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# AFFECT AND WORK EXPERIENCE AS PREDICTORS OF COUNTERPRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIOUR AMONG TEACHERS IN NSUKKA ZONE OF ENUGU STATE

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***ABSTRACT***
*The study investigated the relationship between affect and work experience on CWB among teachers in Nsukka zone of Enugu State. There has been extensive research on counterproductive work behavior in organisations in western countries, but little research has been conducted on this issue in the Nigerian setting. Thus, the need for the present study. The sample comprised 279 teachers (162 females and 117 males with the mean age of 32.48 years) from nine schools in the south-eastern part of Nigeria. Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule – Short Form (PANAS-SF) was used to measure affect while work experience was measured by asking the participant how many years they have worked as a teacher. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was utilized to predict CWB from affect and work experience. Results showed that positive affect and work place experience negatively predicted CWB, whereas negative affect positively predicted CWB. This implies that positive affect and work experience have a greater role to play in CWB, such that, teachers who expresses positive affect and who have spent many years teaching will less likely to engage in CWB. Strategies aimed at improving positive affective experiences for teachers will help to curtail CWB.*

**Keywords:** Counterproductive work behaviour, affect, work experience, teachers

## Introduction

Counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) is both harmful to the organization as well as individuals in the organization (Kanten & Ulker, 2013). The issue of CWB cannot be overemphasized in organizations. This is based on the premise that CWB among workers is one of the factors that are suspected to be among the major causes of poor employee performance, and by inference, poor organizational outcome (Ehigie & Sholola, 2020). CWB are potential threats that are costly to the organization (Ehigie & Sholola, 2020). For

instance, Vardi and Weitz (2004) identified two main costs that are associated with CWB. They are: financial costs (such as productivity loss, lawsuits and compensation, reputation) and social costs (such as mental and physical injuries, psychological withdrawal, Job dissatisfaction). CWB refers to intentional behaviours by employees that have the potential to harm an organization, its members, or both (Sackett & DeVore, 2001; Spector & Fox, 2005). Such behaviour include harassment, arriving late at work without permission, dragging out work to receive extra payment for overtime, property misuse and destruction, poor quality work, and theft (Idiakheua, & Obetoh, 2012; Lawrence & Robinson, 2007; Spector et al., 2006; van Gils et al., 2015). Counterproductive work behaviour has been studied in the past under such label as employee negative behaviour (Yao et al., 2014), retaliatory behaviour (Lian et al., 2014), workplace deviance (Bennett & Robinson, 2000), antisocial behaviour (Giacolone & Greenberg, 1997), and occupational crime (Kwok, Au, & Ho, 2005). CWB has been reported to be soaring at a staggering rate in Nigerian workplaces (Fagbohungbeet al., 2012). Common to CWB is that it is intentionally committed and are perpetrated with the intent to harm the organization and/or its stakeholders (Enwereuzor et al., 2017).

There is an alarming loss rate that is associated with CWB. It has accounted for between $6 billion and $200 billion of organizational loss annually (Coffin, 2003; Murphy, 1993; Samnani, Salamon & Singh, 2014). This figure is rather less since a good proportion of employees (33-75%) have engaged in some type of CWB at one point in serving in an organization (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; McGurn, 1988). The loss associated with CWB is not just financial as human capital is also affected by this behaviour. For instance, being a target of CWB could lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and stress, and ultimately possibly leading to intention to leave the organization (Dunlop & Lee, 2004; Glomb, 2002). Surprisingly, CWB could be both beneficial to the organization as well as destructive. For instance, going against the dysfunctional directives of superiors in an organization and engaging in innovative ways of solving problems or creating values, thereby contributing to the organization's competitive advantage (Galperin, 2012; Vadera, Pratt, & Mishra, 2013; Warren, 2003), is beneficial to the organization on the long run. It is destructive when employees choose to perform actions that are contrary to organizational norms, yet not helpful to organization or fellow employees, like theft and sabotage (Warren, 2003). However, the focus of this study is on the destructive aspect of CWB and the protective factors that can help curb it.

Past studies have indicated that CWB can be influenced by both internal and external factors (Chen, Chen, & Liu, 2013; Raman et al., 2016; Spector & Zhou, 2014). For example, affect (positive or negative) which is an internal factor, has a capacity to influence CWB while work experience

which is an external factor, can influence CWB. The teaching profession has been found to be more stressful compared to other human service-related occupations (Boshoff et al., 2014; Kinman et al., 2011; Sonn, 2013). This means that those teachers who are more stressed could be given to negative affect more than other human service-related occupations. It therefore becomes important to investigate their performance at work. However, more study is needed to assess the difference between teachers in Nigeria and other human service-related occupations on CWB.

Affective behaviour (positive or negative) plays a role in determining CWB. Drawing from the Affective Events Theory of counterproductive work behaviour (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) asserts that organizational events are proximal causes of effective reactions. This means that, things happen to people in work setting and they often react emotionally to these events (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). It was argued by Ehigie and Sholola (2020) that when teachers perceive that their organization has not been fair on them, they could experience negative emotion to such an organization which in turn can make an employee turn against such organization by engaging in behaviour that can have detrimental effect on an organization. Such behaviours can include but not limited to absenteeism, theft and tardiness. But, if they perceive their organization to be fair on them, they engage less on CWB. Bauer (2011) investigated the relationship between negative emotions and CWB among 241 employees. The study found a positive relationship between negative emotions and CWB indicating that the frequency of experiencing negative emotion is associated with the frequency of engaging in CWB. In the present study, we want to look at if teachers will engage in CWB while disguising under the umbrella of "the work is stressful."Work experience or organizational tenure is that number of years that one has spent working in an organization. The link between work experience and CWB remain mixed. Enwereuzor et al. (2017) in their study found no relationship between organizational tenure and workplace deviance among teachers in Nigeria. Liao et al. (2004) in their study on deviance from work found no relationship between organizational tenure and deviance at work. Ng and Feldman (2010) in their meta-analysis found that organizational tenure was positively related to self-rated workplace aggression. Henle (2005) in their study on organizational tenure and workplace deviance found no relationship between them. This therefore calls for further studies to understand the relationship between work experience and CWB.

Even though there have been studies on affect and CWB, there is still a gap yet to be filled in regards to Nigerian setting. It was therefore important to look at how affect will influence teachers in the Nigerian setting and especially, the South Eastern part of Nigeria. Additionally, findings on work experience and CWB remains rather inconclusive. Therefore, the need for further studies on it. There are variations in the

stress levels and issues affecting teachers based on the institutional levels where they teach (Adeyemi, 2008; Aladenusi & Ayodele, 2014). Studies have shown that secondary school teachers may be prone to CWB due to the prevailing school climate of Nigerian schools where these teachers are poorly paid and expected to work under poor conditions of service (Aladenusi & Ayodele, 2014). Therefore, the present study focuses on teachers in secondary school. We therefore hypothesized in the present study that: (a) positive affect will negatively predict CWB among teachers, (b) negative affect will positively predict CWB among teachers, and (c) work experience will negatively predict CWB among teachers such that teaching with greater years of teaching experience will report less CWB.

## Research Method

***Participants:*** Participants were 279 secondary school teachers comprising of 162 females (58.1%) and 117 males (41.9%) recruited from nine schools in Nsukka zone of Enugu state, Nigeria. Majority (51.3%) of them were single. More than half (81%) were of Igbo ethnicity, 23 were Yoruba (8.2%), 22 were Hausa (7.9%), and 8 (2.9%) were of other minor ethnic groups. On educational level, 119 (42.7%) had Odinary National Diploma (OND) or equivalent, 115 (41.2%) had Bachelor of Science (BSc.) or equivalent, and 45 (16.1%) had Masters of Science (MSc.). Average organizational tenure (years of work experience) was 6.48 years (*SD* = 6.38 years).

***Procedure:*** We approached the prospective participants after obtaining permission from authorities in charge of the schools. Teachers who agreed to participate were handed a pack of self-report measures for affect, CWB, and demographics, along with instructions on how to complete them.

***Instruments:*** The teachers self-reported their demographic characteristics. Work experience was measured by asking participants how long they have worked as a teacher. It was measured in years and was part of the demographic variables. They then completed measures of affect and CWB. *Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule – Short Form (PANAS-SF)(Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1998)*

We assessed positive and negative affect using the Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule – Short Form (PANAS-SF). PANAS-SF was developed by Watson, Clark and Tellegen (1988). It is a 20–item scale designed to measure positive and negative affect as independent dimensions. Based on previous research in Nigeria (Agbo, 2016), the items were scored on a 5–point Likert response format as follows: Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4), and Always (5). PANAS-SF has been found to be reliable and valid in the Nigerian context (e.g., Agbo 2016; Onyekachi, Oodo, & Chukwuorji, 2013). Agbo (2016) has earlier reported α of .71 for negative affect and .80 positive affect in Nigeria. In the present study, α were .74 for negative affect and .77 for positive affect.

*Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWBC) (Spector et al., 2006)*

The CWBC was developed by Spector et al. (2006). It has 32 items that assess the extent to which a worker engages in CWB. Examples of items in the checklist include: Came to work late without permission; Started or continued a damaging or harmful rumor at work; and Did something to make someone at work look bad. Respondents indicate how often they engaged in these specific behaviors on a 5-point Likert scale namely: Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4), and Always (5). High scores represent higher incidence of counterproductive work behaviour. Spector and colleagues (2006) reported an α of .81. In the current study, the scale obtained an α = .92.

***Data analyses:*** The data obtained from participants were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 23.0. Pearson's correlation was conducted to establish the relationship of the variables in the study. We used hierarchical multiple regression to predict CWB from affect and work experience. In the regression analysis, we entered negative affect and positive affect in the first step, and then entered work experience in the second step. The hierarchical multiple regression analyses allowed us to determine the unique contributions of each of the predictors to CWB.

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**Presentation of Results**

Descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 1 while results of the hierarchical multiple regression are displayed in Table 2.

**Table 1:** Means, standard deviations, and correlations matrix of study variables

| Variables | | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Age | 32.48 | 9.50 | - | | | | | |
| 2 | Gender | - | - | .20** | - | | | | |
| 3 | Work experience | 6.48 | 6.38 | .79*** | .22*** | - | | | |
| 4 | Educational level | - | - | .22*** | .19** | .21*** | - | | |
| 5 | Positive affect | 31.16 | 9.79 | .12* | -.02 | .07 | .17** | - | |
| 6 | Negative affect | 22.31 | 7.49 | .15* | -.01 | .06 | .16** | .22*** | - |
| 7 | CWB | 50.81 | 19.36 | -.05 | .10 | -.16** | -.06 | -.28*** | .29*** |

Note: N = 279. CWB : Counterproductive work behaviour. *p ≤ 0.05(two-tailed), **p ≤ 0.01 (two-tailed), ***p ≤ 0.001 (two-tailed). Gender was coded 1 = male, 0 = female; work experience was coded in years, such that higher scores represent higher number of years spent on the job.

In Table 1, older age was associated with being a male ($r$ = .20, $p$<.01), higher working experience ($r$ = .79, $p$<001), higher educational level ($r$ = .22, $p$<001), more positive affect ($r$ = .12, $p$<05), and more negative affect ($r$ = .15, $p$<05). Male had more working experience ($r$ = .22, $p$<001), and higher educational level ($r$ = .19, $p$<01), than females. Higher work experience was associated with more educational level ($r$ = .21, $p$<001), and less CWB ($r$ = -.16, $p$<01). Higher educational level was associated with more positive affect ($r$ = .17, $p$<01), and more negative affect ($r$ = .16, $p$<01). Positive affect was positively associated with negative affect ($r$ = .22, $p$<001), and negatively associated with CWB ($r$ = -.28, $p$<001). Negative affect was positively associated with CWB ($r$ = .29, $p$<001).

**Table 2:** Hierarchical multiple regression predicting overt aggression, by Family relationship and empathy.

| **Predictors** | **Step 1** | | | **Step 2** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***B*** | **β** | ***T*** | ***B*** | **B** | ***t*** |
| Positive affect | -.71 | -.36 | -6.52*** | -.69 | -.35 | -6.43*** |
| Negative affect | .95 | .37 | 6.71*** | .97 | .38 | 6.92*** |
| Work experience | | | | -.47 | -.16 | -2.94** |
| $R^2$ | .21 | | | .21 | | |
| $\Delta R^2$ | .23 | | | .02 | | |
| *F* | 35.74 (2, 276)*** | | | 27.35 (3, 275)*** | | |
| $\Delta F$ | 35.74 (2, 276)*** | | | 8.61 (1, 275)** | | |

$\Delta R^2$ = Change in $R^2$; $\Delta F$ = Change in *F; B* = Unstandardized regression coefficient; β = Standardised regression coefficient

Table 2 showed that positive affect was negatively associated with CWB ($\beta$ = -.36, $p$<.000), indicating that teachers who engage in positive affect are less likely to engage in CWB. Negative affect showed a positively association with CWB ($\beta$ = .37, $p$<.000), indicating that teachers who have negative affect towards the organization will engage in CWB. Positive and negative affect collectively accounted for 21% variance in CWB. Work experience was negatively associated with CWB ($\beta$ = -.16, $p$<.004). This means that teachers who have higher working experience are less likely to engage in CWB. However, work experience only account for 2% variance in CWB.

**Discussion of Findings**

This study aimed at gaining insight into the roles that affect (positive and negative) and work experience could play in CWB. We found that positive affect negatively predicted CWB. This result is not surprising as it has been argued by Ehigie and Sholola (2020) that when employees perceive that their organization is fair to them, they tend not to engage in CWB as opposed to when the organization is not fair on them. Also, affective event theory which has it that organizational event affects emotional reaction. The more the positive event, the more the reaction will be positive. On negative affect, the reverse was the case as it positively predicted CWB. This finding is in line with the work of Bauer (2011) which he also found a positive association between the two. Drawing from affective event theory, one will see that negative event in the organization will be the reason why teachers will want to engage in CWB. For instance, if there is bribery for promotion, the teachers who are not able to bribe their way out might resort to engaging heavily on CWB. This implies that teachers

with positive affect are less likely to engage in CWB while those with negative affect have the tendency to engage in such behaviours. In relating this to the present day condition, teachers with positive affect will be found going to classes on time, they will properly attend to their students, they are more likely to be in good terms with their colleagues, and they will obey the instructions of their superior as opposed to those with negative affect who will stand against anything that the superior says, will not give the students utmost attention, they will use the time they are supposed to attend to students to do their personal business, they will close from work before the proper closing time and they will be answerable to no one.

We also found that work experience had a negative association with CWB, showing that more work experience leads to less tendency to engage in CWB. The probable reason for this could be that those teachers who have worked for many years now have a different drive for life. They could be busy preparing for their retirement, unlike the young teachers that still think they have more years. So, age is not really a problem to them. However, Ng and Feldman (2010) found a positive association between organizational tenure and self-rated workplace aggression. The reason for this difference in finding could be because of the choice of measurement as well as the sample of study. The finding implies that those teachers who have worked for many years are less likely to engage in CWB as compared to the new teachers. This could be so because the new teachers are probably in the teaching profession because that is the job that is available to them at the moment. While working as teachers, they could be actively searching for other high paying job while mindlessly attending to their present job.

We nonetheless admit that the use of a cross-sectional design, self-report measures, availability sampling procedures, and a relatively small sample size are limitations to the current study, and restrict us from making causal inferences, and broader generalizing claims from the study. However, further studies should look at ways to increase the sample size and looking at the role that gender plays among teachers on CWB. This study has however shown efforts to further examine the role that affect (positive and negative) and work experience play on CWB.

## Conclusion

We conducted a study on the relationship between affect and work experience on CWB. We found that teachers who have positive affect and more working experience engage less in CWB while those teachers who have negative affect are more prone to engage in CWB. This implies that those teachers who expresses positive affect and have been teaching for a long period of time are less likely to engage in CWB.

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