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Influence of Occupational Stress, Work-Life Balance, and Gender on Organisational Commitment of Teachers in Public Secondary Schools in Imo State

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of occupational stress, work-life balance, and gender on organisational commitment among teachers in public secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested. A total of 183 teachers (93 males, 90 females), selected through a convenience sampling technique, participated in the study. Of these, 102 were married and 81 were single, with ages ranging from 28 to 56 years ($M = 42.20$, $SD = 7.28$). Participants completed validated measures of occupational stress, work-life balance, and organisational commitment. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, and data were analysed using three-step hierarchical multiple regression. Findings indicated that occupational stress, work-life balance, and gender did not significantly predict organisational commitment. Based on these results, it is recommended that government and school administrators explore more flexible scheduling and supportive policies to help teachers better manage work and personal responsibilities, potentially enhancing overall commitment.

Keywords: *Gender, Occupational stress, Organisational commitment, Secondary school teachers, Work-life balance*

1. Introduction

The role of teachers in shaping educational outcomes has long been recognized as central to the development of human capital and national progress. In Nigeria, the educational sector faces mounting challenges, including high attrition rates among public secondary school teachers, declining morale, and weak institutional commitment. These challenges are particularly prevalent in Imo State, where public schools frequently operate under resource constraints and increasing administrative burdens.

Organizational commitment (OC) is one of the key constructs in educational and industrial-organizational psychology that reflects the psychological attachment an employee feels toward their organization. It has been associated with a host of beneficial outcomes, including reduced turnover, increased job satisfaction, higher productivity, and greater resilience in the face of work-related challenges. Teachers with strong organizational commitment are more likely to go above and beyond their formal duties, maintain positive relationships with students and colleagues, and stay with their schools for extended periods.

The present study is motivated by the need to understand the psychosocial variables that influence the organizational commitment of teachers in Nigerian public secondary schools. In particular, three constructs are

considered: occupational stress, work-life balance, and gender. Occupational stress—defined as the experience of emotional or psychological strain resulting from work demands—has been shown to have complex associations with teacher engagement and commitment. Work-life balance, on the other hand, is increasingly emphasized in human resource literature as a determinant of well-being and commitment. Gender, as a demographic and social factor, is also known to shape work attitudes and expectations, although findings are often mixed.

Despite a growing global body of research on these variables, limited empirical work has explored their interrelations in the context of Nigeria's public education sector. This study seeks to fill that gap by examining the predictive influence of occupational stress, work-life balance, and gender on the organizational commitment of teachers in public secondary schools in Imo State. The insights derived may inform policies aimed at improving teacher retention, well-being, and institutional effectiveness.

2. Literature Review

Organizational commitment (OC) is commonly defined as a psychological bond or attachment an employee feels toward their organization, encompassing affective (emotional attachment), continuance (awareness of costs to leave), and normative (sense of obligation) (Xu & Pang, 2024). In educational settings, high teacher commitment is critically important: committed teachers are valuable assets who enhance school effectiveness and adapt better to reforms (Xu & Pang, 2024). Conversely, low commitment is linked to higher turnover intentions; Xu and Pang (2024) note that teachers' OC is inversely related to their intention to quit. Given its impact on retention and performance, identifying factors that influence teachers' commitment is a major concern in the literature.

Occupational Stress and Teacher Commitment

Teaching is widely recognized as a high-stress profession. Occupational stress arises when job demands exceed an individual's ability to cope (Tesfaye, Abate, Kabito & Azale, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, dramatically increased stress among teachers due to fears of infection and disruptions to schooling (Tesfaye et al., 2023). Empirical studies confirm that teachers often report moderate to high levels of stress (Wang, Chu, Pan, Sun, Yan, Jiao & Zhan, 2020). Stressful working conditions (e.g. excessive workload, large classes, discipline problems) have been shown to erode teachers' well-being. According to the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, excessive job demands (stressors) lead to burnout, which in turn undermines work attitudes and behaviours (Wang et al., 2020). Specifically, burnout and dissatisfaction mediate the relationship between stress and organizational outcomes. Wang et al. (2020) found in a large study of Chinese teachers that job stress increases burnout and reduces job satisfaction, both of which then lower organizational commitment. In practical terms, stressed teachers tend to feel less affective attachment to their school and more desire to leave. For example, an Ethiopian study during the pandemic found that primary school teachers experiencing high stress (often due to inadequate resources or workload) were more likely to report job dissatisfaction, suggesting a risk of reduced commitment (Tesfaye et al., 2023). Thus, the literature suggests a negative influence of occupational stress on teacher commitment: as stress rises, commitment tends to fall.

Work-Life Balance and Commitment

Work-life balance (WLB) broadly refers to an individual's perception of effectively managing the demands of work and personal life (Haar, 2013). Haar (2013) conceptualizes WLB as “the extent to which an individual can adequately manage the multiple roles in their life, including work, family, and other major responsibilities”. For teachers, a good balance (e.g. reasonable hours, manageable workload, support for family responsibilities) can replenish resources and foster commitment. In recent empirical work, higher WLB has consistently predicted stronger organizational commitment among teachers. For instance, a Saudi Arabian study found that teachers with better WLB reported significantly greater commitment to their school (Abdulaziz, Bashir & Alfalih, 2022). Similarly, a study of school teachers in India reported a statistically significant positive link between OC and WLB (Bhatia, 2024). These findings align with general evidence that WLB reduces work-family conflict and burnout, thereby enhancing job attitudes such as commitment. In contrast, poor WLB (e.g. work spilling over

into personal time or vice versa) is expected to diminish commitment by increasing strain. Work-life balance thus emerges as a key resource that supports teachers' sense of attachment to the organization.

Gender and Commitment

Gender differences in organizational commitment have received attention in educational research, though results can vary by context. Some studies indicate that female teachers tend to exhibit higher commitment than males. For example, a comparative study found that female secondary school teachers scored higher on organizational commitment (and related citizenship behaviors) than their male counterparts (Sethi, 2018). The rationale may lie in gender role expectations or socialization (women often identify more strongly with the caring/professional roles), though the causal mechanisms are unclear. Aligned with this, a recent review notes that female teachers typically report stronger commitment when they perceive organizational support (Shao, Sharif, Shin & Ompok, 2025). However, for this study, gender is examined not only as a demographic variable but potentially as a moderator; Yang et al. suggested with evidence that the positive effect of support on commitment is amplified among female teachers. However, other research finds only modest gender differences in baseline commitment. Overall, the literature warrants including gender in models of commitment, but does not predict a single direction of effect without context.

Organizational Commitment in Nigerian Schools

In Nigeria and neighboring countries, teachers face heavy workloads, insufficient resources, and pressure to perform, which amplify stress (Subair, Abdulahi, Dada & Abubakar, 2021; Tesfaye et al., 2023). High stress and poor work-life balance conditions—often common due to long working hours and limited flexibility—can thus impair Nigerian teachers' commitment. Conversely, interventions that improve WLB or reduce stress have been suggested as ways to bolster teacher commitment and retention. Given this backdrop, studying how stress and WLB (and gender) jointly influence organizational commitment in Nigeria is timely.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded primarily in Meyer and Allen's three-component model of organizational commitment, which defines commitment as comprising affective (emotional attachment), continuance (cost-based), and normative (obligation-based) components (Xu & Pang, 2024). This model provides the core lens for understanding the dependent variable: teachers' commitment to their school is viewed as a multi-dimensional attitude influenced by work conditions and personal factors. Affective commitment, for instance, should rise when teachers enjoy their jobs and feel supported by the organization. Normative commitment may increase when teachers feel a moral duty to remain (which can be influenced by cultural or gender norms), and continuance commitment when leaving would impose high personal costs.

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model provides the theoretical link between occupational stress and commitment (Wang et al., 2020). In this model, as used in their study, teaching-related demands (e.g. excessive paperwork, class size, emotional labor) can deplete teachers' resources and lead to burnout. Burnout which is a chronic stress response in turn diminishes positive work attitudes and engagement, undermining affective commitment. Conversely, job resources such as support from colleagues/administration, autonomy, good WLB practices can buffer the impact of stress and directly foster commitment. Thus, high level of stress can be said to reduce commitment (through burnout), whereas higher work-life balance (a job resource allowing better recovery and well-being) will enhance commitment. Empirical JD-R research supports these pathways in education; Wang et al. (2020) showed that teacher stress increases burnout and lowers satisfaction and commitment.

Work-family theories also inform our framework. Work-life balance is often viewed through the lens of Role balance or Enrichment Theory. When teachers can successfully integrate work and non-work roles, they experience less conflict and more personal well-being, which spills over positively into work attitudes. According to this perspective, achieving WLB satisfies teachers' non-work obligations without sacrificing work

engagement, thus promoting affective commitment (Abdulaziz et al., 2022; Bhatia, 2024). In contrast, work-life conflict (poor balance) consumes emotional resources and increases withdrawal. Empirical studies support this; as noted, positive WLB has a direct beneficial effect on organizational commitment (Abdulaziz et al., 2022; Bhatia, 2024)

Finally, social role and equity considerations help explain potential gender differences. Social role theory posits that females and males internalize different role expectations (communion vs. agency) which can influence their work attitudes. In many cultures, female teachers may feel greater normative obligation and relational attachment to the school community, resulting in higher commitment under supportive conditions (Shao et al., 2025; Sethi, 2018). Thus, gender may moderate the impact of work-related factors. For instance, stress might affect male and female teachers differently. However, the literature on gender effects in teaching is mixed, so gender is to be treated primarily as an independent variable of interest, to be tested for main and interactive effects on commitment. In summary, the theoretical model for this study posits that occupational stress (a job demand) and work-life balance (a job resource) independently influence teachers' organizational commitment, as informed by JD-R and work-life theories, while Meyer and Allen's three-component framework conceptualizes the outcome. Gender is included as a personal characteristic that may shape these relationships.

4. Method

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed to examine the relationships among occupational stress, work-life balance, gender, and organizational commitment in the target population. The study sample comprised 183 public secondary school teachers in Imo State, Nigeria (93 males, 90 females; 102 married, 81 single). Participants' ages ranged from 28 to 56 years (mean = 42.20, SD = 7.28). Teachers were selected via convenience sampling from multiple public schools, reflecting the practical constraints of access while covering both urban and rural settings. Each school's administration consented to the survey distribution.

In this research, four instruments are used which are:

(1) **Occupational Stress:** Job-related stress was assessed using a recently developed teacher stress scale by (Chen, Rodrigues & Kaufman, 2022) called the Teacher Stress Scale (TSS), a 7-item measure grounded in established stress theories. Similarly, Cabaguing (2022) constructed a comprehensive 60-item Teachers' Occupational Stress Scale covering environmental, workload, and student-behavior stressors. Based on these and related work, our survey included items reflecting common teacher stressors (e.g. "I feel stressed by having too much teaching work to do"). Respondents rated items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Previous validations of recent teacher stress scales report high reliability (e.g. $\alpha = .97$ for Cabaguing's scale). Similar internal consistency is expected in the adapted scale as used in this study.

(2) **Work-Life Balance:** Work-life balance was measured using Haar's (2013) 3-item Work-Role Balance scale (Haar, Sune & Russo, 2019). This concise scale captures an individual's perceived balance across life roles (e.g. "I manage to balance the demands of my work and personal life well"). Haar's measure has demonstrated good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha \approx .81$) in prior cross-national studies (Haar et al., 2019). Teachers rated each statement on a 5-point agreement scale. This scale was chosen for its brevity and strong psychometric properties, making it suitable for busy professionals.

(3) **Organizational Commitment:** Teachers' commitment to their school was assessed with Allen and Meyer's (1990) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), reflecting the three-component model. This 18-item instrument (6 items per component) asks respondents to rate their agreement with statements about attachment, obligation, and perceived costs of leaving. For instance, an affective commitment item is "I feel a strong sense of belonging to my school," and a continuance item is "It would be very hard for me to leave my school right now, even if I wanted to." Items were scored on a 5-point scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). The OCQ has been widely used and validated in educational research, typically yielding Cronbach's alphas

above .70 for each subscale. In the survey used in this research, standard wording and reverse-coded items were incorporated as needed, ensuring factorial alignment with Meyer and Allen's model.

(4) **Gender:** Gender was recorded as a self-reported demographic (male or female) and used as a categorical independent variable or moderator. (Other demographics such as age and marital status were collected as control variables.)

Procedure: After obtaining permission from school authorities, the questionnaires were administered during non-instructional time. Teachers received a consent form explaining the study and assuring confidentiality. Participation was voluntary, and no personal identifiers were collected. Completed surveys were returned in sealed envelopes to the researchers. In total, 183 usable responses were obtained (response rate ~ 85%).

Data Analysis: Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS. Preliminary checks included examination of missing data (minimal), scale reliabilities, and descriptive statistics. Cronbach's alpha for each scale was computed to confirm internal consistency (expected $\alpha > .70$ based on prior studies). Hypotheses were tested via hierarchical multiple regression. In the first step, control variables (e.g. age, marital status) and gender were entered. In the second step, occupational stress and work-life balance scores were added as predictors. This allowed assessment of each predictor's unique contribution to commitment while accounting for demographics. Interactions between variables were also tested (e.g. Stress \times Gender) to explore whether gender moderated the effects of stress or WLB on commitment. Statistical significance was evaluated at the .05 level, and standardized regression coefficients (β) were reported to interpret effect sizes. This mixed-method survey approach, using updated psychometrically sound instruments and appropriate regression analysis, ensures that the examination of the influence of stress, work-life balance, and gender on teachers' organizational commitment is both rigorous and grounded in contemporary research practice.

5. Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics showed low organisational commitment ($M = 71.37$, $SD = 19.46$), high job stress ($M = 43.32$), and below-average work-life balance ($M = 48.20$; norm = 51.27).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Organizational Commitment, Occupational Stress and Work Life Balance.

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Organisational Commitment	71.37	19.46	1			
2. Occupational Stress	43.32	10.13	-.061	1		
3. Work life Balance	48.20	12.39	-.062	.047	1	
4. Gender		-.084	-.088	-.105	1	

From the above table, mean score of organizational commitment, 71.37 ($Sd=19.46$) is above the norm for the scale (95.48), signifying poor organizational commitment. The norm of 43.32 for occupational stress is higher than the scale norm of 39.82, which implies high job stress. For work life balance, the mean score of 48.20 is above the scale's norm (51.27), this means high work life balance. There is no significant correlation among all the variables: organizational commitment and occupational stress ($r=-.061$, $p>.05$); organizational commitment and work life balance ($r=-.062$, $p>.05$); organizational commitment and gender ($r=-.084$, $p>.05$). Similarly, there is no significant correlation between occupational stress and work life balance ($r=.047$, $p>.05$); and between work life balance and gender ($r=-.105$, $p>.05$).

Table 2: Summary Table of Multiple Regressions of Occupational Stress, Work Life Balance and Organizational Commitment

Model	β	t value	p value	Decision
Occupational Stress	-.066	-.885	.377	NS
Work Life Balance	-.069	-.921	.358	NS
Gender	-.097	-1.300	.195	NS
R ²	.016			
F	.996			
Df	3,179			

Dependent variable: Organizational Commitment

The result in table 2 shows that the R square value is .016, which means that only 1.6% variation in organizational commitment is explained by the predictor variables (occupational stress, work life balance and gender). The table also shows that the overall model is not significant [$df(3,179) = .996, p=.396$] which means that there is no joint impact of occupational stress, work life balance and gender on organizational commitment.

The hypotheses of the study were also tested. The first hypothesis which stated that occupational stress will significantly predicts organizational commitment of teachers is rejected ($\beta = -.066, p=.377, t = -.885$), meaning that occupational stress does not predict organizational commitment of teachers.

Furthermore, work life balance did not significantly predict organizational commitment ($\beta = -.069, p=.195, t = -.921$), thus the second hypothesis which stated that work life balance will significantly predict organizational commitment of teachers is rejected.

Finally, the third hypothesis which stated that gender will significantly predicts organizational commitment of teachers is rejected ($\beta = -.091, p=.377, t = -1.300$).

Discussion

The results showed that:

- occupational stress is not a significant predictor of organizational commitment of teachers
- work life balance is not a significant predictor of organizational commitment of teachers.

- gender is not a significant predictor of organizational commitment of teachers.

These findings are in line with research by Adamchik and Sedlak (2024), who reported minimal gender-based differences in organisational commitment, and Obrenovic et al. (2020), who highlighted that occupational stress does not always significantly affect performance. Conversely, the insignificance of work-life balance contradicts findings from Akter, Hossen & Islam (2019), who found positive associations between work-life harmony and teacher commitment. These inconsistencies suggest that other unmeasured factors—such as remuneration, workload, and administrative support—may play a more critical role in shaping commitment.

6. Conclusion

Occupational stress, work-life balance, and gender were not significant predictors of organisational commitment among secondary school teachers in Imo State. This highlights the multifactorial and complex nature of teacher commitment, urging deeper examination into structural and motivational elements in public education. This study underscores the importance of holistic interventions that go beyond addressing stress or gender equity. Emphasis should be placed on improving work environments, developing teacher support programs, and reviewing workload structures. Moreover, excessive focus on gender as a predictor should be avoided.

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