



**ORIGINAL ARTICLE**

# **Job Satisfaction and Psychological Health of Staff in a Nigerian University**

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## **Keywords**

Job satisfaction;  
Psychological health;  
University staff; Nigeria.

## **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Job satisfaction is the extent to which people like their jobs and the positive perception towards work. Work experiences have significant influence on psychological health. This study assessed job satisfaction and psychological health of university staff in a Nigerian university.

**Methods:** Four hundred and sixty-one respondents selected by a two-stage cluster sampling technique participated in this descriptive cross-sectional study. Psychological health was assessed using the General Health Questionnaire 12 (GHQ 12). Data was analyzed using SPSS (26.0). Level of significance set at  $p \leq 0.05$  and results presented using of tables and graphs.

**Results:** The mean age of the respondents was  $36.02 \pm 9.12$  years, 261 (56.6%) were males, 311 (67.5%) married, all were literate and 380 (82.4%) had been in employment for up to 10 years, (mean duration of employment =  $8.3 \pm 6.92$  years). Overall, 316 (68.5%) of staff were satisfied with their jobs and 342 (74.2%) were in psychologically stable health. Self-reported factors like job security, relationships with co-workers and supervisors impacted positively on job satisfaction while others like amount of paid vacation and promotion opportunity did not. Psychological disorder occurred more significantly among staff dissatisfied with their jobs  $p < 0.001$ .

**Conclusion:** A majority of staff were satisfied with their jobs and were in psychologically stable health. There is need to address factors impacting negatively on job satisfaction to further improve psychological health of university staff.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The most-used research definition on job satisfaction is by Locke in 1976, who defined it as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences”.<sup>1</sup> Job satisfaction is based on the degree of contentment

that the worker has with the requirements and goals of his or her job, which in turn determines the overall attitude of the employee towards their jobs.<sup>2</sup> It is one of several factors whose influence on health has been thought to be highly significant and has been identified as an

important determinant of employee retention, turnover and work performance.<sup>3</sup> In terms of the broader social determinants of health, job satisfaction is said to play a pivotal role as it is determined by a comparison of one's prior expectations about the job and the actual experience of the job. People come with various high expectations about their jobs and when these expectations are not met, it usually leads to dissatisfaction which can affect the psychological health of the worker.<sup>4</sup>

Psychological or mental health is a state of well-being in which a person realizes one's own abilities, is able to cope with the usual stresses of life, is able to function normally and productively and can contribute to their community.<sup>5</sup> It reflects an individual's sense of well-being and also their ability to achieve their full potential.<sup>4</sup> It therefore involves good emotional, behavioural and social health (how the individual feels, acts and interacts with others respectively).

Job satisfaction can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic job satisfaction is when workers consider only the kind of work they do and the tasks that make up the job. It assesses the

nature of the job tasks themselves such as professional development opportunities and other similar factors while extrinsic satisfaction is when workers consider the conditions of work, such as their pay, benefits, bonuses, coworkers, supervisors and assesses aspects of the working situation that are external to the job tasks.<sup>6</sup> These two types of satisfaction are different, and it is important to look at jobs from both points of view as they call for different solutions.

University lecturers who constitute academic staff of universities are key players in the growth of any country as they groom students who become driving forces for growth and development. Teaching is the traditional role of lecturers and includes the preparation and delivery of lectures. Academics are also engaged in research and are expected to generate research income as well as publish their findings in books or professional and academic journals. They are also required to perform certain administrative duties and student-support tasks, including serving on departmental or faculty committees, dealing with general departmental and administrative concerns and preparing departmental

budgets and related reports.<sup>7</sup> It is important that lecturers find satisfaction when carrying out these tasks. In the university setting, there are various non-academic staff whose roles are important in the day to day running of activities, as they perform vital roles in ensuring the smooth operations of the institution. Non-academic staffs are recognized as active participants in implementing the “Academic Plan”.

There is now widespread recognition that the relationship between work, psychological health and disease goes well beyond specific occupational illnesses and accidents to broader matters. Work which provides satisfaction and allows individuals control over their working lives confers considerable health benefit. Jobs which are lacking in self-direction and control seem to confer far fewer health benefits, and people with such jobs seem to experience consistently higher rates of mortality and morbidity including poor psychological health.<sup>8,9</sup> Previous studies have explained a workers’ job satisfaction as a function of personal characteristics for example age, gender and marital status and a function of the work itself for example,

pay, promotions, autonomy and working hours.<sup>10-19</sup>

This study aimed at assessing levels and determinants of job satisfaction as well as the psychological health among university staff. Findings from this study could form part of a knowledge base that would inform policy formulations aimed at improving job satisfaction and the subsequent psychological well-being of university workers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out in 2014, among staff at the University of Benin, Benin City in the Southern part of Nigeria. The University which offers courses at the certificate, diploma, undergraduate, and postgraduate levels, has sixteen faculties, including a College of Medical Sciences and three Centers of Excellence. There is a health center which takes care of the medical needs of all staff and their families and recreational facilities such as the staff club and a sports complex which host all forms of sporting activities for both staff. Students and sometimes on approval, for public use. There was an estimated total staff strength of 5899

comprising of 1896 academic 4003 non-academic.<sup>20</sup>

The calculated minimum sample size<sup>21</sup> using a prevalence of 33.4% for the proportion of university staff who were very satisfied with their jobs from a study in the Cordillera Administrative Region of the Philippines <sup>22</sup> was 378, after an adjustment for a 10% non-response rate was made. A two-stage cluster sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. At the time of the study, there were 11 faculties, an academic library and a college of medical sciences with three schools and an institute of health, making a total of 16 faculties with academic staff members. Eight (50%) of this number were selected by balloting and each of them regarded as a cluster. A list of staff in each cluster was obtained from their respective faculty offices and proportionate allocation done to determine the number of staff to be included in the study. The respondents were thereafter chosen by the use of computer-generated random numbers with respondents who were absent during data collection period replaced by the next generated number.

Data was collected by use of a self-administered semi-structured questionnaire containing both open and close ended questions. Aspects of job satisfaction assessed included; General working conditions, pay and promotion potential, work relationship and use of skills and ability. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction in these various aspects using a 5-point Likert scale as follows; 1-Highly dissatisfied, 2-Dissatisfied, 3-Indifferent, 4-Satisfied and 5-Highly satisfied. Psychosocial well-being of respondents was scored using the General Health Questionnaire 12 (*GHQ 12*), which is a screening tool that has been extensively used by researchers and has been found to be reliable and well-validated both globally<sup>23,24</sup> and nationally in Nigeria<sup>25-28</sup> It is used for identifying minor psychiatric disorders in the general population and within communities of non-psychiatric clinical settings. And is the shortest version commonly used as a screening tool in a public setting. Twelve (12) items were assessed and for the purpose of this study, the GHQ binary scoring method was chosen over the simple Likert scale of 0-1-2-3, as this particular method is believed to help eliminate any bias

which might result from the respondents who tend to choose extreme responses<sup>29</sup> Scores of 2 or less indicated the absence of a psychological disorder and higher scores indicating the presence of disorder<sup>29</sup>

Data was screened for completeness before entry into the SPSS (26.0) spread sheet. Univariate analysis was done for the variables, while bivariate analysis was done to determine association between dependent and independent variables using chi square test and Fisher's exact test. Level of significance was set at  $p < 0.05$  and the results are presented using tables and graphs.

Ethical clearance to conduct this research was sought and obtained from the University of Benin Teaching Hospital Research and Ethics Committee. Permission to carry out the study was obtained from the management of the University of Benin as well as oral informed consent given by the individual respondent before participation in the study. Confidentiality and privacy were ensured during the course of the study by ensuring that serial numbers rather than names were used to identify the respondents.

Respondents were also informed of their right to decline participation or even withdraw from the study at any time they wished. All data generated from the study were kept secure and made available only to the researchers.

## **RESULTS**

Five hundred and twenty-five (525) questionnaires were distributed, and 461 retrieved giving a response rate of 87.8%. The mean age of the respondents was  $36.02 \pm 9.12$  years, more than half 261 (56.6%) of the respondents were males, 311 (67.5%) were married and all staff were literate with 439 (95.2%) having attained tertiary form of education. A total of 360 (82.4%) of the respondents had been in employment for up to 10 years with mean duration of employment as  $8.3 \pm 6.92$  years. (Table 1). Overall, 316 (68.5%) of staff were satisfied with their jobs. (Figure 1).

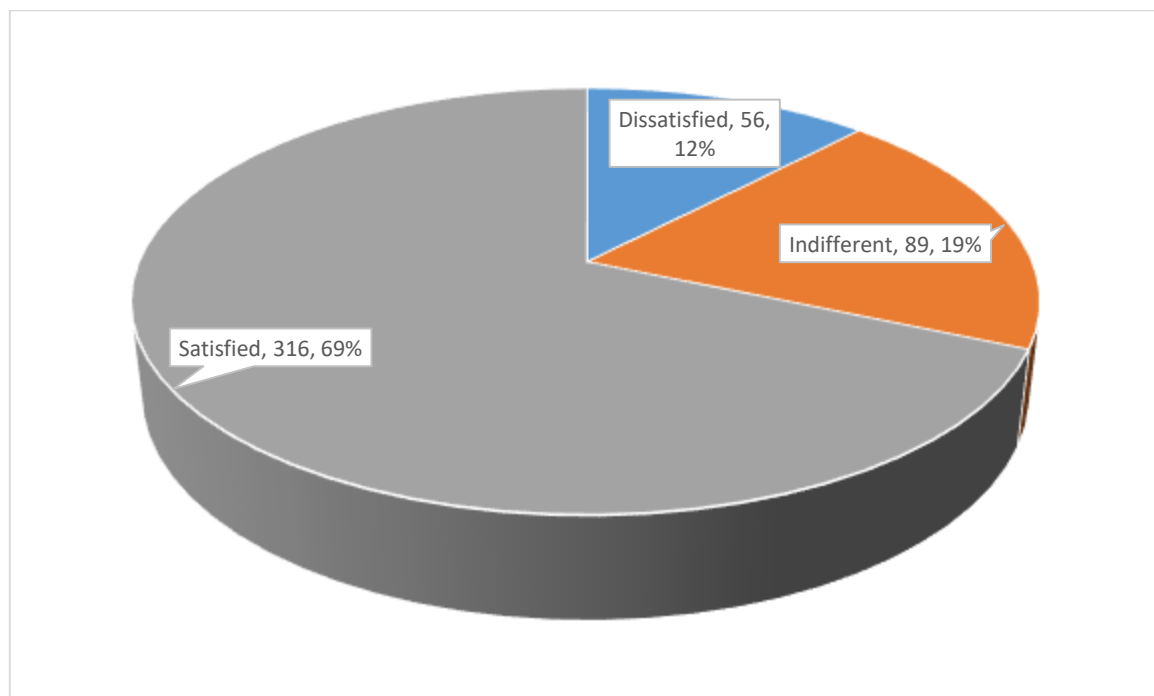
Tables 2 shows the relationship between some socio-demographic characteristics with the levels of job satisfaction. Higher proportions of staff were satisfied with their jobs than those who were not across all age groups with the older age groups being more satisfied with their jobs

**Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents**

Variable	Frequency	Percent
<b>Age (years)</b>		
21-30	132	28.6
31-40	216	46.9
41-50	75	16.3
51-60	33	7.2
61-70	5	1.0
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	261	56.6
Female	200	43.4
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	311	67.5
Single	146	31.7
Cohabiting/ Separated	4	0.8
<b>Level of Education</b>		
Tertiary	439	95.2
Secondary	18	3.9
Primary	4	0.9
<b>Duration of employment (years)</b>		
1-10	380	82.4
11-20	42	9.1
21-30	27	5.9
31-40	12	2.6

Mean age (years) = 36.02 ± 9.12

Mean duration of employment (years) = 8.3 ± 6.92



**Figure 1: Level of overall job satisfaction among respondents**

**Table 2: Relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and levels of job satisfaction among the university staff**

Socio-demographic characteristics	Level of Satisfaction		
	Highly dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied (n=56)	Indifferent (n=89)	Highly satisfied/ Satisfied (n=316)
<b>Age group (years)</b>			
21-30	24 (18.2)	41 (31.0)	67 (50.8)
31-40	17 (7.9)	34 (15.7)	165 (76.4)
41-50	13 (17.3)	12 (16.0)	50 (66.7)
>50	2 (5.3)	2 (5.3)	34 (89.5)
<b>Fishers exact = 36.02; p &lt;0 .001*</b>			
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	36 (15.1)	50 (20.9)	153 (51.8)
Female	20 (9.0)	39 (17.6)	163 (73.4)
<b><math>\chi^2 = 5.63; p = 0.060</math></b>			
<b>Marital status</b>			
Married	35 (11.2)	55 (17.7)	221 (71.1)
Not Married	21 (14.0)	34 (22.7)	95 (63.3)
<b><math>\chi^2 = 2.81; p = 0.245.</math></b>			
<b>Duration of employment (years)</b>			
1-10	50 (13.1)	85 (22.4)	245 (64.5)
11-20	6 (14.3)	4 (9.5)	32 (76.2)
21 -30	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	27 (100.0)
31-40	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	12 (100.0)
<b>Fishers exact = 16.3; p = 0.012*</b>			

\*Statistically significant result

than the younger age groups ( $p < 0.001$ ). Both gender and marital status did not show any statistically significant association with job satisfactory ( $p=0.060$  and  $p=0.245$ , respectively), but the female gender 163 (73.4%) compared to the male 153 (51.8%) and the married 221 (71.1%) staff compared to the unmarried 95 (63.3) had higher proportions of staff who were more satisfied with their jobs. The proportion of staff who were satisfied

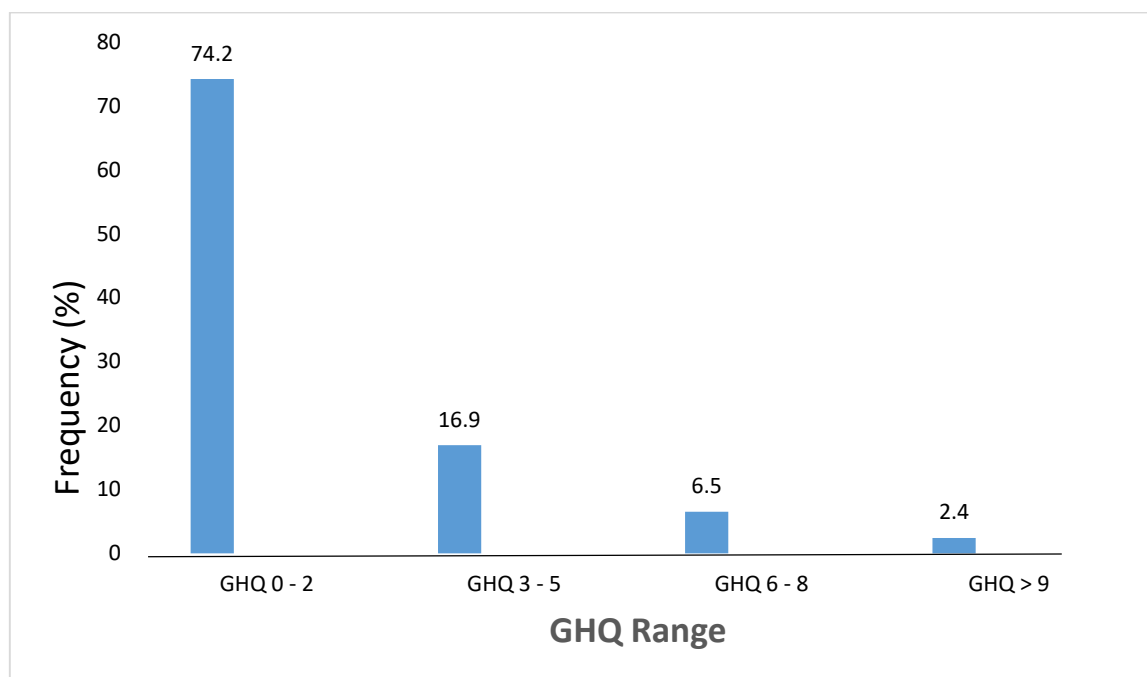
with their jobs increased with increasing duration of employment and this relationship was statistically significant at  $p=0.012$

The self-reported work-related factors associated with levels of job satisfaction among the respondents are shown on table 3. Job satisfaction was high in the following domains: relationship with co-workers 374 (81.1%), hours worked per week 349 (75.7%), job security 329 (71.4%), and

**Table 3: Self-reported work-related factors associated with levels of job satisfaction among the university staff**

Self-reported work-related factor	Level of Satisfaction		
	Highly dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied	Indifferent	Highly satisfied/ Satisfied
Relationship with co worker	33 (7.2)	54 (11.7)	374 (81.1)
Hours worked/week	53 (11.5)	59 (12.8)	349 (75.7)
Job Security	65 (14.1)	67 (14.5)	329 (71.4)
Relationship with supervisor	43 (9.3)	92 (20.0)	326 (70.7)
Opportunity to utilize skills and talents	87 (18.9)	99 (21.5)	275 (59.6)
Opportunity to learn new skills	125 (27.1)	96 (20.8)	240 (52.1)
Salary	152 (33.0)	112 (24.3)	197 (42.7)
Opportunities for promotion	127 (27.6)	142 (30.8)	192 (41.6)
Benefits (Health & life insurance and others)	140 (30.4)	134 (29.0)	187 (40.6)
Recognition for work accomplished	121 (26.2)	153 (33.2)	187(40.6)
Having support for additional training	144 (31.2)	130 (28.2)	187 (40.6)
Amount of paid vacation time	199 (43.2)	150 (32.5)	112 (24.3)

n=461



**Figure 2: GHQ scores of the university staff**

relationship with supervisors 326 (70.7%). It was moderate in two domains viz opportunities to utilize skills and talents 275 (59.6%) and to

learn new skills 240 (52.1%) while low in others like salary 197 (42.7%), opportunity for promotion 192 (41.6%), insurance benefits 187



**Table 4: Association between level of satisfaction and presence of psychological disorder among university staff**

Level of job satisfaction	Psychological Disorder	
	Present	Absent
Dissatisfied	30 (53.6)	26 (46.4)
Indifferent	32 (36.0)	57 (64.9)
Satisfied	57 (18.0)	259 (82.0)
Total	119 (25.8)	342 (74.2)

$\chi^2 = 37.06$ ;  $p < 0.001$

(40.6%), recognition for work accomplished 187 (40.6%), support for additional training 187 (40.6%) and amount of paid vacation time 112 (24.3%).

The prevalence of psychological disorder among the staff was 119 (25.8%) (GHQ values  $>2$ ), with 342 (74.2%) having no psychological disorder (Figure 2). Table 4 shows that the association between the level of satisfaction and the presence of psychological disorder among the university staff was statistically significant. Psychological disorder was lower among those who were satisfied with their jobs 57 (18.0%) compared to those who were dissatisfied 30 (53.6%),  $p < 0.001$ .

## DISCUSSION

Job satisfaction has important implications for staff in tertiary institutions and this study has shown

that majority were satisfied with their jobs. This is commendable as job satisfaction has been linked to productivity, motivation, mental/physical health, and general life satisfaction.<sup>11</sup> Employee satisfaction has also become an important corporate objective in recent years as motivated and committed staff can be a determining factor in the success of an organization. This study found that increasing age had a positive impact on staff job satisfaction. The reason for this may be that those in higher age groups may have stayed longer on their jobs and may have grown to enjoy their jobs. In this study, there was no statistically significant difference between the level of job satisfaction among the sexes though the proportion of females who were satisfied with their jobs was higher than that for the males. The results of previous

empirical studies examining job satisfaction of men and women suggest that women's job satisfaction was significantly higher because women may have relatively lower expectations of career and income, and secondly, they may attach relatively less importance to extrinsic rewards than men.<sup>30,31</sup>

The findings of this study of a higher proportion of staff being satisfied with their job security, contrasts that of Iranian academics where the level of respondents' satisfaction on job security was low affirming inadequate job security in their work places.<sup>32</sup> This finding could be due to the fact that, being a public federal institution, there is a usually a statutory procedure which can take a long time, before any staff is laid off except for very grievous offences, therefore staff felt more secure in their jobs.

The high proportion (74.2%) of staff with GHQ scores of 2 or less suggest a fairly psychologically stable workforce on the average. Nevertheless, the GHQ-12 is only a screening tool and may not provide insight into the severity of mental disturbances. The prevalence of psychological disorder of 25.8% which

is higher than the 18.9% obtained from a community-based study in Western Nigeria<sup>33</sup> means some form of psychological disorders and could be an indication of imminent psychological problems among these staff, and therefore needs to be urgently addressed in order to maintain a psychological healthy workforce.

Job satisfaction seemed to be related to psychological disorder as those who were satisfied with their jobs, were less likely to have psychological disorders. It is therefore not surprising that psychological disorder was higher among the dissatisfied workers compared to the satisfied workers, indicating that psychological disorders occurred more with decreasing job satisfaction and further supporting the findings from previous studies<sup>34,35</sup> that job satisfaction affects psychological well-being. Work-related factors that enhanced job satisfaction which were identified to have less satisfaction such as salaries, amount of paid vacation time, opportunity for promotion, recognition for work accomplished, support for additional training and availability of social benefits need to be improved while those with high and moderate scores

for job satisfaction such as job security, hours worked per week, relationship with co-workers and supervisors, opportunity to learn and utilize new skills and talents should be further encouraged and strengthened.

**Limitation of the study:** Findings from this study were based on self-report which may lead to some form of information bias including social desirability bias where respondents gave answers which appeared “good” or “right” to them. This study used a validated study instrument, the General Health Questionnaire-12, which helped to reduce this bias.

**Conclusion:** Majority of the university staff were satisfied with their jobs with the older age groups being more satisfied than the younger groups. Psychological disorder was present among a quarter of the staff with a higher proportion of those not satisfied with their jobs having psychological disorder. Factors leading to job dissatisfaction in the university need to be addressed by the university management in order to maintain a psychological stable workforce.

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**Conflict of Interests:** The authors declare no conflicts of interest

**Authors' Contributions:** YE conceptualised the study, did the literature search, developed and administered of data collection tools, analysed the data and final write up. AO reviewed the study methodology, finalization of data collection tools and final write up. EI conceptualised the study, was involved in the literature search, data analysis and final write up. All authors read and approved the final draft of the manuscript

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