

## **Occupational Burnout among Head Teachers in Nigeria: Consequences of Job Satisfaction and Workplace Commitment**

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### **Abstract**

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Previous studies focused more on the benefits of job satisfaction and workplace commitment for employees and the organization. Less attention has been devoted to the possible detrimental effects of job satisfaction and workplace commitment, especially on the employees. This study investigated the extent to which job satisfaction and workplace commitment are related with occupational burnout. The participants were 207 head teachers (116 males; 91 females). Their ages averaged 41.13 years (SD= 5.89) with a range of 32 to 54 years. They responded to measures of job satisfaction, workplace commitment, and occupational burnout. Results showed that job satisfaction significantly increased the extent to which head teachers experienced occupational burnout. Similarly, workplace commitment significantly predicted occupational burnout such that head teachers who were committed to their workplace tended to report occupational burnout. Finally, workplace commitment increased the level at which job satisfaction led to occupational burnout among head teachers. Implications for theory and practice were discussed.

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**Keywords:** Commitment, satisfaction, job burnout, teachers.

### **1.0 General Introduction**

In the last two decades, there has been increased focus on occupational burnout because of its spiral implications for both employees and organizations (Chapman & Green, 1986; Chase, 1986; Kwag & Kim, 2008; Ogungbamila, 2013; Schepman & Zarate, 2005).

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Occupational burnout has been defined as a situation in which an employee becomes psychologically and physically exhausted due to workplace conditions (Freudenberger, 1974). In other words, burnout connotes a state wherein employees experience depletion of mental resources, are indifferent or cynical towards people at job locations and feel unfulfilled in their jobs (Maslach, 1993).

Previous studies have associated occupational burnout with health challenges for employees with serious implication(s) on their job satisfaction and commitment (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Accordingly, these studies (e.g. Maslach & Leiter, 1997) have shown that occupational burnout negatively correlated with job satisfaction and workplace commitment. Thus, the higher an employee experiences occupational burnout, the lower the satisfaction s/he derives from the job and, subsequently, the lower the commitment to the job. Studies in this category have been criticized on the ground that occupational burnout is investigated as an independent variable to predict job satisfaction and job commitment without a corresponding interplay of job satisfaction and job commitment as independent variables to predict occupational burnout (Castle, 2008; Roy & Avdija, 2012). This is because, in spite of the positive consequences of job satisfaction and workplace commitment, employees who are satisfied with their job and are committed to the workplace may also be prone to occupational burnout. There is, therefore, a need to investigate how job satisfaction and workplace commitment may be connected to occupational burnout. Researchers have begun to focus on job satisfaction and workplace commitment as possible predictors of occupational burnout (Griffin, Hogan, Lambert, Tucker-Gail & Baker, 2010).

Griffin *et al.* (2010) contextualize job satisfaction as a positive orientation of an individual towards the work role which s/he is presently occupying. Put differently, it is an overall attitude of employees that indicate the extent to which they like or dislike a job or facets of a job (Spector, 1997). By implication, it connotes the extent to which an employee expresses a positive attitude/feeling towards her/his job and employer (Bullock, 2003).

Studies both within and outside the domain of teaching have investigated job satisfaction as a predictor of occupational burnout (Griffin *et al.*, 2010; Roy & Avdija, 2012; Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000; Sharma, Verma, Verma & Malhotra, 2010; Tsigilis, Zachopoulou & Grammatikopoulos, 2006).

Results have been equivocal. For instance, some studies indicated a negative relationship between job satisfaction and occupational burnout (Castle & Martin, 2006; Koustelios & Tsigilis, 2005; Roy & Avdija, 2012; Tsigilis *et al.*, 2006). Thus, an increase in job satisfaction may lead to a decrease in occupational burnout. Other studies found no significant correlation between job satisfaction and occupational burnout (Roy & Avdija, 2012).

The construct of workplace commitment (WC) is multidimensional (Lok, Westwood & Crawford, 2004; Ogungbamila, 2006). Notwithstanding, scholars are in consensus that commitment is an expression of a psychological state reflective of how employees feel about their engagement with the employing organisation (Newstrom, 2007). As such, WC entails **employees' positive** attitude towards imbibing the beliefs, values, norms, and goals of the organization for which they work; the demonstration of loyalty to the organization; willingness to exert efforts on behalf of the organization; and a desire to remain with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Therefore, in this study, WC is conceptualized as employees' level of identification and involvement with and loyalty to the employing organization (Lok *et al.*, 2005). Studies have investigated WC as a predictor of occupational burnout (Nagar, 2012; Roy & Avdija, 2012). While some findings showed that WC significantly correlates with occupational burnout (Nagar, 2012) others showed no significant relationship (Dick & Wangener, 2002).

In Nigeria, some studies focused on occupational burnout among health workers (Adebayo & Ezeanya, 2010; Ogungbamila, 2013), bankers (Ogungbamila, 2010), and teachers (Akomolafe & Popoola, 2011; Olaitan, Oyerinde, Obiyemi & Kayode, 2010). None of the reviewed studies examined job satisfaction and job commitment as independent variables; capable of predicting occupational burnout among head teachers in Nigerian primary schools. However, some findings from studies elsewhere suggest that job satisfaction and employees' commitment to the workplace inversely correlate with the employee's experience of occupational burnout (Roy & Avdija, 2012). In spite of the foregoing, the inconsistency of findings from previous studies renders it difficult to provide explanation for the situation in Africa; more so that the studies are conducted in socio-cultural settings that are different from Africa and, particularly, Nigeria.

Therefore, it is necessary to study job satisfaction and workplace commitment as possible predictors of occupational burnout among head teachers; given that the teaching profession is highly demanding (Roy & Avdija, 2012) and stressful (Nagar, 2012). Work dissatisfaction or excess commitment to teaching in order to meet up with the job pressure may render head teachers vulnerable to occupational burnout. Head teachers who are experiencing occupational burnout may experience unstable mental balance, engage in unnecessary quarrels with fellow teachers, exhibit poor leadership trait, maintain poor social relations with both pupils and teachers, and develop the urge to leave the job (Nagar, 2012; Griffith *et al.*, 2010; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Thus, findings from this study can be expected to have policy implications for intervention.

The aim of this study, therefore, is to examine the extent to which job satisfaction and workplace commitment predict occupational burnout. Against this background, the following hypotheses were formulated.

### **Hypotheses**

1. Job satisfaction predicts occupational burnout in such a way that high job satisfaction will be associated with increased level of occupational burnout.
2. Workplace commitment predicts occupational burnout such that employees who are committed to their workplace will exhibit high level of occupational burnout.
3. Workplace commitment moderates the relationship between job satisfaction and occupational burnout such that workplace commitment increases the extent to which job satisfaction leads to occupational burnout.

### **METHOD**

#### **Participants and Procedure**

Two hundred and seven head teachers (116 males; 91 females) from Kwara State, Nigeria participated in the study. In order to conceal the identity of the respondents, the specific schools were not listed. Their ages ranged between 32 and 54 years ( $M_{\text{age}} = 49.13$ ;  $SD = 5.89$ ). The respondents had spent an average of 26.18 years on the job ( $SD = 7.46$ ).

In the case of position tenure, the respondents indicated that they had spent an average of 3.06 years ( $SD = 1.95$ ) as head teachers. Majority of them (204 or 98.6%) were married and 3 (1.4%) were single. The respondents also **varied** in terms of academic qualifications in such a way that 55 (26.6%) had National Certificate in Education (NCE), 93 (44.9%) had first degree, and 59 (28.5%) had postgraduate degree. Apart from academic qualification, the respondents also indicated their religious affiliation. In their responses, 147 (72%) were affiliated to Christianity and 58 (28%) were affiliated to Islam. The respondents also indicated whether or not they had other sources of income. One hundred and thirty six (65.7%) said "yes" and 71 (34.3%) said "no".

The purposive random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. Sixteen Local Government Areas (LGAs), in the state were randomly selected using the Table of Random Numbers. The formal list of private and public secondary schools in each LGA, arranged in alphabetical order, was obtained from the Local Education Authority (LEA). Based on the list, 220 schools (110 private; 110 public) that came up as odd numbers were selected. The respondents were given some basic information about the research to secure their informed consent to participate in the study. The respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and that they were free to discontinue with the study whenever they felt **so**. Out of the 220 head teachers sampled, 210 were willing to participate in the study. Out of the 210 copies of questionnaire distributed, 207 were duly completed and found usable. Data collection spanned 7 weeks.

## Measures

*Job satisfaction* was assessed using Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss, Dawis, England & Lofquist, 1967). This 20-item inventory was designed to measure extent to which employees derive fulfillment from their job environment. MSQ was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = very dissatisfied; 5 = very satisfied). Sample item included: "The working conditions". Weiss et al. (1967) reported a one-week test re-test reliability coefficient of .89 for the scale. In the present study, a Cronbach's alpha of .87 was obtained. High score on MSQ was an indication that the head teachers had a high sense of fulfillment in their job environment.

*Workplace commitment* was measured using Buchanan's (1974) Organizational Commitment (OC) scale. It was a 23-item scale designed to measure the extent to which employees are affectively attached to the achievement of the goals and values of the organization. OC assesses 3 components of organizational commitment (identification = 6 items; job involvement = 6 items; and loyalty = 13 items). OC was predicated on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Sample items included "I feel a sense of pride in working in this organization" (identification); "I live, eat and breathe my job" (job involvement); and "I feel a strong sense of loyalty toward this organization" (loyalty). Buchanan (1974) reported a coefficient alpha of .94 for the overall scale. In this study, a Cronbach's alpha of .87 was obtained for the overall scale. High score on the measure of workplace commitment was an indication that the head teachers were highly attached to the goals and values of their organization.

*Occupational burnout* was measured using Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). It was a 22-item inventory rated on 6-point scale (1 = A few times a year; 6 = Everyday). It was designed to measure a state of physical and emotional depletion resulting from the condition of work. It measures 3 components of the burnout syndrome: emotional exhaustion (9 items), dehumanization (5 items), and reduced personal accomplishment (8 items). Sample items included: "I feel burned out from my work" (emotional exhaustion), "I have become more callous towards people since I took up this work" (dehumanization), and "I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job" (reverse scored) (reduced personal accomplishment). In this study, the composite score was used because of the researchers were interested in occupational burnout as a syndrome. Maslach and Jackson (1986) obtained a .71 Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale. With this sample, a .78 Cronbach's alpha was obtained for the overall scale. High score on the measure of occupational burnout was an indication that respondents were highly drained from their work (occupational burnout).

## **Data Analysis**

In this study, age, gender, marital status, religious affiliation, academic qualification, position tenure, job tenure, and additional source of income were treated as covariates. In the preliminary analysis, some of the demographic variables were codified. Gender was coded as male = 0; female = 1. Marital status was coded single = 0; married = 1.

In the case of religious affiliation, Christianity was coded 0 and Islam was coded 1. Academic qualification was coded National Certificate in Education = 1; first degree = 2; and postgraduate degree = 3. Additional source of income was coded No = 0; Yes = 1. While the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation statistics was used to determine the nature of relationships among the study variables, the 3 hypotheses were tested with a 3-step hierarchical regression.

## RESULTS

### *Test of relationships among the study variables*

The results of the descriptive and correlational analyses are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Mean, SD, and Inter-variable Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age	41.13	5.89	1										
2. Gender	-	-	.24**	1									
3. Marital status	-	-	.02	.03	1								
4. Religious affiliation	-	-	-.11	-.12	-.011	1							
5. Academic qualification	-	-	.12	.06	.01	-.12	1						
6. Post tenure	3.06	1.95	.05	-.11	-.05	.01	-.12	1					
7. Job tenure	26.18	7.46	.54**	.26**	-.03	-.16*	-.04	.04	1				
8. Additional source of income	-	-	.06	.03	-.00	-.00	.01	-.04	.06	1			
9. Job satisfaction	92.59	22.36	.00	.02	.00	-.01	-.10	-.09	.07	-.071	1		
10. Workplace commitment	73.48	20.29	.02	-.03	-.07	.14*	-.16*	-.09	-.05	-.02	.61**	1	
11. Occupational burnout	50.54	14.07	-.13	-.07	-.04	-.02	-.12	.09	-.05	.06	.20*	.22*	1

**Note:** \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*  $p < .05$ . N = 207. Gender was coded as male = 0; female = 1. Marital status was coded single = 0; married = 1. Religious affiliation was coded Christianity = 0 and Islam = 1. Academic qualification was coded National Certificate in Education = 1; first degree = 2; and postgraduate degree = 3. Additional source of income was coded No = 0; Yes = 1.

Table 1 shows that job satisfaction had a significant positive relationship with occupational burnout [ $r(205) .20, p < .05$ ]. This implied that head teachers who were satisfied with their job also tended to experience occupational burnout.

Similarly, workplace commitment was significantly related with employees' level of occupational burnout [ $r(205) .22, p < .05$ ]. The implication was that head teachers' level of occupational burnout increased as their level of commitment to the workplace increased.

### *Test of the hypotheses*

The 3 hypotheses were tested with a 3-step hierarchical regression. The covariates were entered into the regression model in step 1. In step 2 of the analysis, the independent effects of the predictor variables (job satisfaction and workplace) were entered. In step 3, the interaction effects of job satisfaction and workplace commitment were entered into the regression model. The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Hierarchical Multiple Regression on Effects of Job Satisfaction and Workplace Commitment on Occupational Burnout**

Variables	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
<i>Covariates</i>	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$
1. Age	-.15	-.14	-.14
2. Gender	-.03	-.03	-.03
3. Marital status	-.04	-.05	-.05
4. Religious affiliation	.02	.04	.04
5. Academic qualification	.03	.03	.03
6. Post tenure	.08	.08	.08
7. Job tenure	.05	.04	.04
8. Additional source of income	.07	.08	.08
<i>Predictors</i>			
Job satisfaction		.20*	.21*
Workplace commitment		.22*	.24**
Job satisfaction x Workplace commitment			.41**
<i>R</i>	.21	.37	.59
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.04	.14	.35
$\Delta R^2$	.21	.10	.21
<i>F</i>	1.81 ( <i>df</i> = 11, 195)	4.80* ( <i>df</i> = 13, 193)	11.04** ( <i>df</i> = 14, 192)

**Note:** \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*  $p < .05$ . N = 207. Gender was coded as male = 0; female = 1. Marital status was coded single = 0; married = 1.



Religious affiliation was coded Christianity = 0 and Islam = 1. Academic qualification was coded National Certificate in Education = 1; first degree = 2; and postgraduate degree = 3. Additional source of income was coded No = 0; Yes = 1.

As Table 2 indicates, none of the covariates exerted a significant effect on occupational burnout among head teachers; as they jointly contributed 4% to the changes in occupational burnout [ $R = .21$ ,  $R^2 = .04$ ,  $p > .05$ ]. When the independent effects of the predictor variables were entered into the model, the results indicate that job satisfaction significantly predicted occupational burnout such that head teachers who felt satisfied with their job experienced occupational burnout [ $\beta = .20$ ,  $p < .05$ ]. This result supported hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 was also supported by the results in Table 2. Workplace commitment significantly predicted occupational burnout such that workplace commitment led to increased level of occupational burnout among head teachers [ $\beta = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ ]. This means that head teachers who were attached to their workplace and engrossed with their job tended to experience occupational burnout. The addition of job satisfaction and workplace commitment to the model brought about 10% changes in the level of occupational burnout [ $R^2 = .14$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .10$ ,  $F = 4.80$ ,  $p < .05$ ].

In testing the moderation effects of workplace commitment on the relationship between job satisfaction and occupational burnout, the interaction effects of job satisfaction and workplace commitment were added to the model. The results show that the beta value increased from .20 (independent effect of job satisfaction) and .22 (independent effect of workplace commitment) to .41 when the interaction effects of job satisfaction and workplace commitment were added to the model. This implies that workplace commitment increased the level at which job satisfaction culminated in occupational burnout [ $\beta = .35$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .21$ ,  $F = 11.80$ ,  $p < .01$ ]. Hypothesis 3 was, therefore, supported.

## Discussion And Conclusion

This study investigated the extent to which occupational burnout was related with job satisfaction and workplace commitment. Results showed that job satisfaction significantly predicted occupational burnout in such a way that when head teachers were satisfied with their job they tended to experience occupational burnout.

The result of the present study did not go in the direction of the findings of previous studies (Castle & Martin, 2006; Koustelios & Tsigilis, 2005; Roy & Avdija, 2012; Tsigilis *et al.*, 2006). They reported that job satisfaction was associated with a decrease in the level of occupational burnout. The results of the present study went in the opposite direction of the findings of previous studies may be because head teachers who had positive attitudes toward the job felt attracted to, were satisfied with, engaged more, and expended more energy and time on the job, which might have resulted in occupational burnout. Studies (e.g. Schaufeli, Taris & van Rhenen, 2008) have shown that the more employees engage with their job the more the tendency of experiencing occupational burnout. As posited in the job demands-resources model (Bakker, Demerouti & Euwema, 2005), when job resources cannot ameliorate the demands from the psychosocial environment of the job; and the employee continues to engage with such job, occupational burnout may be inevitable.

As the results of the present study indicate, head teachers who were committed to their workplace experienced occupational burnout. The findings of Nagar (2012) and Roy and Avdija (2012), which showed that occupational burnout decreased with workplace commitment, were not supported by the results of the present study. The results of the present study have shown the possible *dark side* of workplace commitment. The organization afforded the head teachers the opportunities to meet their psychological and economic needs, which might have increased their level of commitment to the organization in spite of the perceived stress embedded in the organization. The head teachers might have experienced occupational burnout because the organization did not provide enough resources to buffer the effects of the stress-inducing aspects of the organization (Bakker *et al.*, 2005).

Workplace commitment significantly moderated the relationship between job satisfaction and occupational burnout. This implies that the risk of occupational burnout becomes increased when head teachers who are satisfied with their jobs become attached to the workplace. This commitment might have created repeated exposure to the work and environmental variables, which make the head teachers vulnerable to occupational burnout (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2008).

The present study is unique because it has shown that job satisfaction and workplace commitment could have *dark sides*, which previous studies did not adequately elucidate.

Most studies highlighted and focused more on the benefits of job satisfaction and workplace commitment. Such studies are usually management-focused in their approach; as satisfied and committed employees are found to be more productive (Lok *et al.*, 2005). As desirable as job satisfaction and workplace commitment could be for the organization; there is a need to explore their consequences on the employee. The present study has, therefore, highlighted the health implications of job satisfaction and workplace commitment on the employees.

Apart from that, the present study has extended the job-demands-resources model. It has shown that the perceived balance between organizational demands and organizational resources may be important in explaining the relationships of job satisfaction and workplace commitment to occupational burnout. Therefore, apart from job characteristics, which may increase job satisfaction and workplace commitment; other features of the organization that can negatively affect the balance of demands/resources should be adequately managed. A practical implication of the results of this study is that as organizations try to get employees satisfied with their job and committed to the goals and aspirations of the organization, efforts should be made to provide adequate resources that would help prevent occupational burnout.

An important variable that has been implicated in the connections among job satisfaction, workplace commitment, and occupational burnout is work engagement. Therefore, future studies should explore these connections in order to have fine-grain knowledge of the *dark sides* of job satisfaction and workplace commitment.

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