
Effect of emotional exhaustion on workplace deviant behaviour among academic staff: The role of affective commitmentYahaya Muhammad Goga¹, Bugaje Idris Bashir², & Idris Ahmad Aliyu³^{1&2}*Department of Business Administration, ABU Business School, Nigeria.*³*Department of Actuarial Science and Insurance, ABU Business School, Nigeria.*Corresponding Email: gogamuhammadyahaya@gmail.com

Abstract

The phenomenon of workplace deviance is prevalent among academic staff of universities which are seen as role models to students. One of the significant antecedents of Workplace Deviant Behaviour (WDB) among academic staff is emotional exhaustion which is developed as a result of high job demands in the academia. Thus, this study made an attempt to investigate the effect of emotional exhaustion on WDB among academic staff. Interestingly, few studies in the literature have produced conflicting findings with respect to the relationship between emotional exhaustion and WDB, thus suggesting the need for the introduction of a moderator. The study therefore examined whether affective commitment moderates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and WDB. The study is underpinned by stressor-emotion model and social control theory. Survey research design was adopted and data were collected from 142 sample of academic staff from the faculty of education, ABU Zaria using self-administered questionnaire. Result using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) established that emotional exhaustion has a significant positive relationship with WDB. However, affective commitment was found not to moderate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and WDB. Based on the study findings, it was recommended that the federal government lifts the employment embargo so that more academic staff are hired in order to reduce workload and also, it is recommended that the university emphasizes competency when hiring staff so that academic workload will be proportionally allocated to each staff. Finally, the limitations of the study and suggestion for future research were given.

Keywords: Workplace deviant behaviour, emotional exhaustion, affective commitment, academic staff.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of workplace deviance has become an interesting area of concern that has sparked the interest of researchers, managers, scholars and practitioners. This is because now adays, employees are continuously engaged in WDB. In support of this argument, Marasi, Bennett, and Budden (2018) reported that more than 90% of employees have admitted to engaging in WDB. Hence, this issue of WDB casts a negative impact with regards to the accomplishment of organizational goals, creates social and economic losses and interferes with employees' safety at work

(Budiman, Ardianty, Wigati, Baharudin, & Abdulaziz, 2022). WDB occurs when an individual consciously behaves in a way that directly goes against the organizational norms and as a consequence threatens the welfare of either the organization, its employees, customers or both (Harder, 2019; Bennett, Robinson & Locklier, 2018).

Globally, WDB has been a pervasive problem to organizations and their employees. For instance, Association of Certified Fraud Examiners [ACFE] (2020) reported that public as well as private organizations globally were hit by a median

loss of \$150,000 to occupational fraud in 2020. Similarly, United States businesses loss as a result of employee theft amount to between \$20 billion \$50 billion annually (Ivana, 2022), thus, making the United States Department of Commerce to conclude that WDB is the cause of about third of all bankruptcies in the country (Bennett, et al, 2018). In the same breadth, Organizations in Africa were also hit by a median loss of \$100,000 and an average loss USD 1,523,000 due to occupational fraud (ACFE, 2020). In narrowing it to the Nigerian context, bank workers were reported to have committed 37,817 fraud cases in 2018 where they stole ₦26.182 billion (Ejike & Itsibor, 2019).

In narrowing it to the university context, universities are not immune from WDB because there are increasing reports of WDB among university workers in Nigeria especially academic staff (Olasupo & Fangbenro, 2021). For instance, World Health Organization (WHO) (2018), reported that 70% of female graduates have reported harassment with main perpetrators being lecturers and students (Sessou, 2022). This has also been reaffirmed by former president Muhammadu Buhari on 25th October, 2019, during the 35th convocation of university of Ilorin, where he expressed worry that the performance of some universities in Nigeria at the global level were being clouded by sexual misconducts (Fagbenmi, 2019). The former president again at the 25th convocation of the university of Uyo, Akwa Ibom state, says, it is disheartening to hear about the increase in plagiarism, sorting and sexual harassment in many universities in the country (Lawal, 2020). Some of the major forms of workplace deviance among academic staff are extortion of money, irregularity in conducting examination for students, abuse of office, gross insubordination or disregard for constituted authorities, distortion of students' grades for financial gain, spending excessive hours daydreaming, sexual harassment, absence

from lectures without prior notice to students, academic plagiarism among others (Igbe, Okpa & Aniah, 2017; Adeoti, 2018).

Emotional exhaustion is one of the major determinants of WDB (Amir, 2020). Emotional exhaustion refers to the feeling of being emotionally overextended and depleted of one's emotional resources (Maslach 1993), which makes workers feel no longer able to give of themselves (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996). It arises when an employee is overworked (Margulescu, 2020), therefore it is viewed as the stress dimension of burnout (Maslach, Schaufeuli & Leiter, 2001). Studies have shown that emotionally exhausted workers are more likely to engage in WDB (Lubbadeh, 2021; Makhdoom, Atta, & Malik, 2019; Lebron, Tabak, Shkoler & Rabenu, 2018). Thus, a university is now a relatively stressful workplace because of high demand in academic work from lecturers like teaching loads, excessive paper works, research, publication, pressure, and increased work demands (Amir, 2020), which make academic staff to develop the feeling of emotional exhaustion which in turn heightens the likelihood for WDB.

Findings related to the studies between emotional exhaustion and WDB are inconclusive, some found positive significant relationship (Jia, Liao & Yin, 2022; Wallace & Coughlan, 2022; Tajeja, et al, 2021; Lubbadeh, 2021; Naeem et al, 2020); while some found insignificant positive relationship (Guertirrez, 2019; Makhdoom, Atta and Malik, 2019). Thus, inconsistent findings send a wrong signal about the deviation of some research variables based on apriori assumptions (Hassan, Sabo, Tijjani, & Aliyu, 2023). As a result, the researcher felt inclined to introduce a moderating variable consistent with the Baron and Kenny (1986) view that moderator variables are introduced when there is unexpectedly weak or inconsistent

relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

Going forward, this study draws from social bond theory (Hirschi, 1969), and introduced affective commitment to moderate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and WDB. This study theorized that individuals' affective commitment may prompt academic staff to act inversely to WDB. Previous studies established that affective commitment is related to various favourable factors (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitc, & Topolnysky, 2002) and that affective commitment is a resource that employees use to cope with stressors and strain outcomes (Meyer & Maltin, 2010). Additionally, evidence from the literature has shown that lack of affective commitment leads to WDB (Amin, Situngkir, & Aira, 2021; Promsri, 2018). Furthermore, it was found that employees with high affective commitment experience more positive effect and less negative effect than those who are less committed (Spector & Fox, 2002), thus unlikely to engage in WDB.

This study seeks to achieve two objectives. Firstly, to determine the significant effect of emotional exhaustion on WDB and secondly, to determine whether affective commitment moderates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and WDB.

2. Literature Review

Workplace Deviant Behaviour

Bennett and Robinson (1995) defined WDB as a voluntary form of behavior that contradicts significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the wellbeing of the organization, its members or both. WDB is a multi-dimensional construct comprising of organizational deviance and interpersonal deviance, (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). Organizational deviance refers to unacceptable behaviours by employees that are targeted toward the organization or her assets while interpersonal deviance reflect unethical acts targeted toward colleagues,

customers and co-workers. However, this study is only limited to organizational deviance because it would allow for the achievement of parsimony in concept development and measurement (Arthur, 2011; Kura, Shamsuddin & Chauhan, 2015). Additionally, focusing on organizational deviance will give room for other researchers on WDB to focus on interpersonal deviance (Kura et al, 2015). Hence, drawing from stressor emotion model as an underpinning theory, the feeling of emotional exhaustion will lead to negative emotion which will in turn leads to WDB that are targeted toward the organization (organizational deviance).

Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion in this paper refers to the tired and fatigued feeling that develops as emotional resources becomes depleted making academic staff unable to give themselves to students as once could. Emotional exhaustion is characterized by lack of energy and a feeling by an individual that their emotional resources are drained (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). It is a response to a situation where academic staff get extensively involved emotionally, over extend themselves and also feel overwhelmed by the emotional demands by other people (Maslach, 1982). Maslach (1982) added that emotionally exhausted individuals lack enough energy to face another day because their emotional resources are depleted with no source of replenishment. Emotional exhaustion has been linked to tension, anxiety, insomnia, physical fatigue inter alia (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) hence, predicted to be associated with physical and physiological strain (Lee & Ashforth, 1982).

Emotional Exhaustion and Workplace Deviance

This relationship is based on the theoretical foundation of Stressor-Emotion Model (Spector & Fox, 2002). The model points out that various emotional responses are developed as a consequence of employees' appraisal of the work environment

(Smoktunowicz, Baka, Cieslak, Nichols, Benight & Luszczynska, 2015), and all events that are threatening to well-being are job stressors that lead to negative emotional reactions (Spector, 1998). Hence, negative emotions heighten the likelihood or facilitates WDB, while positive emotions are facilitators for organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Hence, it can be seen that emotional exhaustion is a stressor that induces negative emotion among employees which heightens the likelihood of engaging in WDB. In support of this line of reasoning in the context of the academia, evidences show that lecturers work in an extremely stressful environment (Aminullah & Olojuola, 2021) which makes academic staff develop emotional exhaustion (workplace stressor) which gives birth to negative emotions which in turn contribute to WDB.

Scholars have conducted several empirical studies to determine the effect of emotional exhaustion and workplace deviant behaviour. For instance, Tageja, Chaturvedi, & Rajput (2020) conducted a study on the effect of emotional exhaustion on workplace deviant behaviour among a sample of 205 sales executive of three insurance firms. The study established a positive significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and WDB. Similarly, a study was conducted by Jia, Liao, & Yin (2022) on the effect of job insecurity and emotional exhaustion on WDB with corporate social responsibility as a moderator. The study was conducted among 145 computer equipment providers in China. Findings revealed a positive relationship between emotional exhaustion and WDB. In the same vein, Cohen and Abedallah (2020) conducted a study in an attempt to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence, dark triad, core self-evaluation, organizational justice, and the three dimensions of job burnout on workplace deviant behaviour. Data of the study was collected using questionnaire from 680 teachers across twenty teachers in

elementary schools. In relation to the finding on the relationship between emotional exhaustion and WDB, result found a positive significant relationship.

On their part, Makhdoom, Atta and Malik (2019) investigated the link between emotional exhaustion and counterproductive behavior based on a sample of 364 teachers of both private and public school of Sarghodka division. The study revealed that emotional exhaustion dimension was found to be not a predictor of withdrawal. Gutierrez (2019) investigated the role of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization on the relationship between pressure, emotional demands, work performance and CWB among information technology professionals in South Africa. Data were collected from 296 respondents. The study established that emotional exhaustion has no significant relationship with CWB. According to them IT professionals experiencing emotional exhaustion do not have the energy to work against the organization.

Based on the foregoing empirical studies, inconsistent findings were discovered between the relationship between emotional exhaustion and WDB. In addition, most of these studies were conducted in the nursing, bank, aviation, and other occupations. Consequently, studies on the relationship between emotional exhaustion and WDB among university academic staff would be desirable considering the nature of high job demands of the work, hence, the need to address this existing gap.

Affective Commitment as a Moderator

Affective commitment is defined as an emotional attachment to the organization in such a way that a committed individual is identified with, involves in and enjoys membership in the organization (Allen & Mayer, 1990). They further added that employees that developed affective commitment maintain membership in the organization because they want to. This bond is formed as a result of positive

treatment by the organization (Amin, Situngkir, & Aira 2021), which takes time to develop but once developed becomes strong (Lambert, Leone, Horgan, Buckner, Worley & Worley, 2020). There is strong evidence in the literature showing that lack of employees' affective commitment leads to WDB (Amin, Situngkir, and Aira 2021; Promsri, 2018). According to the moderator model, the positive relationship between emotional exhaustion and WDB should be contingent upon the level of affective commitment. Specifically, the moderating role of affective commitment will imply that the relationship between emotional exhaustion and WDB among academic staff with high affective commitment would be weak and strong among academic staff with low affective commitment.

This is explained by social bond theory (Hirschi, 1969). Hirschi (1969) argues that there is less likelihood of people who are invested in conventional society to engage in crime/illegal activities/social deviance. On the other camp, people with weak or shallow social bonds were far more likely to deviate from the norm because they have not tried or have no reason to maintain the standard (Carnevale & White, 2022), Hirschi identified commitment as a bond, which refers to acceptance and willingness to adhere to social expectation (Carnevale & White, 2022). In applying it to the organizational context, it can be argued that WDB occurs when employees have weak attachment or commitment to the organization. However, employees with high commitment are likely to have strong adherence to organizational norms, hence, less likely to engage in behaviours that are not in line with organizational norms. Hence, the current study posits that the extent to which emotional exhaustion influence workplace deviant behavior vary, contingent upon the level of academic staff's level of affective commitment. The stronger the academic staff's level of affective commitment, the less likely they

engage in workplace deviant behavior vice-versa.

Statement of Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated based on the empirical literature:

H0₁: Emotional exhaustion has no significant effect on WDB of the academic staff of ABU Zaria.

H0₂: Affective commitment does not moderate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and WDB among the academic staff of ABU Zaria.

3. Methodology

The present study utilized quantitative research design because the aim of the study is hypothesis testing or causal research. In addition, simple random sampling was used to collect the data from the respondents. The population of the study comprises the academic staff of the faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. The faculty was chosen because it is the faculty with the highest number of students (ABU Registry, 2023). This implies that the academic staff of the faculty have the highest workloads which make them susceptible to developing emotional exhaustion which then influence their actions toward workplace deviance (Spector & Fox, 2002). The total population of the staff in the faculty as at 2023 is 187. Based on Krejcie and Morgan table, the sample size is 127. In order to mitigate non-response rate, 40% was added (Salkind, 2007) making the sample 178 which were distributed. 142 were retrieved of which six were deemed unusable, finally 136 questionnaires were used for analysis.

Measurement of Variables

Workplace deviant behaviour is measured using 12 items measuring organizational deviance adapted from Bennett and Robinson (2000) WDB scale. Items are rated on a five-point scale ranging from always=5 to never=1. Emotional exhaustion is measured using nine items

adopted from MBI Educators Survey (ES) developed by Maslach and Jackson (1986).

The adopted items are also rated on a five-point scale ranging from always=5 to never=1. Finally, affective commitment was measured using eight items adapted from Allen and Meyer's organizational commitment scale. The items were scored using a five-point Likert scale ranging from '1' "strongly disagree" to '5' "strongly agree."

4. Results and Discussion

The structural model was used to assess individual item reliability, internal consistency reliability and discriminant validity. Firstly, the individual item reliability was assessed by the examination of the outer loadings of each construct's measure (Hair et al, 2017). The rule of thumb has it that items with loading between 0.40-0.70 should be retained (Hair et al, 2017). Hence, six items were deleted out of 29 items leaving the model with only 23 items. This is depicted in the figure 2 below:

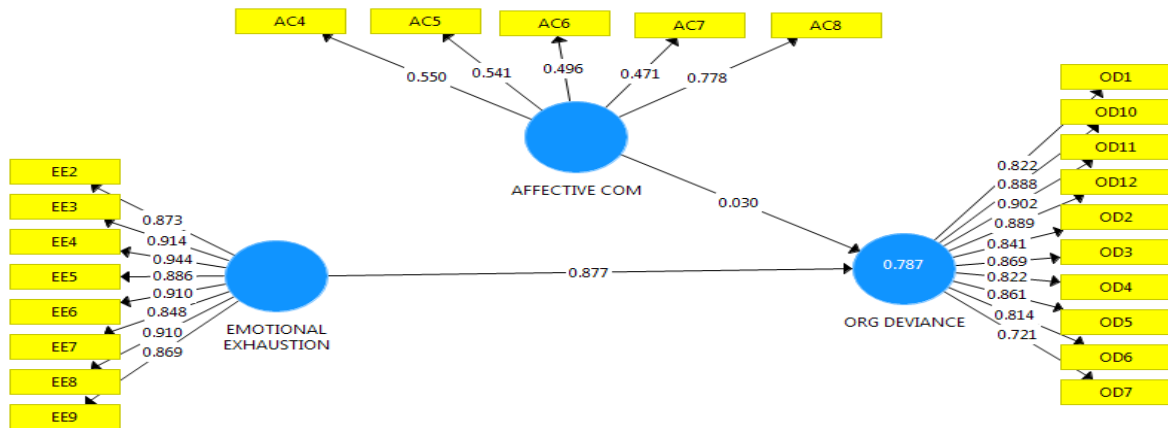


Figure 1: Measurement Model

As can be seen from Figure 1 above, the loadings of the respective constructs meet the threshold of individual item reliability. Secondly, this study employs composite reliability to assess the internal consistency of the constructs. Hair et al (2019) recommended that internal consistency reliability of 0.60 and above is significant. As can be seen in table 1, the internal consistency reliability is adequate because the CR ranges from 0.70-0.93 which is beyond the threshold. Thirdly, this study employed AVE to measure the convergent validity of the constructs. The recommended value of the AVE should be

0.50 or higher, (Hair et al, 2017). As can be seen from Table 1 below, the constructs achieved both convergent validity because the values are above the threshold. Lastly, Fornell-Larcker method was employed to assess discriminant validity. The method compares the square root of the AVE values of the latent variable correlations, and the square root of each construct's AVE should be greater than its highest correlation with any other construct (Hair et al, 2017). As indicated in Table 2, all the reflective measurement constructs have discriminant validity because the square root of their AVEs are above their correlation with any other construct.

Table 1: Measurement Model: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Composite Reliability	Average Extracted	Variance
Affective Commitment	0.93	0.529	
Emotional Exhaustion	0.70	0.800	

Workplace Behaviour	Deviant	0.92	0.787
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Table 2: Measurement Model: Discriminant Validity (Fornell and Larcker)

	AC	EE	WDB
AC	0.727		
EE	0.336	0.895	
WDB	0.324	0.884	0.887

Result of the Structural Model

This is to find the predictive abilities and the interrelationships between the latent constructs (Hair et al, 2014). This study's structural model consists of main effects

where the direct relationships between emotional exhaustion and workplace deviance were investigated. Similarly, the interaction effect of the moderator (affective commitment) was analyzed. This is shown in Figure 2 below:

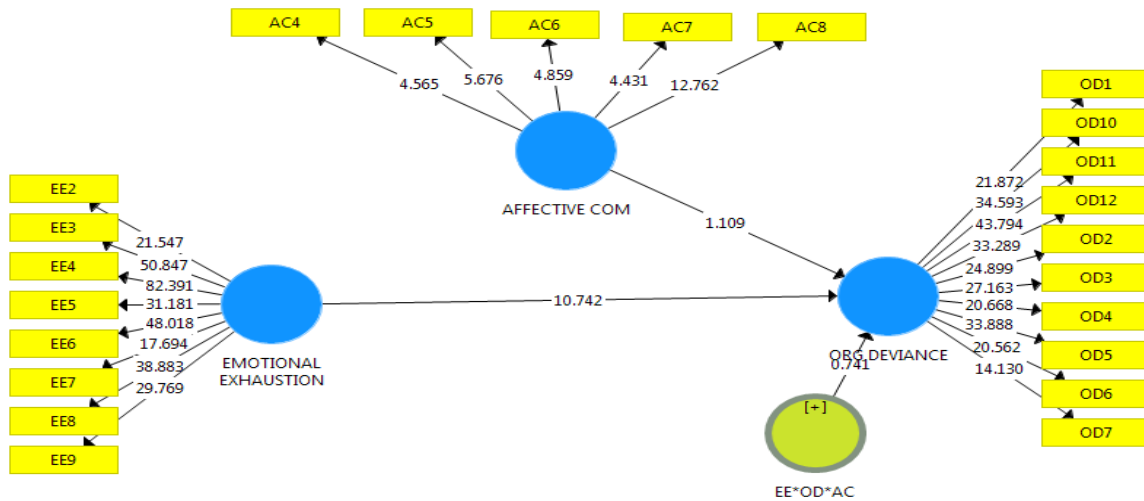


Figure 2: PLS Algorithm for Direct and Indirect Relationship

Table 3: Hypotheses test for direct and Moderating Relationship

Hyp	R/ship	B. Value	SD	T Sta.	P values	Decision
H0 ₁	EE-->WDB	0.927	0.086	10.742	0.000	Reject
H0 ₂	AC*EE-->WDB	0.065	0.088	0.741	0.458	Failed to reject

As can be seen in the Figure 3 and Table 3, hypothesis one which stated that emotional exhaustion does not have significant effect on workplace deviance was rejected ($\beta=0.927$, $T= 0.741$, $P<0.000$). While the second hypothesis which stated that affective commitment does not moderate the relationship between EE and WDB was

not supported ($\beta= 0.065$, $T=1.496$, $P<0.135$) at 5% level of significance. The coefficient of determination (R^2 value) of this model is 0.787 which indicates that 70.87% variation in the WDB is accounted for by the study variable.

Discussion and Implications of Findings

The result of the structural model reveals that emotional exhaustion has a positive significant effect on workplace deviance among the academic staff of the faculty of Education ABU Zaria. The implication is that the higher the emotional exhaustion, the higher that academic staff get engaged in workplace deviance. This positive relationship is consistent with the stressor-emotion model (Spector & Fox, 2002) which advocates that people that continually become exposed to emotion-induced events have an increased likelihood to engage in behavioural responses. Hence, negative emotions heighten the likelihood or facilitates WDB by making the academic staff to actively and directly attack the agent of the situation or to passively and indirectly cope with the emotion by avoiding work, drinking alcohol etc. (Spector & Fox 2002). Similarly, the positive significant relationship is in line with previous empirical studies (Ogunbamila & Adedayo; Lubbadah 2021; Makhdoom, Atta & Malik, 2019; Ugwu, Enwereuzor, Fimber & Ugwu, 2017; Cohen & Diamant, 2017; Banks, Whelpley, & Shin, 2012).

This finding is attributable to the fact that academic staff of universities work in an extremely stressful environment. For instance, Aminullah and Olojuola (2021), reported that lecturers in Nigerian universities are suffering from high academic workloads which include teaching very large classes, invigilating students under tension due to poor accommodation, producing students' result within short time, attending to staff meeting on regular basis, supervising undergraduate and post-graduate projects within limited time, attending to defense, workshops, conferences and seminars, continuous writing for publishing among others. Thus, this makes academic staff experience emotional exhaustion (workplace stressor) which gives birth to negative emotions which in turn leads to WDB.

In relation to the moderating effect, the interaction term shows that affective commitment does not moderate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and workplace deviance. The implication of this finding is that as academic staff developed emotional exhaustion, there is likelihood that they engage in workplace deviance despite their affective commitment for the university. One possible explanation is that as the emotional resources of workers are depleted, they feel that they are no longer able to give of themselves at a psychological level (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), hence academic staff may engage in workplace deviance like coming to classes late, leaving meetings early, delegating lectures to colleagues without HOD's approval etc. Another pertinent reason for the absence of moderation is that the data for this study were collected immediately the academic staff came back from their eight months strike. Indeed, the government's no-work-no-pay policy has adversely affected the academic staff in all facets which inflicts pains, deaths, divorces, instability in the family, etc. (Ecoma, 2022). This probably heightens their emotional exhaustion and depleted their affective commitment for the university and the job.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The current study shows the effect of emotional exhaustion on WDB but shows no moderating role of affective commitment on the relationship. Findings of the study underscores the need to minimize the development of the feeling of emotional exhaustion among academic staff so as to minimize the occurrence of WDB. Additionally, the absence of moderation between affective commitment on the relationship is an indication of the fact that emotional exhaustion among academic staff is a serious problem that needs urgent attention. Based on the study findings, the study recommends that the federal government should lift the employment embargo so that more academic staff would

be hired in order to reduce the workload of the current academic staff which will go a long way in suppressing emotional exhaustion thereby minimizing workplace deviance. Additionally, it is recommended that the university emphasizes competency when hiring staff so that academic workload will be proportionally allocated to each staff. This will reduce the amount of workload per academic staff.

Meanwhile, the limitation of the study is that it is only limited to the academic staff in the faculty of education ABU Zaria, hence, the findings of the study cannot be generalized. It is therefore suggested that future researches should focus on the entire academic staff of the university. Also, the study assessed WDB using self-report measure. Some of the weaknesses of this measure are that it is associated with social desirability bias, ego-protecting and ego-enhancing bias as well as underreporting information on sensitive topics because of the fear of being identified. Future research should use non-self-report measure of WDB.

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