Milašauskienė, 2022). Rigby and Ryan (2018) describe top-down management approaches often neglect critical and potent intrinsic motivational capacities within individual employees. Human resource management in the 21st century has shifted emphasis from organizational, top-down employee engagement models toward individual, bottom-up approaches. From an individualistic perspective, employees exhibit three basic human needs: a) relatedness, the need to have close, affectionate relationships with others; b) autonomy, the need to control the course of their lives; and c) competence, the need to be effective in dealing with the environment (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Gagné et al., 2022).

## Faith Perspectives

Maintaining resources and preventing loss is a primary concern for most employees. Hobfoll’s conservation of resources (COR) theory (1989) elucidates this by proposing that individuals strive to acquire, retain, and protect valued resources to mitigate stress and maintain psychological health. This study examines the limitations of COR theory and explores alternative perspectives, particularly from a Christian faith-integrated viewpoint, to better understand the complexities of employee motivation and resource management.

***Hobfoll’s Conservation of Resources Theory*.** Most employees are inherently concerned with maintaining resources and preventing loss. Employees experiencing high strain have decreased job satisfaction and increased likelihood of burnout or turnover (Podsakoff, LePine, & LePine, 2007; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Hobfoll’s conservation of resources theory (1989) explains why individuals seek resources and respond when resources are threatened. Conservation of resources (COR) theory explains human motivation in the workplace, proposing that “…individuals will strive to maintain, preserve, cultivate, defend, and build those resources that they value” (Dewe, 2017, p. 429). According to Hobfoll’s theory, stress is a reaction to a threat or loss of real or perceived resources (Holmgreen et al., 2017; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Conservation of Resources theory claims the primary human motivator is to seek to obtain, retain, and protect resources to avoid stress, be psychologically healthy, and have positive work-flow experiences.

Evaluating the underlying assumption of the conservation of resources will reveal inadequacies in understanding human motivation. Many organizational theories are based on COR such as Job-Demands Resouces theory (Demerouti et al., 2001), Job-Crafting Theory (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), and the Effort-Recovery Model (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). Though the literature seems to support Hobfoll’s theory, there are concerns with the theory’s assumptions. Conservation of resources theory is built on the three prior assumptions of Freud’s pleasure principle, Maslow’s heirarchy of needs, and Bandura’s social learning theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Two of these assumptions, Freud’s pleasure principle and Maslow’s heirarchy of needs, seem unable to explain more complex human motivations from a Christian faith-integrated perspective. Freud’s (1900/1913) pleasure principle holds that humans are subconsciously motivated toward pleasure and away from pain. However, enduring suffering can viewed as a mark of maturity when done with a purpose (Hannush, 2021). Maslow’s (1968) heirarchy of needs argues that humans seeks needs in a progressive fashion from physical, social, and then to psychological. Maslow believed that satisfied needs do not motivate behavior (Greene & Burke, 2007). Self-determination theory assumes that human behavior is driven by an innate need for growth (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Striving for growth is different than striving for the acquisition of resources.

Hobfoll bases the conservation of resources theory on an “evolutionary need to acquire” resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). However, in Matthew’s gospel, Jesus also connects the concept of stress to acquiring resources (Matthew 6). From a biblical perspective, stress increases with the preoccupation with more resources. Hobfoll and Jesus address the perception of a lack of available resources. The distinctive difference is that Jesus’ approach locates the provision of resources in God’s covenant with his people. In contrast, Hobfoll assumes that the world is a place of scarcity in which self-preservation strategies are necessary for survival. This scarcity mindset is due to the fact that after the Fall, humans have to work hard to survive, which can lead to a feeling of scarcity and fear of not having enough. This scarcity mindset can lead to perceiving the world as a threatening place. COR does not identify which resources provide the ultimate benefit. Whereas a Christian faith identifies the most important resources as those coming from a faith experience. Additionally, COR suggests resources are an end in themselves rather than a means to other ends. These reasons make the conservation of resources theory a limited sociological lens that does not address the complexities of employee needs from a Christian faith-integrated perspective.

## Synthesis of Current Literature

The two dominant work engagement models in organizational psychology previously mentioned are the Job-Demands Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001) and the Job-Crafting Theory (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Each model has significant inadequacies from a Christian worldview perspective. The theoretical model of the Job-Demands Resources theory is based on a unidirectional relationship between the employer/employee. As a top-down approach to organizational behavior, employers are responsible for designing jobs with a proper balance of demands and resources. Job resources are believed to help employees accomplish goals and mitigate the effects of job demands (Van Wingerden, Derks, & Bakker, 2017). Job demands lead to eventual burnout, and job resources lead to work engagement. This dynamic presupposes a nonmutual, even adversarial, relationship between employer and employee. In this model, there is no room to recognize the potential of employees to have internal motives for productive work and accountability. The burden of accountability is placed on management, and the employee is considered a passive player in the relationship. This model does not allow for mutual goal setting and alignment between management and the employee.

Though Job-Crafting takes an opposite bottom-up approach to organizational behavior, it is incompatible with a Christian worldview perspective on work and employee well-being. First, the Job-drafting theory presupposes that a proactive employee should begin the process of job crafting (Teng & Chen, 2019; Vermooten et al., 2019). The outcomes of job crafting could lead to greater work engagement and job satisfaction or potentially overwork and exploit the employee at the cost of the employee’s well-being (Bolino et al., 2016; Harju, Kaltiainen, & Hakanen, 2021). Experts identify the potential for employee exploitation as the ‘dark side’ of Job-Crafting; however, there is not an adequate explanation for how to avoid this downside (Demerouti, Bakker, & Halbesleben, 2015; Hood, 2019; Boehnlein & Baum, 2022). The Job-Crafting model prioritizes work productivity as the Job-Demands Resources model over employee well-being. The burden of responsibility for rectifying an imbalance of demands and resources is left to the proactive employee. Employees without a proactive personality cannot access the Job-Crafting model’s benefits (Niessen, Weseler, & Kostova, 2016; Vermooten et al., 2019). Studies show conflicting evidence about the ability of employees to job craft in all occupations. Some authors argue that specific work environments and industries may be hostile or incompatible with a proactive employee seeking job crafting (Rudolph et al., 2017), whereas Petrou et al. (2012) stated that job crafting can occur in any occupational context.

### Spiritual Engagement

Bickerton et al. (2014) was the first study to operationalize spiritual resources as a subcategory of personal resources within Hobfoll’s (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. Spiritual resources, defined as beliefs, practices, and experiences that result from a connection to the divine, include a secure attachment to God, collaborative religious coping, and calling (Bickerton et al., 2014).

One of the more significant conclusions Bickerton et al. (2014) found was that spiritual resources had a more significant effect on work engagement than job resources among religious workers. This finding supports personal resources within the conceptual framework of Job-Crafting and agrees with Demerouti et al.’s (2001) insistence that Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R) should only include organizational resources job control, autonomy, promotion, and task variety. Though the Bickerton et al. (2014) study offers significant advancement of spiritual resources to manage job demands, personal resources are not conceptually part of the JD-R model. The Job Demands-Resources model identifies job characteristics as demands on the employee or a resource the employee can leverage against the demands. However, the founding authors explicitly state that the demands and resources are inherent in the job design and cannot include individual employee characteristics (Demerouti et al, 2001). As a result, employees can leverage spiritual resources to improve work engagement. This study would have better fit spiritual resources within the Job-Crafting model since it provides employees the capacity to achieve work engagement from a bottom-up conceptual approach.

Bickerton et al. (2014) inaccurately cites Demerouti et al.’s (2001) founding study on JD-R model as claiming that job resources and personal resources promote work engagement (Bickerton et al., 2014, p. 371). However, Demerouti et al. (2001) take the position that “in our study, we focus on external resources because there is no general agreement regarding which internal resources can be considered stable or situation independent - and which can be changed by adequate job design” (p. 501). The full scope of job resources included feedback, job rewards, job control, participation, job security, and supervisor support (Demerouti et al., 2001) which are strictly confined to job characteristics rather than personal resources.

Spirituality is the “human craving for connection with the transcendent, the desire to integrate the self into a meaningful whole, and attaining one’s potential…” (Nwanzu & Babalola, 2021, p. 127). Mitroff and Denton (1999) also emphasize spirituality as connecting with others in the universe. Three factors compose spirituality: connecting to the work community, finding significance at work, and accessing individual hopefulness (Arokiasamy & Tat, 2020). Cavanagh (1999) defined the concept as “the desire to find ultimate purpose in life, and to live accordingly.” Ashmos and Duchon (2000) defined spirituality at work as “recognition of an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community.”

The literature makes a distinction between workplace spirituality and employee spiritual engagement. Workplace spirituality focuses on the overall environment cultivated by the organization that enables employees to experience a sense of connection with others, transcendence, meaning, and inner satisfaction (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Shankar Pawar, 2008). Enhancing workplace spirituality allows employees to feel connected to the organization, increasing work engagement and a sense of belonging (Arokiasamy & Tat, 2020). “This suggests that higher levels of work engagement could lead to higher levels of workplace spirituality. As such, organisations could potentially promote work engagement (vigour, dedication & absorption) by focusing more on workplace spirituality” (Arokiasamy & Tat, 2020, p. 861). Studies that address spirituality in the workplace are done at an organizational level. Yet, little research exists addressing individual employee spiritual engagement (de Diego-Cordero et al., 2021).

As educators experience a need for recovery, HEI administrators should look for new ways to offer spiritual resources. This is additive to the role spirituality plays in well-being. The study shows well-being is affected by decreasing burnout and increasing job satisfaction. This study should provide a significant basis for advocating spiritual engagement. “Spiritual resources are a class of personal resources derived from a connection with a sacred being” (Hashemi et al., 2017). The results showed that spiritual resources, both directly and indirectly through emotional exhaustion and work engagement, significantly affect employees’ work well-being and turnover intention. The results also indicated that spiritual resources, despite cultural and religious differences, can increase the perception of control, the sense of meaning and calling and flexibility in the employees, thereby reducing emotional exhaustion and increasing work engagement (Hashemi et al., 2017).

### Background of Instrument and Variables

This quantitative correlational study will examine the relationship between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions utilizing two validated instruments, the Spiritual Engagement Instrument (SpEI; Roof, Bocarnea, & Winston, 2017) and the Need for Recovery Scale short-form (NFR; Stevens et al., 2019). The instruments measure an individual’s spiritual engagement and that individual’s need for recovery from work, respectively. The statistical analysis of these two instruments could point to items of correlation between spiritual engagement and the need for recovery from work.

The Need for Recovery Scale short-form (NFR) instrument measures employee exhaustion and the need for recovery from work (Stevens et al., 2019). The instrument consists of three items. Second, this study will also utilize the Spiritual Engagement Instrument (SpEI), measuring factors of spiritual engagement in four dimensions, i.e., worship, meditation, fasting, and spiritual rest (Roof et al., 2017). This study will focus on the analysis of the spiritual rest subscale, which consists of five items.

The Spiritual Engagement Instrument (SpEI; Roof, Bocarnea, & Winston, 2017) is a tool that measures factors of spiritual engagement in four dimensions (i.e., worship, meditation, fasting, and rest). The SpEI is scored on a six-point Likert scale: strongly agree, moderately agree, mildly agree, mildly disagree, moderately disagree, and strongly disagree. The SpEI can measure the four dimensions in conjunction with other social constructs, such as job satisfaction or leadership behaviors in the workplace (Roof et al., 2017). The Cronbach alpha values for each of the four dimensions of the SpEI are: worship 0.94, meditation 0.96, fasting 0.98, and rest 0.96. The four factors together explain 85.24% of the variance (Roof et al., 2017).

The SpEI survey is intended to capture perceptions within a participant’s own faith tradition, worldview, or philosophy, those spiritual practice and association beliefs and attitudes that draw that person closer to God or the divine. Though the participant may feel strongly theologically or have specific ideas of how the spiritual practices or disciplines should be conducted, the survey was designed to measure across a wide range of such perspectives. Each participant is encouraged to do their best not to be distracted by the nature of any specific question. Each statement is rated on a Likert scale using the categories of Strongly Agree, Moderately Agree, Mildly Agree, Mildly Disagree, Moderately Disagree, and Strongly Disagree, as indicated on the survey form.

The Need for Recovery Scale (NFR) developed by Stevens et al. (2019) is a validated short-form version of the Danish Need for Recovery Scale. The short form can reduce the burden on researchers and respondents by creating and validating a shortened version of the Danish NFR Scale (Stevens et al., 2019). The short-form NFR scale consists of three items (exhausted at the end of a work day, hard to find interest in other people after a work day, it takes over an hour to fully recover from a work day) demonstrated excellent validity and responsiveness compared to the full nine-item scale (Stevens et al., 2019). The Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) score is 0.88, identical to a Cronbach alpha score. The ICC Responsiveness score is 0.80 (Stevens et al., 2019). The Need for Recovery short-form version is scored on a five-point Likert scale.

## Variant Perspectives

Scholars have built an extensive research base over the past four decades addressing work engagement, recovery from work, stress, and burnout. There are two primary worldview perspectives in the currently established research. However, both worldviews address an employee’s need for recovery from work, with notable differences. First, a humanistic worldview limits the employee resources and work demands to material objects such as compensation, promotion, and benefits or temporal circumstances such as supervisor feedback, environmental pressures, emotional demands, and so forth. Within the humanistic framework, there is no acknowledgment of spiritual resources available for the employee to mitigate work-related stress and burnout. Employers and employees are relegated to negotiating between material and tangible resources and demands to improve work engagement and productivity. Pantheism is a second existing worldview with research support in employee work engagement. Several studies have demonstrated the positive effects of mindfulness on relieving work-related stress and increasing work engagement.

### Proactive Personality Theory

Proactive Personality theory is an alternative framework for explaining the effects of an employee’s need for recovery from work and work engagement (Sonnentag, 2003; Kakanen et al., 2008; Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010). Bateman and Crant’s (1993) built the Proactive Personality theory to describe the systemic relationship between the person, environment, and behavior. Proactive behavior directly alters environments with personal and situational causes (Lewin, 1938). A Proactive Personality is a disposition toward proactive behaviors, e.g., scan for opportunities, show initiative, take action, and persevere until change or closure occurs (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010). However, the Proactive Personality theory was not part of this study’s conceptual framework. Proactive Personality is linked to employees staying engaged at work in the face of increasing demands (Bakker, 2011; Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012). On the other hand, self-determination theory offers a better framework for examining faculty motivations and job satisfaction (Crick et al., 2020).

The two dominant work engagement models in organizational psychology are the Job-Demands Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001) and the Job-Crafting Theory (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). The Job-Demands Resources theory views all job characteristics (i.e., psychological, organizational, physical, and social) from an organizational perspective as either demands or resources. Job demands such as high-pressure situations and emotionally demanding work, among others, increase strain, leading to cynicism, work-related stress, and potential burnout. Job resources help employees accomplish goals and mitigate the effects of job demands (Van Wingerden, Derks, & Bakker, 2017). Job resources such as compensation, career advancement, and peer support, among others, lead to employee motivation, engagement, and productivity (Zhang & Parker, 2019). Employers use this top-down management approach to design jobs, balancing demands and resources.

### Job Demands-Resources Theory

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R; Demerouti et al., 2001) model is a dominant perspective in organizational psychology. It appears that JD-R is less about provoking strategies for change and more about describing the effects of employee job dynamics. By definition, the JD-R model is all of the job characteristics from an organization’s perspective that categorize all characteristics as job demands or resources. Research demonstrates that individual employees may vary in classifying a job demand as positive (i.e., challenge demand) or negative. Therefore, how can a job characteristic be inherently categorized as a challenge or hindrance demand without factoring in the effect on the employee?

### Job-Crafting Theory

The Job-Crafting Theory is an employee-initiated approach to shaping the work environment to fit individual needs when and as the employee feels necessary (J-CT; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012; Petrou et al., 2012). Employees engage in crafting through three domains, i.e., tasks, relationships, and cognitions. Job crafting presupposes an employee’s proactive personality to initiate the job crafting process (Niessen, Weseler, & Kostova, 2016). The job crafting process demonstrates positive benefits of employee work engagement, such as vigor, dedication, and absorption (Oprea et al., 2019). Some research suggests that job crafting has adverse side effects, such as misaligned goals, unequal access, overwork, and exploitation (Demerouti, Bakker, & Halbesleben, 2015; Hood, 2019; Boehnlein & Baum, 2022). Irshad and Raja (2021) cite job-crafting as a mediator of job satisfaction for HEI faculty amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Variations of JD-R and J-CT

Several authors attempt to bring these two theories together. Employee can engage in job crafting through four behaviors: increasing structural job resources, increasing social job resources, increasing challenging job demands, and decreasing hindering job demands (Ferreira et al., 2022). However, the Job Crafting model (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) and Job-Demands Resources model (Tims et al., 2012) maintain significant differences. They differ in defining job crafting content. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) focus on changes in task/relational/cognitive boundaries, whereas Tims et al. (2012) focus on changes in job characteristics. Job crafting and job-demands resources also differ in terms of purpose. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) consider crafting as a way to improve meaning and work identity, whereas Tims et al. (2012) consider crafting as a way to balance job resources and demands to achieve person-job fit (Zhang and Parker, 2019).

Job Demands-Resource theory advocates borrowing and conducting research that measures personal resources such as self-efficacy and optimism. Xanthopoulou et al.’s (2007) study, working with the JD-R theory, demonstrated that job resources tend to increase personal resources, thus resulting in positive individual and organizational outcomes. As job resources are more accessible to employees, then employees will sense greater personal resources (e.g., self-efficacy, optimism) and remain engaged in the organization. Xanthopoulou et al.’s (2007) study claims to confirm the JD-R model and expand the model by locating personal resources within the framework. Bakker & Demerouti (2007) argue for including personal resources with the JD-R model based on Xanthopoulou et al.’s (2007) study. Bakker & Demerouti (2007) argue that “personal resources partly mediated the relationship between job resources and work engagement, suggesting that job resources foster the development of personal resources” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 323).

In another study, Bakker & Demerouti (2008) explain that the reasoning for expanding the JD-R model is based on Xanthopoulou et al.’s (2007) study showing how personal resources affect work engagement and that personal and job resources are interrelated. Nevertheless, the authors then recommend further research to establish the inclusion of personal resources in the JD-R model. The fact that personal and job resources are related to increased work engagement and decreased exhaustion is clear. However, the question is whether the JD-R model is designed and intends to incorporate personal resources. The original studies in Job Demands-Resource theory excluded personal resources with an explicit preference for resources to be exclusively organizational rather than personal. Though more recent studies have expanded the JD-R model to be more inclusive of personal resources. Bakker & Demerouti (2017) allow the JD-R model to encompass personal resources and job crafting.

## Literature Gap

Focusing on spiritual engagement as a resource for employee work engagement may enable adjunct faculty working in an online environment to experience recovery from work and relief from work-related stress, leading to decreased burnout. Current literature on adjunct faculty promotes negotiating job demands and resources to achieve job satisfaction and well-being (Eagan Jr., Jaeger, & Grantham, 2015; Bolitzer, 2019). However, there is a gap in the literature concerning spiritual engagement of adjunct faculty to reduce the need for recovery from work (Kühnel, Sonnentag, & Westman, 2009; Büssing et al., 2013; Roof et al., 2017). Spiritual resources are a class of personal resources derived from a connection with the divine being (Hashemi et al., 2017). Spiritual engagement differs from workplace spirituality by focusing on individual practices rather than the organizational environment. Spiritual rest or the practice of Sabbath involves a commitment to stop labor, engage in rest, and adjust daily habits to focus on faith and family (Chandler, 2010; Gallagher, 2019; Hartman, 2011; Roof et al., 2017).

As faculty experience a need for recovery, HEI administrators should look for new ways to offer or promote employee sustainability through alternate means, such as spiritual resources (Varga & Denniston, 2022; Spinrad et al., 2022). Spirituality plays an additive role in employee well-being. Increasing spiritual engagement positively affects employee well-being and job satisfaction and decreases burnout (Hashemi et al., 2017). Hashemi et al. (2017) demonstrated that spiritual resources improve employee well-being, and reduce turnover intention by positively affecting an employee’s perception of control, the sense of meaning and calling, and flexibility.

This study will contribute to the gap in literature among Christian social researchers examining the effects of spiritual engagement on non-ministerial professions (Büssing et al., 2013; Kühnel, Sonnentag, & Westman, 2009; Roof et al., 2017) by identifying sabbath rest as a spiritual resource for adjunct faculty in need of recovery from work demands. A handful of studies exist on the spiritual resource constructs among the clergy (Büssing et al., 2013; Chandler, 2009; Chandler, 2010; Hough et al., 2019; Terry & Cunningham, 2020). However, the same research questions are not being conducted for adjunct faculty in HEIs (Bolitzer, 2019). As well as the significant gap in empirical research, social researchers are not integrating faith into the workplace, leaving many Christians to rely on resources based on incompatible worldviews such as atheism, humanism, and pantheism.

# Chapter 3

## Introduction

This chapter is an introduction to the research methodology for this quantitative correlational study regarding the relationship between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions. This approach will examine potential correlations between the practice of spiritual rest and its effect on the need for recovery from work-related stress among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions. The research plan, including the research questions, hypotheses, methodology, design, dissertation participants, instrumentation, data collection procedures and analysis, ethical considerations are also primary components of this chapter.

The problem is adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions experience a high need for recovery from work and lack adequate spiritual rest (Varga & Denniston, 2022; Han et al., 2020; Bennet, 2003; Walker & McPhail, 2009; Chickering, Dalton & Stamm, 2015). The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

The research questions emerged from the purpose statement. The hypotheses aligned with the research questions to support the purpose of the dissertation. The results of the dissertation answered the research hypotheses.

## Research Questions

This study seeks to examine the relationship between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work in answer to the following research questions:

RQ1: What relationship exists, if any, between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions?

RQ2: What relationship, if any, exists between spiritual rest and years of teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions?

RQ3: What relationship, if any, exists between the need for recovery from work and years of teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions?

This study formulates specific hypotheses to guide the investigation of the relationships between spiritual rest, the need for recovery from work, and teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online HEIs. These hypotheses aim to determine whether statistically significant relationships exist between these variables, thus providing an understanding of the potential impacts of spiritual rest on faculty need for recovery from work. This study seeks to generate empirical evidence that can inform faculty practices, HEI policies, and support systems designed to enhance the overall work experience for adjunct faculty. The following section details the hypotheses to be examined.

## Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be examined in this study:

H01: No statistically significant relationship exists between spiritual rest subscale scores and the need for recovery from work scores among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha1: A statistically significant relationship exists between spiritual rest subscale scores and the need for recovery from work scores among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

H02: No statistically significant relationship exists between spiritual rest subscale scores and years of adjunct teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha2: A statistically significant relationship exists between spiritual rest subscale scores and years of adjunct teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

H02a: No statistically significant relationship exists between spiritual rest subscale scores and faculty length of employment among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha2a: A statistically significant relationship exists between spiritual rest subscale scores and faculty length of employment among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

H03: No statistically significant relationship exists between recovery from work scores and years of adjunct teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha3: A statistically significant relationship exists between recovery from work scores and years of adjunct teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

H03a: No statistically significant relationship exists between recovery from work scores and faculty length of employment among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha3a: A statistically significant relationship exists between recovery from work scores and faculty length of employment among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

### Hypotheses for “Other Findings” (Indirectly Related to RQs)

The following hypotheses, though not directly related to the research questions, will be examined for other findings:

H04: No statistically significant difference exists in spiritual rest subscale scores between retired and non-retired status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha4: A statistically significant difference exists in spiritual rest subscale scores between retired and non-retired status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

H05: No statistically significant difference exists in spiritual rest subscale scores between full and part-time status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha5: A statistically significant difference exists in spiritual rest subscale scores between full and part-time status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

H06: No statistically significant difference exists in recovery from work scores between retired and non-retired status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha6: A statistically significant difference exists in recovery from work scores between retired and non-retired status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

H07: No statistically significant difference exists in recovery from work scores between full and part-time status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Ha7: A statistically significant difference exists in recovery from work scores between full and part-time status among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions.

Having outlined the research questions and hypotheses, the next step is to detail the research methodology and design that will be employed to investigate these relationships. This study adopts a quantitative approach, utilizing correlational methods to analyze the data gathered from adjunct faculty in online HEIs. By employing validated instruments and statistical techniques, the study aims to investigate the potential connections between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work, as well as how these variables may be influenced by the length of teaching experience. The following section will elaborate on the quantitative methods and specific design elements used to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

## Research Methodology and Design

Quantitative research methods will be used to gather and test data via Spearman rank-order from two validated instruments. This study will examine the correlations between two discrete variables within the same group on an ordinal scale (Crump, 2024). The researcher assumes that spiritual rest will be the predictor variable and the need for recovery from work will be an outcome variable. The study will test the theoretical relationship between these discrete variables (Judd & Sadler, 2003).

Quantitative correlational research attempts to establish relationships between variables within a population. Quantitative research requires researchers to use numeric data to describe the attitudes, behaviors, or opinions of the sample population under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2009). The research must strive for objectivity and remain independent from the dissertation subjects. The theoretical framework accurately reflects the constructs. The variables in this dissertation are assumed to be measurable with validated and reliable instruments. This quantitative dissertation addresses the potential correlations between the variables. Multiple variables are measured for each participant and statistics are used to determine the magnitude and direction of the associations among the variables (Plano Clark, 2015). The theoretical framework is assumed to accurately reflect the constructs under examination. Due to the limitations of the theoretical framework, the results of this dissertation are limited.

This quantitative dissertation will utilize a correlational design to examine the relationship between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work among adjunct faculty in online colleges. Quantitative research methods are used to gather and the Spearman rank correlation non-parametric test will be performed (Siegel, 1957). The Spearman correlational test will determine if a relationship between spiritual rest, measured by the SpEI, and the need for recovery from work, measured by the NFR, exists. The two instruments will be accessed through a secure and anonymous online survey. Data from the instruments will be provided in Excel spreadsheet format for ease of transfer into PSPP.

### Population and Sampling

The target population for this dissertation will be adjunct faculty in online colleges from the midwestern United States. Adjunct faculty, by definition, are considered part-time employees of the university (citation). However, many adjunct faculty work at multiple higher education institutions to collectively obtain full-time workloads (citation). The population for this dissertation will be any faculty with adjunct status. Purposive sampling will ensure eligible participants meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria of part-time non-tenure track faculty teaching college-level courses solely through an online instructional delivery format. The exclusion criteria for this dissertation would be individuals who teach college-level courses in hybrid, blended, or on-campus formats for any of their teaching loads. This dissertation would also exclude individuals employed outside of higher education. This dissertation excludes teaching faculty who have tenured, or tenure-track status in higher education institutions. The random sampling will continue until a sample size of 55-100 participants is attained. Permission to recruit participants will be secured from the institutional research board.

### Instrumentation

This quantitative correlational study will examine the relationship between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions utilizing two validated instruments, the Spiritual Engagement Instrument (SpEI; Roof, Bocarnea, & Winston, 2017) and the Need for Recovery Scale short-form (NFR; Stevens et al., 2019). The instruments measure an spiritual engagement and that individuals need for recovery from work, respectively. The statistical analysis of these two instruments could point to items of correlation between spiritual engagement and the need for recovery from work.

This dissertation will also utilize the Spiritual Engagement Instrument (SpEI), which measures factors of spiritual engagement in four dimensions, i.e., worship, meditation, fasting, and spiritual rest (Roof, et al., 2017). This study will focus on the spiritual rest subscale consisting of five items. The SpEI survey intends to capture perceptions within a participant’s faith tradition, worldview, or philosophy, those spiritual practice and association beliefs and attitudes that draw that person closer to God or the divine. Though the participant may feel strongly theologically or have specific ideas of how the spiritual practices or disciplines should be conducted, the survey was designed to measure across a wide range of such perspectives. Each participant is encouraged to do their best not to be distracted by the nature of any specific question. Each statement is rated on a Likert scale using the categories of Strongly Agree, Moderately Agree, Mildly Agree, Mildly Disagree, Moderately Disagree, and Strongly Disagree, as indicated on the survey form.

This dissertation will utilize the Need for Recovery Scale short-form (NFR) instrument, which measures employee exhaustion and the need for recovery from work (Stevens et al., 2019). The instrument consists of three items. The NFR instrument measures employee exhaustion and the need for recovery from work (Stevens et al., 2019). The instrument consists of three items. Second, this study will also utilize the Spiritual Engagement Instrument (SpEI), measuring factors of spiritual engagement in four dimensions, i.e., worship, meditation, fasting, and spiritual rest (Roof et al., 2017). This study will focus on the analysis of the spiritual rest subscale, which consists of five items.

### Variables

Table 1.1 aligns this study’s research questions and the constructs/variables measured by the selected validated instruments to help establish clear organization and structure.

**Table 1.1**Alignment of Variables to Research Questions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Quantitative Variable(s) | Research Question | Theory or Literature Support |
| Spiritual rest, need for recovery from work | What relationship exists, if any, between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions? | Roof et al., 2017 |
| Spiritual rest | What relationship, if any, exists between spiritual rest and years of teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions? | Varga & Denniston, 2022; Han et al., 2020; Bennet, 2003; Walker & McPhail, 2009; Chickering, Dalton & Stamm, 2015 |
| Need for recovery from work | What relationship, if any, exists between the need for recovery from work and years of teaching experience among adjunct faculty in online higher education institutions? | Stevens et al., 2019; Büssing et al., 2013; de Diego-Cordero et al., 2021 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

### Validity and Reliability

The Spiritual Engagement Instrument (SpEI; Roof, Bocarnea, & Winston, 2017) is a tool that measures factors of spiritual engagement in four dimensions (i.e., worship, meditation, fasting, and rest). The SpEI is scored on a six-point Likert scale: strongly agree, moderately agree, mildly agree, mildly disagree, moderately disagree, and strongly disagree. The SpEI can measure the four dimensions in conjunction with other social constructs, such as job satisfaction or leadership behaviors in the workplace (Roof et al., 2017). The Cronbach alpha values for each of the four dimensions of the SpEI are: worship 0.94, meditation 0.96, fasting 0.98, and rest 0.96. The four factors together explain 85.24% of the variance (Roof et al., 2017).

The Need for Recovery Scale (NFR) developed by Stevens et al. (2019) is a validated short-form version of the Danish Need for Recovery Scale. The short form can reduce the burden on researchers and respondents by creating and validating a shortened version of the Danish NFR Scale (Stevens et al., 2019). The short-form NFR scale consists of three items (exhausted at the end of a work day, hard to find interest in other people after a work day, it takes over an hour to recover from a work day fully) demonstrated excellent validity and responsiveness compared to the full nine-item scale (Stevens et al., 2019). The Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) score is 0.88, identical to a Cronbach alpha score. The ICC Responsiveness score is 0.80 (Stevens et al., 2019). The Need for Recovery short-form version is scored on a five-point Likert scale.

## Data Collection and Analysis

### Data Collection

Outline the procedures for collecting data. Detail the steps, timeline, and protocols for ensuring data collection consistency and quality.

Study participants will be allowed to complete the demographic and assessment surveys through an online survey application. Survio survey software will host the online survey. Participants will receive an email link with a unique code associated with each survey. Participants will answer a short survey of questions associated with the two validated instruments identified in this dissertation (See Appendix XX). Participants will be assigned a unique identifier associated with data collection and analysis. Personally identifying information will not be shared with the researcher.

#### Time Schedule

Data collection will be conducted over an six-week period during the summer months, August through September. It should be noted that many faculty will be beginning Fall semester during the data collection period. This may impact the faculty response rate and/or the faculty need for recovery since the semester will have started during the data collection period of this study.

### Data Preparation

Describe the processes for preparing data for analysis, such as cleaning and organizing quantitative data or transcribing and member-checking qualitative data.

### Data Analysis

Explain the methods and techniques for analyzing the collected data. Specify different analytical strategies for quantitative data as appropriate. For quantitative designs, state the statistical tests, assumptions testing, non-parametric alternatives to parametric tests, and post hoc procedures.

## Ethical Considerations

In preparation for conducting this dissertation, the researcher will complete the Human Research Protection Foundational Training offered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to satisfy the National Institutes of Health (NIH) educational requirement, “Protecting Human Research Participants” (see Appendix G). Additionally, the researcher undertook to insure the protection of all participants through the use of a formal consent form that:

* Explained the purpose of the study;
* Described the quantitative data collection procedures and expected interview lengths;
* Disclosed a participant’s right to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason;
* Described how a participant’s right to privacy were protected through the use of pseudonyms;
* Included procedures for adhering to federally regulated institutional review board guidelines.

The researcher will secure all data on a web-based HIPPA compliant server monitored through a password-protected personal computer with limited access and accessibility.

While conducting this dissertation, the ethical rules and considerations for the withhumans currently enforced in the United States and those outlined by the American PsychologicalAssociation were followed. All participants will be informed of the objectivesand scope of the study and their rights according to the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects in the United States (Federal Register, n.d., [45 CFR 46.116](https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2017-01058/p-818)).The participants who agreed to participate in the dissertation will sign an informed consent letter.Participation in this dissertation is voluntary and does not involve payment.

### Participant Consent

Carefully describe how participants will be protected and informed of their rights and how consent will be captured.

### Bias Acknowledgment and Mitigation

Acknowledge potential biases in your dissertation study and outline strategies to mitigate these biases, such as researcher bias, selection bias, or data analysis bias. Acknowledge how faith-based biases will inform or potentially skew data analysis. It is always best to disclose potential bias rather than try to conceal it.

## Summary and Conclusion

The quantitative correlational research methods of this study will effectively address the research questions by examining the relationships between variables within the target population of adjunct faculty in online HEIs. Specifically, these methods will investigate the relationship between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work, as well as their associations with years of teaching experience among adjunct faculty. Two validated instruments, the Spiritual Engagement Instrument (SpEI) and the Need for Recovery Scale short-form (NFR), will be used to examine the relationship between spiritual rest and the need for recovery from work among adjunct faculty. The SpEI measures spiritual engagement across four dimensions, with a focus on the spiritual rest subscale. The NFR assesses employee exhaustion and the need for recovery from work. Both instruments aim to provide statistical data to identify potential correlations.

The target population for this dissertation consists of adjunct faculty in online HEIs from the midwestern United States. Purposive sampling ensures participants meet specific criteria, excluding hybrid, blended, or on-campus instructors, as well as those with tenured or tenure-track status or employed outside higher education. The sample size aims for 55-100 participants, with recruitment permissions obtained from the Institutional Research Board.

This research methodology contributes to the study’s purpose by offering data insights into the relationship between spiritual rest, recovery from work, and teaching experience among adjunct faculty. By quantitatively analyzing these relationships, this study aims to enhance understanding of the factors influencing adjunct faculty's well-being and job satisfaction in online HEIs. Furthermore, the findings derived from correlational analyses will inform potential interventions or strategies to support adjunct faculty in managing work-related stress and promoting spiritual rest.

# Appendix A: Site Permission

# Appendix B: Informed Consent

**Omega Graduate School (OGS) Informed Consent Form**

**Sent to Participants to Solicit Consent**

Dissertation Title: The Relationship Between Spiritual Engagement And The Need For Recovery From Work Among Adjunct Faculty At Online Higher Education Institutions

Candidate’s Name: David Moser

Candidate’s Email Address: dmoser@ogs.edu

Chair’s Email Address: jreichard@ogs.edu

**Introduction**

This form is to provide you with information about the research study and to seek your informed consent to participate. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw without penalty.

**Study Description**

**Brief Summary of Research**: The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of spiritual engagement, specifically Sabbath rest, on mitigating work-related stress and burnout among adjunct faculty in higher education institutions. The study employs a quantitative research design, utilizing surveys to measure levels of work-related stress, burnout, and spiritual engagement among adjunct faculty members. Statistical analysis will be conducted to assess the relationship between Sabbath rest and reduced work-related stress and burnout. This study aims to provide empirical evidence on the potential benefits of spiritual engagement for adjunct faculty, contributing to the broader literature on employee well-being and stress management.

**Duration of Participation**: This study will be open for six weeks during August and September of 2024.

**Confidentiality**

☐ I understand that my data will be kept confidential and stored securely.

☐ I understand that my data may be used for future research or educational purposes but will remain anonymous.

**Risks and Benefits**

☐ I acknowledge that the researcher has explained the potential risks associated with this study.

☐ I understand that the research may not provide direct benefits to me.

**Voluntary Participation**

☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without any negative consequences.

**Compensation**

☐ I understand that I will not receive compensation for my participation.

**Participant Rights**

☐ I have been informed of my rights as a participant in this study.

☐ I understand that I can ask questions about the study anytime.

☐ I am 18 years or older and of sound mind.

**Contact Information**

If you have any concerns or questions about the research, please contact:

**Researcher**: David Moser, dmoser@ogs.edu

**IRB Office**: Omega Graduate School, Chief Academic Officer (cao@ogs.edu)

**Consent**

By checking the boxes and signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate in the research study.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (or electronic field)

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (or electronic “I Consent” button)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (or electronic field)

# Appendix C: Recruitment Letter/Email

# Appendix D: Instruments

## **Demographic Survey**

\* Indicates required question

1. Age \*

*Mark only one oval.*

19-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60+

1. Gender \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Female

Male

Prefer not to say

1. Ethnicity \*

*Check all that apply.*

Asian

Latino or Hispanic

Paci c Islander

Caucasian

African American

Native American Two or more

Prefer not to say

1. Marital Status \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Single

Married

Divorced

Prefer not to say

1. Highest Level of Education Attained \* *Mark only one oval.*

Did not complete high school

High School Diploma

Some College

Undergraduate Degree

Graduate Degree

Terminal Degree

1. Current Work Status by Institution \* *Mark only one oval.*

Part time at one college

Part time at two to three colleges

Part time at more than three colleges

Full time

1. Academic Rank \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Professor

Associate Professor

Assistant Professor

Instructor

Lecturer

Other faculty

1. Course Delivery Format \* *Mark only one oval.*

Fully In Person

Online/Virtual only

Hybrid

1. Length of employment as an adjunct status \* *Mark only one oval.*

Less than 5 years

5 - 10 Years

10 - 20 Years

20+ Years

1. Religious Affiliation \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Catholic

Protestant Judaism

Islam

Buddhism

Hinduism

Atheism

None

Prefer not to say

## Spiritual Engagement Instrument - Sabbath Rest Subscale

This survey is intended to capture within your own faith tradition, worldview, or philosophy, those spiritual practice and association beliefs and attitudes that draw you closer to God or the divine. While you may feel strongly theologically or have speci c ideas of how the spiritual practices or disciplines should be conducted, the survey was designed to measure across a wide range of such perspectives, so please do your best not to be distracted by the nature of any speci c question.

Rate the following statements using the

categories of Strongly Agree, Moderately Agree, Mildly Agree, Mildly Disagree, Moderately Disagree, and Strongly Disagree as indicated on the survey form.

1. My time off for religious/spiritual rest is important to me. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

* 1. 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Agree

Stro

ngly Disagree

1. I am more patient and focused when I have my time off for religious/spiritual rest \* each week.

*Mark only one oval.*

* 1. 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Agree

Stro

ngly Disagree

1. My spirit is refreshed by my dedicated weekly rest. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

* 1. 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Agree

Stro

ngly Disagree

1. My weekly time for religious/spiritual rest leaves me in a better place. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

* 1. 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Agree

Stro

ngly Disagree

1. Life's priorities are clearer as a result of my dedicated time off weekly for my faith \* practices.

*Mark only one oval.*

* 1. 2 3 4 5 6

Strongly Agree

Stro

ngly Disagree

## Need for Recovery (NFR)

The “need for recovery scale” is suggested as an operationalization for the measurement of

(early symptoms of) fatigue at work. Recovery includes mental and physical resources.

1. At the end of my work day, I am exhausted. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

* 1. 2 3 4 5

Nev

er

Always

1. I find it hard to show interest in other people, when I have just come home from \* work.

*Mark only one oval.*

* 1. 2 3 4 5

Nev

er

Always

1. It takes me over an hour before I am fully recovered/fully improved after a work \* day.

*Mark only one oval.*

* 1. 2 3 4 5

Nev

er

Always

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[Forms](https://www.google.com/forms/about/?utm_source=product&utm_medium=forms_logo&utm_campaign=forms)

# Appendix E: Validity Documentation

### Validity and Reliability

The Spiritual Engagement Instrument (SpEI; Roof, Bocarnea, & Winston, 2017) is a tool that measures factors of spiritual engagement in four dimensions (i.e., worship, meditation, fasting, and rest). The SpEI is scored on a six-point Likert scale: strongly agree, moderately agree, mildly agree, mildly disagree, moderately disagree, and strongly disagree. The SpEI can measure the four dimensions in conjunction with other social constructs, such as job satisfaction or leadership behaviors in the workplace (Roof et al., 2017). The Cronbach alpha values for each of the four dimensions of the SpEI are: worship 0.94, meditation 0.96, fasting 0.98, and rest 0.96. The four factors together explain 85.24% of the variance (Roof et al., 2017).

The Need for Recovery Scale (NFR) developed by Stevens et al. (2019) is a validated short-form version of the Danish Need for Recovery Scale. The short form can reduce the burden on researchers and respondents by creating and validating a shortened version of the Danish NFR Scale (Stevens et al., 2019). The short-form NFR scale consists of three items (exhausted at the end of a work day, hard to find interest in other people after a work day, it takes over an hour to recover from a work day fully) demonstrated excellent validity and responsiveness compared to the full nine-item scale (Stevens et al., 2019). The Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) score is 0.88, identical to a Cronbach alpha score. The ICC Responsiveness score is 0.80 (Stevens et al., 2019). The Need for Recovery short-form version is scored on a five-point Likert scale.

# Appendix F: IRB Approval Letter

# Appendix G: NIH/CITI Certificate







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