

## Examining Age, Pay Satisfaction and Intent to Leave in Counterproductive Work Behaviour among University Support Staff\*

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**Abstract:** Workplace behaviour, including Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB), continues to attract scholarly enquiries. This is because it has implications in workplaces. Workplace behaviour in Nigerian tertiary institutions has largely focused on the academic staff. The present study focuses on the supporting staff as it investigates gender difference, predictive ability of age, pay satisfaction and intent to leave in counterproductive work behaviour. Two hundred (107 male & 93 female) university support staff participated in a cross-sectional research survey for this study. Questionnaire comprising reliable measures of CWB, pay satisfaction and intent to leave along with some demographics was used as an instrument. Their ages ranged from 20 to 55 years ( $M = 33.16$ ;  $SD = 6.34$ ). Data were analysed using hierarchical multiple regression. No gender difference was found in CWB among supporting staff. Age, pay satisfaction and intent to leave significantly predicted counterproductive work behaviour with age and intent to leave recording higher contributions. This study highlights the importance of being human capital variables in reducing incidence of counterproductive work behaviour, while such factors are suggested for inclusion in the strategic policy for implementation.

**Keywords:** counterproductive work behaviour, gender, age, pay satisfaction, intention to quit, university support staff

### Introduction

Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB) can be described as any behaviour that employees engage in that goes against or hinders organizational goals and negatively affects fellow employees. In view of the obvious negative connotation, CWB is detrimental to both co-workers and organizations (Cowen & Marcel

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\* The authors were grateful to the participants for their assistance and appreciate the support from management of the university for making the environment conducive for data collection. The authors have no financial admissions or conflicts of interest to report.

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2011; Czarnota-Bojarska, 2015; Umesh, Kumari & Nagendra, 2015). Umeshi et al. (2015) categorised gossiping, spreading rumours, avoiding work or assignment, littering and inappropriate intent or printer usage in workplace as minor CWB, while damaging resources, different forms of harassment and physical harm or violence are grouped as severe CWBs. Uche, George and Abiola (2017) affirmed that apart from the differences in CWB across different organizations, CWB also varies according to some socio-demographic factors. In asserting the imperativeness of CWB in realising organisational goals, Oge, Ifeanyi and Gozie (2015) noted the need for continuous research in understanding some of the salient determinants of CWB in different organizations, towards the provision of effective interventions. It is on this premise that the present study examines age along with pay satisfaction and intent to leave as possible psychodemographic factors predicting counterproductive work behaviour among supporting staff in a university is timely and relevant.

Existing studies have identified a range of factors that were associated with CWB in distinct categories of organizations and in different countries. For instance, some of the mostly reported factors associated with CWB include job satisfaction, organizational justice, work stress, propensity to aggressive behaviour (Czarnota-Bojarska, 2015) and organizational politics (Muhammad, Muhammad & Tahira, 2015). Other studies described factors such as job stress (Hira & Anam, 2012); employee engagement (Ariani, 2013); work stressors, intention to quit, mediating role of organizational climate (Aldea-Capotescu, 2012); guilt proneness, intention to turnover, interpersonal conflict at work, negative affect at work, age, and gender (Cohen, Panter & Turan, 2013); climate, occupational status and leader-member exchange (Chernyak-Hai & Tziner, 2014); family incivility, self-esteem and emotional regulation (Bai, Lin & Wang 2016) as possible factors relating to counterproductive work behaviour among employees.

Specifically related to the Nigerian workplace terrain, studies conducted across the country revealed some psychological variables such as big five personality factors (Mase, 2016), organizational justice (Oge et al., 2015); cynical behaviour, work life conflict, compensation and supervisor support (Lasisi, Okuneye & Shodiya, 2014); psychological contract breach and job stress (Onyishi & Onunkwo 2014); work locus of control, perceived organizational justice and workplace deviant behaviour (Olabimitan & Alausa 2014); surface acting and distress tolerance (Amazue, Onyishi & Amazue, 2014) as factors associated with counterproductive work behaviour among different categories of employees. Other studies view counterproductive work behaviour in relation to gender, organizational reactions (Fagbohunbe, Akinbode & Ayodeji, 2012); age difference, perceived organizational support and job burnout (Ugwu, Enwerezor, Fimber and Ugwu, 2017; Onuoha 2013) as well as job insecurity and entrepreneurial intention (Joe-Akunne, Oguegbe & Aguanunu, 2014). In recent time, Ugwu et al., (2017) investigated the moderating role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between experience of burnout and counterproductive work behaviour in nursing population. Despite the enviable strides recorded, these studies also indicate that investigations on salient psychological variables such as age, pay satisfaction and intent to leave as

predictors to CWB are still understudied in Nigeria, especially among support staff in a critical setting like universities.

Pay satisfaction is described as the satisfaction which an employee derives from the payment earned in their workplace. However, while satisfaction with pay is important to employees, the importance to individual employees differs. A cursory analysis of existing literature reveals that pay satisfaction and counterproductive work behaviour have been understudied. Only a few studies, such as Saqib Usman, Akbar and Ramzan (2013), confirmed the relevance of pay or salary satisfaction in job-related attitudes among employees. Similarly, Fapohunda (2012) investigated pay disparity and pay satisfaction in public and private universities and reported higher pay satisfaction among employees of private universities compared to their public universities' counterparts.

Quitting a job, whether in private or government-owned organizations, is low among Nigerian employees, considering the high level of unemployment in the country. However, although employees might not actually quit the job, they may harbour the idea of leaving if better opportunities come their way in future. This becomes a problem due to the strong link between intention to quit and actual quitting (Cho & Lewis 2012; MorBarak, Levin, Nissly & Lane, 2006). Undeniably, engaging in counterproductive work behaviour by an employee can be regarded as an expression of his or her intention to quit the job. This is because an unrealized intention to quit a job could result in counterproductive work behaviour-related activities such as absenteeism (Chang, Wang & Huang, 2013). Intention to leave is therefore defined as the tendency for a support staff to leave his or her organization in a definite period in future. Mbah and Ikemefuna (2012) reported a link between intention to leave and other psychological variables such as job satisfaction. Cohen *et al.*, (2013) stated that intention to turnover is one of the variables that predicted counterproductive work behaviour among employees.

Age and gender differences were investigated as possible demographic variables that can influence extent at which employees express counterproductive work behaviour. Earlier studies conducted on age difference in counterproductive work behaviour have reported mixed findings. For instance, Onuoha (2013) reported no age difference in counterproductive work behaviour among employees. Others stated that age is one of the socio-demographic variables predicting CWB (Uche *et al.*, 2017; Cohen *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, further investigation of age difference in CWB is still germane in literature. Also, existing literature indicates that the gender of employees influences their level of engagement in CWB (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). Spector and Zhou (2014) also affirmed that gender moderated the relationship between job stressors and personality with counterproductive work behaviour. With these results, examining gender difference in counterproductive work behaviour among support university staff as another group of employees is important for detailed and robust explanation on the possible differences. This study investigated the extent of separate and combined contributions of age, pay satisfaction and intent to leave in explaining

counterproductive work behaviour among support staff in a Nigerian university setting. Examined also is the role/implication of gender in counterproductive work behaviour among university support staff.

## **Materials and methods**

### **Research Design**

The study utilized cross sectional survey quantitative research to evaluate data on age, pay satisfaction, intention to leave and counterproductive work behaviour. The research design was chosen because the researchers only observed existing conditions that could not be manipulated. In the study, independent variables are age, pay satisfaction and intent to leave, while the dependent variable is counterproductive work behaviour. The actual age of respondents was measured. In addition, pay satisfaction, intent to leave and CWB were also measured with interval scale.

### **Description of Setting and Population**

The study was conducted at Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The institution, owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria, was established in 2011. It is in the south-western part of the country. The institution offers undergraduate programmes in seven faculties which include Faculties of Arts, Agriculture, Engineering, Social Sciences, Sciences, Education and Agriculture and has about 1,350 employees (academic and support staff).

### **Participants**

Two hundred support staff members comprising 107 males and 93 females were sampled in the study using the convenience sampling method. Participants' ages ranged from 20 to 55 years ( $\bar{x} = 33.16$ ;  $SD = 6.34$ ). Year of work experience ranged from 1 year to 28 years ( $\bar{x} = 5.24$ ;  $SD = 4.67$ ). One hundred and eighty (90%) of the respondents were Christians, 18(9%) were Muslims and 2(1%) indicated other religions. In terms of the educational qualifications of the respondents, 17(8.5%) had Senior Secondary School Certificate, 47(23.5%) had Ordinary National Diploma, 42(21%) had Higher National Diploma, 68(34%) had a first degree and 26(13%) had postgraduate qualifications. The majority of the respondents, 142 representing(71%), were married; 57(28.5%) were single while 1(5%) was a widow.

### **Measurements**

Survey questionnaire was used as a tool for the collection of data. It included socio-demographic information such as age, gender, religion, marital status, highest educational level, and years of work

experience. The tool also included standardized scales assessing variables of interest in the study as follows:

**Counterproductive work behaviour** was assessed by a 32-item counterproductive work behaviour checklist (CWB-C) as specified by Spector et al., (2006). The evaluation was done on a Likert response scale from Never (1); Once in a week (2); Twice in a week (3); Thrice in a week (4); Four or more times in a week (5). This means that high score on the scale is indicative of higher counterproductive work behaviour. For the scale, Cohen et al., (2013) reported internal consistency of 0.97, while alpha coefficient of .90 was obtained in the current study.

**Pay Satisfaction** was assessed using an 18-item version of pay satisfaction questionnaire (PSQ) developed by Heneman and Schwab (1985). It is a 5-point rating scale, ranging from Very Dissatisfied (score 1) to Very Satisfied (score 5). A high score indicates higher level of pay satisfaction while a low score indicates lower pay satisfaction. The authors reported coefficient alpha reliability estimate of 0.89 for the scale. This scale has a reliability coefficient of Cronbach's alpha of 0.97 in this study.

**Intent to Leave** was assessed using the 8-item coined for the study. Examples of items in the scale include, "As soon as I can find a better job, I will quit this organization", "I often think about quitting my job", and "I will probably look for a job outside this organization within the next 3 years". It is a 5-point rating scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (score 1) to Strongly Agree (score 5). A high score indicates higher intention to quit the job, while low score indicates lower intention to quit the job. This scale has a reliability coefficient of Cronbach's alpha of 0.67 in this study.

### **Ethical consideration and Procedure**

Institutional-based ethical approval was obtained from the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria. Informed consent was sought from individual respondents and self-report questionnaires were distributed to them in their offices during working hours. In order not to disrupt the working activities, respondents were asked to submit the questionnaires to their heads of unit after completion; after which the researchers came to collect them. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality of their information and were promised that the information would be used solely for research purposes. In all, 250 questionnaires were distributed across the five faculties with 50 for each faculty. Of the 213 copies of the questionnaire retrieved, the 200 that were properly completed were used for data analyses in the study; this constituted a response rate of 80% of the number distributed.

## Statistical Analyses

Data obtained in the study were analysed using IBM-SPSS version 24. The statistical methods used involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. Demographic characteristics of respondents were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and percentages. To achieve the study's objectives, inferential statistics of bivariate Pearson correlation, hierarchical multiple regression and t-test for independent samples were conducted. Specifically, bivariate correlation analysis was performed in order to examine the relationships between independent and dependent variables in the study. A three-model hierarchical multiple regression was computed in order to determine the contributions of each of the predictor variables (age, pay satisfaction & intent to leave) in the criterion variable (CWB). In addition, t-test for independent samples was computed in order to compare male and female support staff on counterproductive work behaviour. Results obtained in the study were significant at 0.01 and 0.05 levels of significance.

## Results

To access the association between the predictor variables (age, pay satisfaction & intent to leave) and the criterion variable (counterproductive work behaviour), bivariate correlational analyses were performed (See Table 1). Results of the bivariate correlational analyses showed that age has a significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.18$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) with counterproductive work behaviour but no significant relationship with pay satisfaction ( $r = 0.04$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) and intent to leave ( $r = -0.01$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). Furthermore, pay satisfaction negatively correlated significantly with counterproductive work behaviour ( $r = -.15$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), but not with intent to leave ( $r = -0.05$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). Intent to leave positively correlated significantly with CWB ( $r = .17$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Interpretations of these results infer that as support staff grow old, their engagement in CWB reduces. Also, as support staff are more satisfied with their pay/salary, they are less likely to involve in counterproductive work behaviour. Finally, support staff who have less intention to quit their jobs are less likely to be involved in counterproductive work behaviour.

**Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and co-relational matrix between variables in the study**

Variable	1	2	3	4
Age	-			
Pay Satisfaction	0.04	-		
Intent to Leave	-0.01	-0.05	-	
CWB	-0.18*	-0.15*	0.17*	-
<i>M</i>	33.16	65.28	24.24	38.34
<i>SD</i>	6.34	17.20	8.35	9.33

Note: \*\* =  $p < 0.01$  level; \* =  $p < 0.05$  level; CWB = Counterproductive work behaviour, *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard deviation

A three-model hierarchical multiple regression analyses of counterproductive work behaviour on age, pay satisfaction and intent to leave was also performed (See Table 2). Age was entered in step 1 as a control variable, pay satisfaction was entered at step 2, and intent to leave was entered at step 3. The analysis indicated that at first model of the regression, age was a significant predictor of counterproductive work behaviour  $\beta = -.18$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , with contribution of  $F(1, 188) = 6.58$ ,  $p < 0.01$  and accounted for 3.4% of the variation in CWB. At second model of the regression, pay satisfaction was a significant predictor of counterproductive work behaviour  $\beta = -.14$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , with contribution of  $F(2, 187) = 5.27$ ,  $p < 0.01$  and accounted for 5.3% of the variation in CWB. With the addition of pay satisfaction, the result showed an increase of 1.9% in CWB. Finally, at third model of the regression, intent to leave was a significant predictor of counterproductive work behaviour  $\beta = -.17$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , with contribution of  $F(3, 186) = 5.49$ ,  $p < 0.01$  and accounted for 8.1% of the variation in CWB. It means that addition of intent to leave resulted in a significant increase of 2.8% in CWB among the university support staff.

**Table 2: Summary of hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting CWB of University Support Staff**

Predictors	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	SEB	$\beta$	B	SEB	$\beta$	B	SEB	$\beta$
Age	-	0.11	-.18**	-	0.11	-.18*	-	0.11	-.18*
Pay Satisfaction	0.28			0.27	0.04	-.14*	0.27	0.14	-.13
Intent to Leave				-			-	0.08	.17*
R		.18		0.08	.23		0.07	.29	
R <sup>2</sup>		.03			.05			.08	
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>		.03			.04		0.20	.07	
R <sup>2</sup> Change (%)		.03			.02			.03	
F		6.58*			5.26**			5.49**	
F Change		6.58*			3.85*			5.66*	

Note: \*\* =  $p < 0.01$  level; \* =  $p < 0.05$  level; B = unstandardized regression coefficient;  $\beta$  = beta weight; SEB = standard error of regression coefficient; R = multiple correlation; R<sup>2</sup> = coefficient of determination

The examination of gender difference in CWB showed that male support staff ( $\bar{x} = 38.68$ ) were not significantly different in counterproductive work behaviour compared to female support staff ( $\bar{x} = 37.94$ ),  $t(198) = 0.56$ ;  $p > 0.05$  (See Table 3). The implication is that there is no sex difference in counterproductive work behaviour among support staff of the university.

**Table 3: t-test showing gender difference in University support staffs' counterproductive work behaviour**

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>CWB</i>	<i>Male</i>	107	38.68	9.41	198	0.56	>.05
	<i>Female</i>	93	37.94	9.26			

*Note: CWB: counterproductive work behaviour; N = number of respondents;  $\bar{x}$  = Mean; SD = standard deviation; df = Degree of freedom; t = t-value; p = probability-value*

## Discussion

The present study set out to investigate the separate and combined contributing of age, gender, pay satisfaction and intent to leave to the problem of counterproductive work behaviour among support staff in a Nigerian university. This was hinged on the hypothesis that as support staff grow older, the tendency to engage in forms of CWB would reduce compared to those who are younger. Confirming this expectation, results of the first regression model showed that age independently predicted counterproductive work behaviour. This finding showed that older support staff reported lower counterproductive work behaviour than younger ones, thus suggesting that counterproductive work behaviours were mostly reported among young support staff. This finding contradicted Onuoha (2013) which identified that age difference was non-significant in engagement in counterproductive work behaviour among government workers. It is however in tandem with Cohen et al. (2013) which reported that age was a significant factor in the prediction of employees' engagement in counterproductive work behaviours. The motivation for lower counterproductive behaviour among older support staff is adjudged to be because these older support staff see themselves retiring in their present job. On the other hand, young supporting staff might believe that there could still be other opportunities of securing a better job elsewhere; thus, they engage in more forms of workplace deviant behaviour.

The second regression model focused on pay satisfaction. The analysis showed that age and pay satisfaction independently and jointly predicted counterproductive work behaviour. In other words, apart from the direct relationship between age and counterproductive work behaviour as well as between pay satisfaction and counterproductive work behaviour, the two predictor variables (age and pay satisfaction) also mutually explain the extent of counterproductive work behaviour among the participating employees. Specifically, the addition of pay satisfaction with the age of employees led to a significant increase in the extent to which employees exhibit CWB. The implication of this finding is that being satisfied with the salary/pay influenced employees overall attitudes towards their jobs. This is in line with existing studies which assert the relevance of a salary or pay in employees' job-related attitudes (Fapohunda 2012; Saqib Usman et al., 2013). The probable reason why pay satisfaction significantly contributed to CWB among the employees could be the value they attached to money. Satisfaction with payments such as annual increase, promotion, end of the year bonuses, etc. could lessen the possibility of counterproductive work behaviour.

In third regression model, Intent to Leave was aggregated to Age and Pay Satisfaction. This led to a significant increase in the display of counterproductive work behaviour in the University. Intention to leave was found to have a significant contribution to CWB. This finding is in line with Chang et al. (2013) that employees who had intention to quit their jobs were prone to engaging in CWB-related activities. On other hand, employees with less intention to quit their jobs were less likely to engage in CWB. Staying on one's job could be due to the love one has for his or her job, the fear of losing it and the uncertainty of securing another one in the event of losing the current job, especially when the high percentage of Nigerian unemployment rate is reckoned with.

In this study, there was no distinction between male and female university support staff in their engagement in counterproductive work behaviour. In other words, gender did not have a significant influence on the exhibition of CWB. This finding contradicts previous studies that reported significant influence of gender on CWB (Cohen et al., 2013; Spector & Zhou, 2014). A plausible reason why the non-significant difference existed in level of CWB being displayed by male and female support staff might be linked to the fact that both sexes were exposed to similar working conditions.

Many previous studies have identified some personal and organizational variables other than Age, Pay Satisfaction and Intent to Leave as factors predisposing employees to CWB in government-owned universities. Most of these studies were based on corporate and private organizations as settings, neglecting academic institutions. The present study's focus on support staff is with the belief that these staff are as important as the academic staff in the universities. Therefore using the group of people as a population in a study on counterproductive work behaviour is vital for the implementation of holistic measures in reducing/controlling cases of counterproductive work behaviour at government-owned universities.

### **Conclusion**

This study has drawn attention to the situational and organizational climate within the Nigerian tertiary education system. Some of its significant conclusions are that age significantly and independently predicted counterproductive work behaviour since younger support staff reported engaging in more counterproductive work behaviours than older ones. In addition, Pay satisfaction significantly and independently predicted CWB; suggesting that support staff are less likely to engage in forms of counterproductive work behaviour when they are satisfied with what they earn. Intent to leave significantly and independently predicted CWB; indicating that support staff are less likely to engage in counterproductive work behaviour if they hold less intention to quit their jobs. Finally, there was no difference between male and female support staff when it came to the engagement in counterproductive work behaviour at the University.

## Recommendations

Outcomes of this study are essential considering the preponderant practice of counterproductive work behaviour or workplace deviant behaviour among employees; especially in government owned organizations. Therefore, based on the present findings, the following recommendations are made: First, young support staff of universities requires proper orientation regarding possible consequences of engaging in various forms of workplace deviant behaviours. Second, since employees generally appear to attach a high degree of value to money, management should endeavour to reward their employees by disbursing unexpected bonuses from time to time. More importantly, promotions should not be delayed since it attracts an increase in salary. Furthermore, salaries should be paid as at when due. Availability of these could lessen involvement of employees in forms of workplace deviant behaviour. Finally, working at government owned universities should be made attractive so that employees would want to stay in their longer and possibly until retirement.

## Limitation of Study

In the study, hierarchical regression analysis was employed to probe the contributions of age, pay satisfaction and intent to engage in counterproductive work behaviour by supportstaff. Statistics enable us to identify the level of association between each of the predictor variables and CWB among employees. However, what serves as a limitation in the study is that the results do not show any form of causal inferences. Another potential limitation of the study is the relatively small sample size of the university support staff sampled. This limits the generalization of findings to the entire population. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to use larger samples to take of this inadequacy. Only self-report instruments were used for data collection. To augment this, observation methods might be included to have a comprehensive understanding of the extent of CWB among employees. Nevertheless, it is important to note that despite the limitations, findings of this study are relevant in predicting variables which seek to explain levels of counterproductive work behaviour among employees.

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