

Job Dissatisfaction and Psychological Health Among Civil Servants in Delta State, Nigeria

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62154/ajmbr.2025.020.01021>

Abstract

Job satisfaction is an essential indicator of how employees feel about their job, as it provides the route for creativity, means of livelihood, and relief of boredom. In the developing countries, poor remuneration, amongst other factors, has been implicated as the major cause truncating this fulfilment of workers. This study aims to determine the prevalence of job dissatisfaction, its causes, and its relationship to psychological health. A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among civil servants in Delta State, Nigeria, where 309 civil servants in the Ministry of Health were interviewed. The stratified sampling technique was employed, and data were analysed using SPSS version 25.0. Most of the workers (46.4%) were in the age range of 31–40 years; the mean age of respondents was 38.5 years; 59% were males; 93% had tertiary education; 54% were married; and 39.5% of the respondents had spent 6–10 years in service. Thirty-three percent (33%) of workers were dissatisfied. The commonest cause of dissatisfaction was poor salary (21.7%). Age and stress beyond the job were statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 28.11$, $p = 0.005$ and $\chi^2 = 11.98$, $p = 0.017$) respectively. Job dissatisfaction and psychological disorders of workers should be improved by the government in order to curb wastage of human resources essential for the advancement in the health sector and the overall growth of the country.

Keywords: Job Dissatisfaction, Occupational Stress, Employee Wellbeing, Civil Servants, Psychological Disorder, Delta State.

Introduction

There is growing evidence that current trends in employment conditions may be eroding levels of job satisfaction and directly damaging the physical and mental health of employees (Viertiö, *et.al.*, 2021). Employees are regularly being required to work well beyond their contracted hours as organizations struggle to meet tight deadlines and targets (Escribano *et.al.*, 2019). Work practices are becoming more automated and inflexible, leaving employees with less control over their workload. Many organizations are reducing their permanent workforce and converting to a culture of short-term contracts or “out-sourcing”, increasing feelings of job insecurity. As employers respond to new competitive pressures of Global capitalism and more recently the economic recession, job insecurity and the accompanying psychological ill-health become worrisome (Escribano *et.al.*, 2019). Job satisfaction has been defined as a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal

of one's job and a positive attitude towards one's job (Judge et. al.,2017). The attributes of Job Satisfaction include wages or salary, hours of work, future prospects (promotion, job security), work overload and pressure, Job content (interest, control over work, decision-making) and interpersonal relationships (Akinbode et.al.,2020). The causes of job dissatisfaction and inefficiency has been linked with failure of management to control task of and payment of salary income to workers (Akinbode et.al.,2020). Other causes of job dissatisfaction include lack of material and equipment to work with, lack of promotion as at when due, work overload, time pressure, housing problem and problem with transportation (Nwokeocha, 2023). Psychological Health is concern with how individuals cope, adapt, function in times of challenges, setbacks and hardships. Inability to cope with these attributes of job satisfaction could challenge the physical and psychological well-being of the worker (Nwokeocha, 2023). Psychological effect of job satisfaction could provide a sense of fulfillment by affording the individual worker a sense of purpose and projecting his or her values to the society (Roncalli & Byrne, 2016). Work can also be a source of frustration, boredom and can at times bring feelings of meaningless depending on the character the individual and the nature of the task (Nwokeocha, 2023). Workers who opined that they are satisfied with their work have been found to be healthier than those who do no (Ardelt & Sharma, 2023). A study among Swedish workers found that job factors predicted health behaviour more than family factors (Carmel, 2019). One of the responsibilities of management in any organization is the establishment of incentive for employees. Although extra pay is an important incentive, there are other forms of incentives that are operative in an organization (Engler & Shedlosky-Shoemaker, 2019). Participation in decision making, education, routine promotion and opportunity for advancement outside their institution are positive determinants for job satisfaction (Carmel, 2019). An employer has a duty to provide his or her worker with a reasonably safe system to work and to take reasonable steps to protect him or her from risks that are reasonably foreseeable (Pinar et.al., 2017). In Nigeria today, employers of labour do not seem to be aware of any other reason apart from poor remuneration, why workers are dissatisfied (Soyinka et.al.,2023) .The health of the workers have been undermine at the expense of high turn-over despite the lingering economic depression (Chinwendu O.,2016); this has resulted in the workers working under harsh conditions with occasional outburst of grievances exhibited through strike actions and sustained by poor performance and low innovation as reflected by the slow pace in our economic development(Akinbode et.al.,2020).

This study, therefore assessed workers dissatisfaction with their job as well as their psychological health disposition; in order to find a solution so that the productivity of the workers and invariably the economic growth of the country will be enhanced through recommendations to the appropriate authorities.

Methodology

Study Area

The study Area was Asaba, the capital city of Delta State, Nigeria. It is located in Oshimilli South Local Government Area. The greater Asaba occupies an area of about 300 square kilometers. Ibo is the native language and their mainstay of occupation is civil service, since becoming the capital of Delta State in 1991.

Study site

The Ministry of Health (M.O.H.) was the focus of the research. The M.O.H. has 7 departments which are Medical Services and Training, Primary Health Care and Disease Control, Nursing, Pharmaceutical, Planning, Research and Statistics, Accounts and Finance, and Administration.

Study Design

The study design was a descriptive cross-sectional study.

Study Population

All civil servants in the Ministry of Health (M.O.H.) comprising of Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists, Laboratory and Environmental Scientists, Accountants, Administrators, Architects, Computer scientists, and Statisticians.

Inclusion criteria: Workers employed by the State Civil Service and have spent at least a year in service

Exclusion criteria: Workers who were ill and are not capable of participating.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size for the study was 309 which was calculated using the Cochran formula for descriptive study (Cochran WG, 1977)

$$n = \frac{Z^2 PQ}{e^2}$$

Where n = minimum sample size,

Z = 1.96 = Standard normal deviation

P = prevalence of job dissatisfaction in previous study

Sampling technique

Simple random and stratified sampling techniques were employed in the study.

Simple random sampling technique was applied after stratification of the study population into the 7 departments of M.O.H. Proportionate distribution and allocation of the sample size was done among the 7 departments in the M.O.H.

Study Instruments

A self-administered questionnaire was used in the study. Information sought included demographic data such as age, sex, length of service, level of satisfaction, presence or absence of stress outside work, sources of stress, and presence of children. A 5-point Likert scale was used to grade levels of satisfaction. The sociodemographic variables were the independent variables while level of satisfaction was the dependent variable.

Validity and Reliability of Study Instrument

The study instrument was developed from recent literature review. It was reviewed by experts who are specialised in that area and by my supervisors for face and content validity. This is to improve validity and reliability of the study tool.

Pretesting

The questionnaire was pretested among civil servants in the Ministry of Water Resources in Warri. The final questionnaire was a product of the modifications detected by the pretesting. Psychological ill health on the other hand, was measured using a standard instrument, GHQ 28. The GHQ 28 is a self-administered screening instrument designed to measure psychological health with high specificity and sensitivity

Data Analysis

The data collection was supervised and cross-checked on each day of activity for consistency and completeness. Cleaning of data using frequency, sorting, and listing to identify any missed values, outliers, and identified errors was done using Data analysis software. The IBM SPSS version 25 was used for data entry and analysis.

Ethical Consideration

This was approved by the Permanent Secretary of Health under whose purview this lies. The respondents were also informed that their responses would be held in strict confidence. Thus, eligibility to participate in the study was based on the respondent's willingness to take part.

Results

A total of 276 questionnaires were retrieved and analyzed from the 309 civil servants giving a response rate of 89%. Most of the respondents (128; 46.4%) were between 31- 40 years. The mean age of respondents was 38.5 years. Most of the respondents (149; 54%) respondents were married and living with their spouse; one hundred and ninety (68.9%) respondents were happy with their marriage. Majority of the respondents (174; 63%) had between one to four children while thirty-nine (14.1%) respondents had more than five children. Thirty-six (13%) of the respondents had an adolescent child, fifty-one (18%) has more than one adolescent child while one hundred and eighty-nine (69%) respondents did not have adolescent child. Majority of the civil servants, (256; 93%) had a tertiary education.

Most of the respondents (109; 39.5%) respondents had spent between 6-10 years in service (table 1). It was found that 32.6% of respondents have psychological stress (Figure 1). Thirty-five (12.7%) source of stress was from failure of some personal project and seventeen (6.2%) respondents' source of stress was from broken/unsettled home (Figure2). Most of the respondents (160;38.4%) of the respondents were satisfied with their job (figure 3). Poor salary (60; 21.7%) of the respondents was the major cause of job dissatisfaction (figure 4). One hundred and seventy-three (62.7%) respondents were still interested in working in the civil service. Two hundred and two (73%) of the respondents did not have psychological disorder while seventy-four (27%) had psychological disorder (figure 5).

Hypotheses

Social demographic characteristics and job satisfaction

The social demographic characteristics that were significant with job satisfaction include-
Age: Age was statistically significant with job dissatisfied ($\chi^2 = 28.108$; $P = 0.005$), the younger age group are more dissatisfied with the civil service job.

Stress beyond job: The respondents who had no stress beyond their job (52; 28%) were less dissatisfied, compare to respondents who had stress beyond their jobs(39;43.3%) . This difference in job satisfaction was statistically significant ($\chi^2=11.982$, $P= 0.017$)

Social demographic characteristics and psychological disorder

Sex of respondent was the only social demographic characteristics that was significant with psychological disorder. There were 36(22%) male respondents who have psychological disorder compare to 38(33.9%) of the female respondents. Thus, more females than males had psychological disorder. The difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2=4.865$, $P=0.027$).

Table 1: Social demographic characteristics of civil servants

Variable	Frequency (276)	Percentage (%)
Age		
18 – 30	50	18.0
31 – 40	128	46.4
41 – 50	57	18.0
51 – 60	41	14.9
Gender		
Male	163	59.0
Female	113	41.0
Marital status		
Single	54	19.6
Married and living with spouse	149	54.0
Married and not living with spouse	25	9.0
Divorced	22	8.0
Widow	26	9.4

Education		
Secondary	20	7.0
Tertiary	256	93.0
Number of children		
0	63	22.9
1-4	174	63.0
>4	39	14.1
Adolescent children(10-19years)		
0	189	69.0
1	36	13.0
>1	51	18.0
Duration of service (years)		
1-5	62	22.5
6-10	109	39.5
11-15	38	13.8
16-20	35	12.7
>20	32	11.6

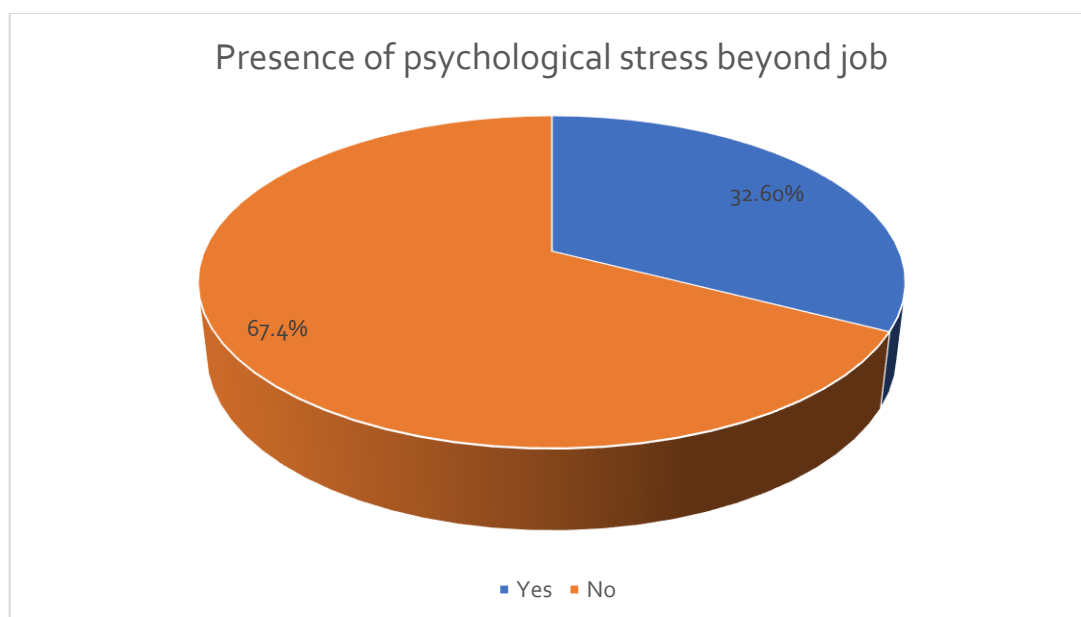


Figure 1: presence of psychological stress.

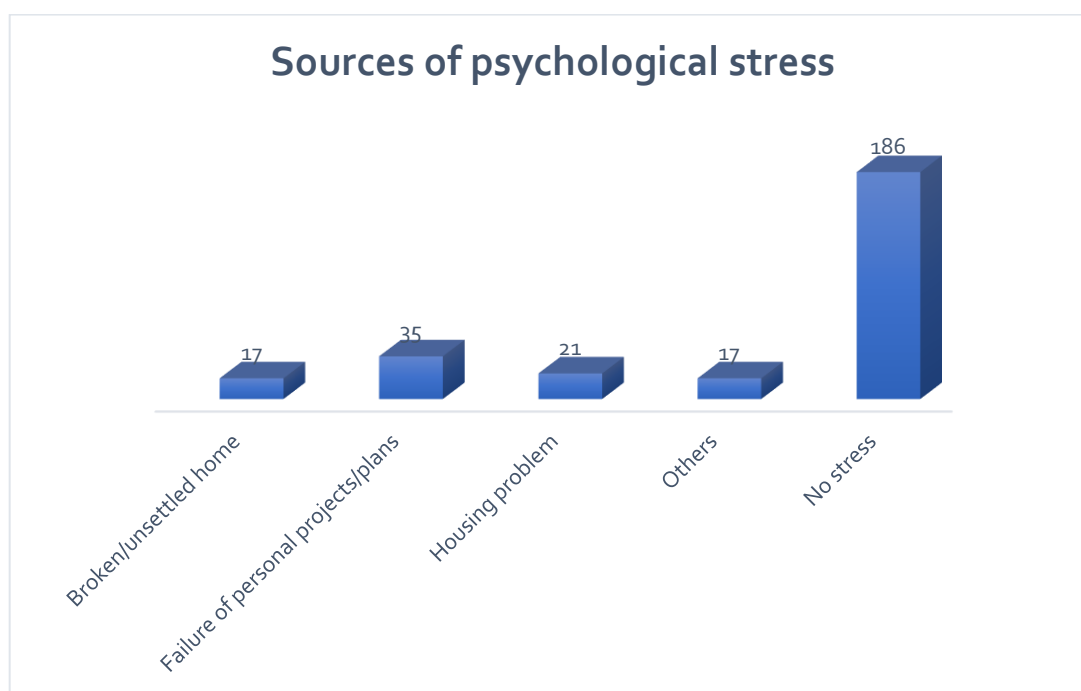


Figure 2: Sources of psychological stress

Note: Others- Transportation, stress of picking the children after school, issue of electricity power (PHCN) and high cost of fuel or scarcity .

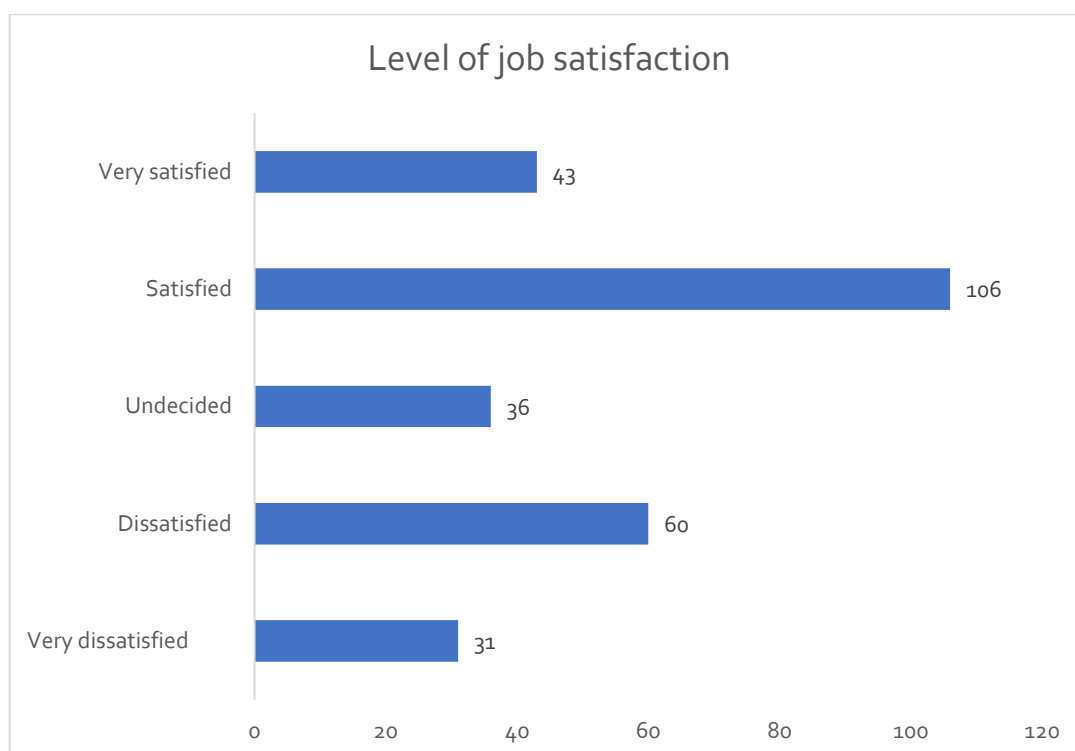


Figure 3: Levels of job satisfaction

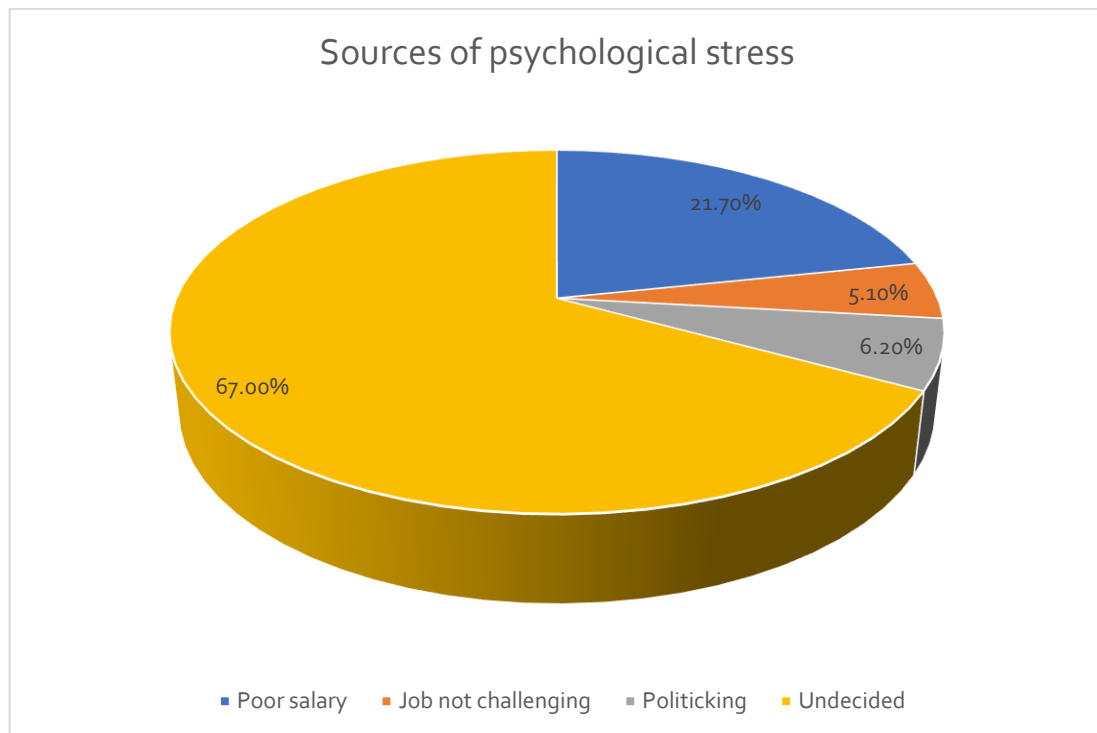


Figure 4: Sources of psychological stress

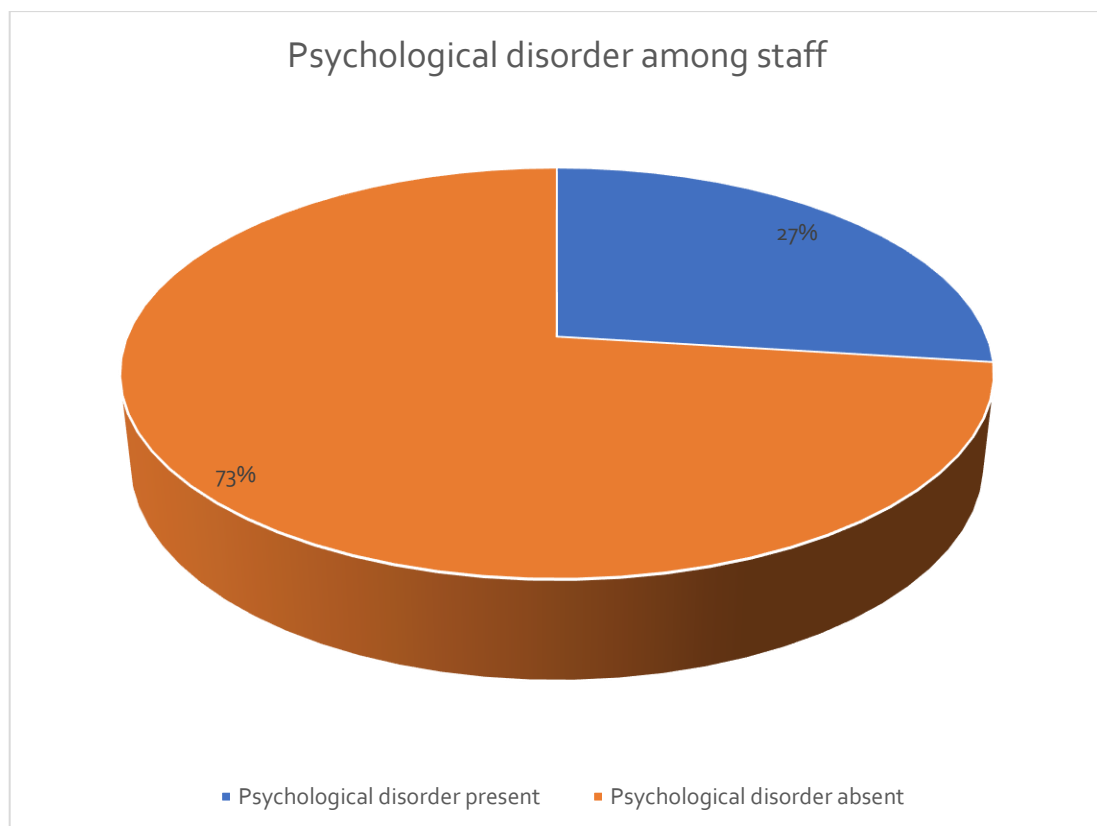


Figure 5: Psychological disorder

Discussion

Our study showed that the level of satisfaction was low compared to a study among physicians in America (Rath et.al.,2015) and that of Kano state (Kolo, E. S., 2018). A study done at the University of Benin among doctors showed an inverse relationship where the level of satisfaction was 30% and level of dissatisfaction 54% (Ofili et. al.2004). This may be due to the fact that majority of the doctors were undergoing post graduate training which has a limited time span and thus had to contend with the vicissitudes of specialist training unlike the civil servants who over time would have gotten adjusted to the bureaucracy of the civil service, risen up the ladder to a more comfortable position, more so when it is a permanent job. Similar findings were also seen among nurses in the same institution where 56% of the nurses were dissatisfied. with their jobs (Ofili et. al.2004). The average level of job satisfaction of 54% being experienced by civil servants could be due to the fact that the workers do have time to engage in other money-making ventures during and after working hours and this is as a result of lack of discipline among staff (lateness to work or leaving before official closing time) and poor monitoring of staff's activities are some of the misconducts prevalent in the civil service. Amongst the issues that the civil service reform addressed was that of promotion as at when due. Hitherto, promotion in the civil service takes years which may lead to stagnation but statistics above showed that 51% of the workers got their promotion between a year and two ago, though not as at when due but remarkably better than before. This might have been a strong motivating factor that influenced the workers satisfaction, though it was not found to be statistically significant. The 33% of dissatisfied workers attributed their dissatisfaction mostly to poor salary. This has been the bane of civil servants as occasioned by the incessant agitation for salary increment by the Nigeria Labour Congress. Money possesses significant motivating power in as much as it symbolizes intangible goals like security, power, prestige, and a feeling of accomplishment and success. The motivational power of money was demonstrated through the process of job choice. Poor salary, job is not challenging and Politicking was the main reasons given by respondents why they are dissatisfied with their job. It had been politicized to the extent that most top officials openly supported the government of the day. The introduction of the quota system of recruitment and promotion, adherence to the federal-character principle, and the constant interference of the government in the day-to-day operation of the civil service especially through frequent changes in top officials and massive purges, meant that political factors rather than merit alone played a major role in the civil service. Twenty-eight per cent of dissatisfied workers and 60.8% of satisfied workers did not indicate presence of stress outside their job. This was observed to be statistically significant. The most important external source of stress was found to be failure with some personal projects like building a house of their own, owning a personal car or having a sustainable business that will bring regular income when they retire from service; as revealed by some of the respondents about to retire with the old pension scheme which does not guarantee regular payment. The reason for this was not farfetched as increased

cost of living coupled with the recent global recession in the economy were known corroborative factors (Ofili et. al.2004). In an attempt to fix job dissatisfaction, the government tried to improve recruitment and selection process, train and re-train workers, create incentives and reward recognized performance and contributions, enhance the content of jobs, encourage leadership involvement of workers and so on. But these efforts to satisfy workers will never be completely successful or long lasting because stress beyond job such as housing, transportation and a host of others are the responsibilities of government of which they have failed to address. However, this has become an uphill task for government over the years due to widespread corruption in the system.

Age was statistically significant with the level of job satisfaction. The highest number of satisfied workers (61.4%) were in the age range of 41 – 50 years. This could be due to the fact that this age group is hardly favoured for another job employment if they decide to quit; they are thus left with no choice but to adjust to the bureaucracy of the civil service. The highest number of dissatisfied workers (41.2%) were within the age range of 18 – 30 years. This could be attributed to the high expectations of the youth which was gradually cut short over the years by the overwhelming corruption in the system. In general, job satisfaction increases with age and as people get older, they move up the ladder and get into better positions. They also sort through different alternative careers and find something that matches their talents and abilities (Lee, Y. & Sabharwal, M.,2016). Twenty-seven per cent of workers had GHQ scores of 4 and above, indicating an increased likelihood of psychological disorder. Slightly more dissatisfied workers had psychological disorder (76%) than satisfied workers (74%), though this difference was not statistically significant. The effect of psychological disorder on either the satisfied or dissatisfied worker seems to be a relative concern as the workers are more interested in the increment of their salary than their psychological health. Among the variables analysed, sex was found to be a significant factor influencing psychological health. In the face of high unemployment rate coupled with the escalating standard of living, workers irrespective of sex may be strained to adapt to the reality on ground without recourse to their psychological health, an unfortunate development highlighted from the study. More so, the daily stress of trying to meet up with the challenges of life especially for the female workers could be responsible for those that developed psychological disorder as well as those that do not have it probably due to adjustment. In addition, women suffer more from mental and physical harassment at workplace apart from the common job stress. Sexual harassment in workplace has been a major source of worry for women; women may suffer from tremendous stress such as 'hostile work environment harassment' which is defined in legal terms as offensive or intimidating behaviour in the workplace. Results revealed that female workers were more stressed psychologically (Rahman et.al.2020). Workers with tertiary certificate were more psychologically healthy than secondary school certificate holders. This may also be because educated people have more choices and they have greater control over their lives and better security (Rahman et.al.2020). It was also observed that job satisfaction of highly

educated people was surprisingly low probably because such people have high aspiration (Goncharuk & Vinot. 2024).

Conclusion

Job dissatisfaction resulting from job stress, unpleasant working conditions, long hours, monotony, ineffective supervision, insufficient training, poor internal communication, poor pay, lack of recognition results in increased complaints, psychological ill-health, low levels of involvement and organizational commitment, poor performance, low productivity and illness. Holistic intervention to address it is pivotal.

Limitation and Future Direction

limitation of this study was the use of self-reporting questionnaires which relied on the honesty of those completing them and its cross-sectional design. There might be need to expand on this research using more elaborate study designs like longitudinal designs, qualitative follow-up studies, or interventional studies. Again, the timing of the verification may also have influenced the study.

Conflict of interest: There is no conflict of interest among the authors.

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