



JOB BURNOUT AND PERSONAL LIFE INTERFERENCE WITH WORK AS PREDICTORS OF COUNTERPRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIOUR AMONG PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEES IN AWKA CITY

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the impact of job burnout (comprising emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment) and personal life interference with work (PLIW) on counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) among private sector employees in Awka City. A total of one hundred and twenty-seven (127) private sector employees (53 males, and 74 females, mean age = 32.46yrs, SD = 5.69) participated in study. Three instruments were used for data collection namely: Maslach burnout inventory, personal life interference with work subscale and counterproductive work behaviour scale. The hypotheses were tested using hierarchical multiple regression analysis with stepwise modeling. The results revealed that emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation both significantly and positively predicted CWB. Furthermore, RPA failed to significantly predict CWB. In addition, PLIW was also found to be a significant positive predictor of CWB. The findings of the study underscore the significance of implementing stress management programs and resilience training to reduce experiences of burnout among private sector employees, and also promoting policies that support work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements and employee assistance programs to help reduce the impact of burnout and PLIW on CWB. Limitations of the study were pointed out and future research directions proposed.

Keywords: Job burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, reduced personal accomplishment, personal life interference with work, counterproductive work behaviour, private sector employees.

Introduction

Counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) is a critical concern for organizations globally, given its potential to undermine organizational goals, employee well-being, and workplace harmony. CWBs are defined as intentional actions by employees that harm or have the potential to harm an organization or its stakeholders (Spector et al., 2006). Such behaviors include absenteeism, theft, workplace incivility, sabotage, and even aggression. Researchers have sought to understand the antecedents of CWB to develop effective strategies for mitigating these behaviors. Among the predictors of CWB, job burnout and personal life interference with work have gained significant attention due to their pervasive impact on employee performance and organizational functioning.

Job burnout, a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion resulting from prolonged exposure to work-related stressors, is a well-documented risk factor for maladaptive behaviors in the workplace. Maslach and Leiter (2016) describe burnout as a multifaceted construct characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of



personal accomplishment. Employees experiencing burnout often resort to CWBs as coping mechanisms to address their dissatisfaction or to retaliate against perceived injustices in their work environment (Jiang et al., 2019). For instance, emotionally exhausted employees may engage in withdrawal behaviors or reduced productivity as a means of self-preservation. The growing prevalence of job burnout, particularly in high-demand sectors, necessitates a deeper exploration of its link to CWBs in various organizational contexts.

Another critical factor influencing CWB is personal life interference with work, a phenomenon where non-work responsibilities and stressors negatively affect an individual's work performance and behavior. Work-life conflict, a subset of this interference, occurs when competing demands from work and personal life create friction, leading to stress, frustration, and reduced job satisfaction (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Employees grappling with significant work-life imbalance are more likely to exhibit CWBs due to increased tension and diminished coping resources (Michel et al., 2011). This dynamic is particularly pronounced in urban areas such as Awka City, where private sector employees often juggle demanding jobs with familial and societal obligations.

The private sector in Awka City, a rapidly developing urban center in Nigeria, presents a unique context for studying these relationships. As private organizations strive to remain competitive, employees are frequently subjected to high-performance demands, extended working hours, and intense job pressures. These conditions exacerbate the risk of burnout and intensify work-life conflicts, thereby increasing the likelihood of CWBs. Moreover, the interplay of cultural expectations, socio-economic challenges, and organizational practices in Awka City further underscores the need to examine these predictors in a localized setting.

By investigating the predictive roles of job burnout and personal life interference with work in CWBs among private sector employees in Awka City, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on workplace behavior in developing economies. It offers insights into the psychological and situational factors that drive CWBs, providing a basis for developing targeted interventions to enhance employee well-being and organizational performance.

Literature Review

Job Burnout

Job burnout is a state of chronic physical and emotional exhaustion resulting from prolonged exposure to work-related stressors. It is a psychological syndrome that manifests through feelings of energy depletion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The concept of burnout was first introduced to describe the emotional exhaustion experienced by human service workers, but it has since been recognized as a universal occupational hazard affecting employees across various sectors. Burnout arises from a mismatch between job demands and available resources, leading to stress and emotional fatigue that compromise both individual well-being and organizational productivity (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

Burnout is often categorized into three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being emotionally drained and overextended by one's work. Depersonalization, or cynicism, is characterized by a detached or indifferent attitude toward work and clients. Lastly, reduced personal accomplishment reflects feelings of incompetence and a lack of achievement in one's role (Maslach et al., 2001). These dimensions interact to diminish an employee's



engagement and performance, potentially leading to counterproductive work behaviors and increased turnover intentions.

The causes of burnout are multifaceted, including excessive workload, lack of control over job tasks, inadequate support, and conflicting demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Furthermore, organizational factors such as toxic leadership, poor communication, and unclear job expectations exacerbate burnout risk. Prolonged burnout can lead to severe consequences, including mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, as well as physical health problems, such as cardiovascular diseases (Shirom, 2005). Consequently, organizations are encouraged to implement interventions aimed at reducing job demands, enhancing job resources, and fostering supportive work environments to mitigate burnout.

Personal Life Interference with Work

Personal life interference with work refers to the extent to which non-work responsibilities, demands, or stressors negatively affect an individual's performance, behavior, or well-being in their professional role. This phenomenon often arises when competing obligations from personal and work domains create conflicts, making it difficult for employees to fulfill their job requirements effectively. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) conceptualize such interference as work-family conflict, which occurs when pressures from work and family roles are mutually incompatible. These conflicts can be time-based, strain-based, or behavior-based, where obligations in one domain consume resources such as time, energy, or focus needed in the other.

The impact of personal life interference with work is multifaceted, affecting both employees and organizations. For employees, such interference often leads to increased stress, reduced job satisfaction, and poor mental health outcomes (Michel et al., 2011). From an organizational perspective, it is associated with diminished employee engagement, higher turnover intentions, and the potential for counterproductive work behaviors. Employees struggling with personal life interference may find it challenging to meet deadlines, maintain productivity, or contribute positively to workplace culture, thereby affecting overall organizational performance (Kossek et al., 2011).

Factors contributing to personal life interference with work include caregiving responsibilities, financial stress, health issues, and cultural expectations. These pressures are particularly significant in contexts where traditional gender roles or societal norms place a disproportionate burden on employees to manage extensive personal obligations. Addressing this interference requires organizations to adopt supportive measures such as flexible working arrangements, employee assistance programs, and fostering a workplace culture that promotes work-life balance.

Counterproductive Work Behavior

Counterproductive work behavior (CWB) refers to intentional actions by employees that harm or have the potential to harm an organization, its stakeholders, or both. These behaviors are broadly categorized into acts that target the organization, such as theft, sabotage, or absenteeism, and those that target individuals, such as workplace incivility, aggression, or harassment (Spector et al., 2006). CWBs are not necessarily isolated incidents but may represent a pattern of maladaptive behaviors that can disrupt organizational efficiency, employee relationships, and workplace harmony.



The causes of CWBs are diverse and often rooted in a combination of individual and organizational factors. Personality traits, such as high levels of hostility or low conscientiousness, have been identified as significant predictors of CWBs (Marcus & Schuler, 2004). Situational factors, including perceived organizational injustice, high work stress, and lack of support, can also trigger these behaviors. For instance, employees who perceive unfair treatment in promotions or rewards may engage in retaliatory behaviors to express dissatisfaction or seek retribution. Additionally, CWBs are sometimes used as coping mechanisms by employees who feel overwhelmed by job demands or interpersonal conflicts at work (Fox et al., 2001).

The impact of CWBs on organizations is profound, leading to financial losses, reduced productivity, and diminished morale among employees. Addressing CWBs requires a comprehensive approach, including fostering a positive organizational culture, ensuring fair treatment, and implementing mechanisms for early detection and intervention. By understanding the underlying causes of CWBs, organizations can develop strategies to mitigate their occurrence and promote a healthier work environment.

Theory and Hypotheses

Job Burnout and Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB)

Job burnout and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) are closely interconnected, with burnout often serving as a precursor to CWBs in organizational settings. Burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, creates a psychological state that can drive employees to engage in behaviors that undermine organizational goals (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory offers a compelling framework for understanding this relationship. According to COR theory, individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect their resources, including emotional and physical energy, time, and social support. When these resources are depleted, as in the case of burnout, employees may resort to CWBs either as a form of retaliation against perceived injustices or as a coping mechanism to manage their stress (Hobfoll, 1989).

Empirical studies have supported this theoretical connection. For instance, Taris (2006) found that employees experiencing high levels of burnout were significantly more likely to engage in CWBs such as absenteeism, workplace incivility, and theft. Similarly, a study by Jiang et al. (2019) revealed that burnout, particularly emotional exhaustion, was positively associated with CWBs among employees in high-demand sectors. These findings suggest that burnout-induced resource depletion leads employees to prioritize self-preservation over organizational goals, resulting in behaviors that harm the workplace.

In the context of private sector employees in Awka City, the relationship between burnout and CWBs may be further amplified by unique local challenges such as high job demands, limited support systems, and socio-economic stressors. Employees in Awka's private sector often work under intense pressure to meet organizational targets, which increases the likelihood of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Over time, this burnout can manifest in CWBs, further straining workplace relationships and reducing organizational effectiveness. Based on the theoretical and empirical evidence, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H_{1a}: Emotional exhaustion positively and significantly predicts CWB among private sector employees in Awka City. Higher levels of emotional exhaustion are associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in CWB.



H_{1b}: Depersonalization positively and significantly predicts CWB among private sector employees in Awka City. Greater levels of depersonalization are linked to a higher tendency to exhibit CWB.

H_{1c}: Reduced personal accomplishment negatively and significantly predicts CWB among private sector employees in Awka City. Lower levels of personal accomplishment correspond to an increased likelihood of engaging in CWB.

Personal Life Interference with Work and Counterproductive Work Behavior

Personal life interference with work (PLIW) and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) are interrelated, with the former often acting as a catalyst for the latter. Personal life interference occurs when non-work-related responsibilities, stressors, or conflicts disrupt an individual's ability to meet workplace demands effectively (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). According to the Spillover Theory, experiences in one domain of life, such as personal life, can spill over and affect another domain, such as work (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Negative spillover from personal life into the work domain creates stress and emotional strain, which may manifest as CWBs, including absenteeism, lateness, or acts of workplace aggression. These behaviors often represent attempts by employees to cope with or retaliate against the perceived imbalance between their personal and professional roles.

Empirical research supports this connection. For instance, Michel et al. (2011) found that work-family conflict, a common form of personal life interference, was positively associated with CWBs, such as interpersonal conflicts and reduced organizational citizenship behaviors. Similarly, a study by Demerouti et al. (2005) revealed that employees experiencing high levels of personal life interference with work were more likely to exhibit counterproductive behaviors as a response to stress and role conflicts. These findings suggest that when personal obligations overwhelm employees, they may experience heightened frustration and reduced self-regulation, increasing the likelihood of CWBs.

In the context of private sector employees in Awka City, factors such as family responsibilities, financial stress, and societal expectations may exacerbate PLIW. Employees grappling with these pressures may lack the resources to manage their dual roles effectively, leading to stress-induced CWBs that harm workplace dynamics and productivity. Based on this evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₂: PLIW significantly predicts CWB among private sector employees in Awka City.

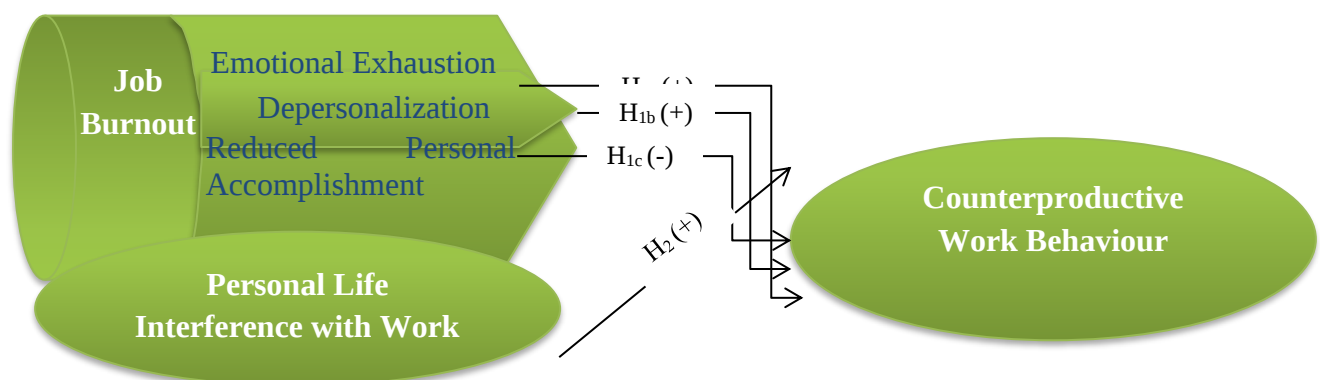


Figure 1: Research Model



Research Method

Sample and Procedure

A total of one hundred and twenty-seven (127) private sector employees comprising of commercial bank employees and teachers participated in the study. Convenient sampling technique was employed to recruit the participants from three private secondary schools (British Spring College, Enzy Royal Schools, and Flora Field Montessori School, Awka) and three commercial banks (Access Bank, First Bank of Nigeria and Fidelity Bank) all situated in Awka City, the capital of Anambra State. The demographic composition of the sampled participants revealed the following: Of the 127 participants, 53 (41.7%) were males while 74 (58.3%) were females. The participants' age ranged from 23 to 50 years with a mean age of 32.46 and SD of 5.69. Eighty-seven (68.5%) of the respondents had 1-10 years of job tenure, 24 (18.9%) had 11-20 years of job tenure, 10 (7.9%) had 21-30 years of job tenure, while 6 (4.6%) had 31 years and above of job tenure. Thirty-four (26.8%) of the respondents had NCE/OND as their highest level of education, 51 (40.2%) had degree/HND, 16 (12.6%) had PGD/PGDE, and 26 (20.5%) had Masters. Sixty (47.2%) of the respondents were single, 58 (45.7%) were married, while 9 (7.1%) were separated. 162 questionnaires were initially distributed out of which 138 were returned, indicating a response rate of 85.2%. However, 11 returned questionnaires were discarded due to incomplete information, resulting in a total of 127 questionnaires utilized for data analysis.

Measures

The measures used in this study were carefully selected to ensure the reliable and valid assessment of the key variables, including job burnout, personal life interference with work, and counterproductive work behaviour.

Job burnout was assessed utilizing 22-item Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1996). Respondents evaluated each item using a 6-point Likert scale (never = 0; a few times a year = 1; monthly = 2; a few times a month = 3; every week = 4; a few times a week = 5; and every day = 6). The scale is divided into three subscales: Emotional exhaustion (9 items); depersonalization (5 items), and personal accomplishment (8 items). In contrast with scores from the first 2 subscales, low scores on the third dimension are indicative of professional burnout. A sample item is: "I feel emotionally drained from my work". The internal consistency reliability coefficients obtained for the subscales by the developers were 0.89 (frequency) and 0.86 (intensity) for Emotional Exhaustion, 0.74 (frequency) and 0.74 (intensity) for Personal Accomplishment, and 0.77 (frequency) and 0.72 (intensity) for Depersonalization. The reliability estimates for the three subscales in the present study are .98, .97, and .89 respectively for emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment subscales

Personal life interference with work (PLIW) was measured with 12-item PLIW subscale, a subscale of Work Life Balance Scale (Banu & Duraipandian, 2014). Responses on the scale were graded on a 5-point likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). A sample item is: "I am often preoccupied with home related thoughts during work hours". The Cronbach's Alpha obtained for the subscale is .93 (Banu, & Duraipandian, 2014). The Cronbach's Alpha in the present study is .82.

Counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) was measured using 12-item CWB scale (Dalal et al., 2009) which assesses the level of employees' deviant and unproductive behaviours. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, to 5 = strongly agree. Sample items include: i) "Behaved in an unpleasant manner toward my



supervisor/a co-worker,” ii) “Spent time on tasks unrelated to work”. Wahyu (2013) found this instrument to be reliable at .67. The reliability estimate in the present study is .81.

Analysis and Study Design

The study employed hierarchical multiple regression analysis to test the formulated hypotheses. This statistical approach allowed the researcher to assess the unique contribution of independent variables to the dependent variable in a sequential manner. By introducing variables in a stepwise fashion, the analysis helped determine how much variance in the dependent variable could be explained at each stage, enabling a deeper understanding of the relative importance of the predictors.

The data were collated and analysed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the research. This design involved collecting data from a sample of the population at a single point in time, making it particularly suitable for studying relationships among variables without the need for longitudinal follow-ups. The design provided a snapshot of the variables of interest, which was appropriate for the objectives of this study.

Results

Inter-correlations among Study Variables

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, reliability estimates (Cronbach’s Alpha) and inter-correlations among the variables under examination. The correlations between the predictor variables and criterion variable revealed the following: Among job burnout dimensions (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment) emotional exhaustion ($r = .54, p < .01$), and depersonalization ($r = .40, p < .01$) are both significantly and positively associated with CWB, while diminished personal accomplishment failed to significantly correlate with CWB. Additionally, Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW) had significant positive correlations with CWB ($r = .85, p < .01$).

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations and Inter-Correlations among the Study Variables

S/N	VARIABLES	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Emotional Exhaustion	26.96	5.47	1				
2	Depersonalization	13.50	6.63	.243**	1			
3	RPA	21.64	8.30	-.117	-.048	1		
4	PLIW	23.69	9.46	.434**	.328**	-.053	1	
5	CWB	23.71	10.74	.536**	.400**	-.073	.849**	1

Note: N = 127, * $p < .05$ (two-tailed), ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed), RPA = Reduced Personal Accomplishment,

PLIW = Personal Life Interference with Work, CWB = Counterproductive Work Behaviour

Hypotheses Testing

The impacts of Job burnout (comprising emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment) and personal life interference with work (PLIW) on counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) were analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression with stepwise modelling. The demographic variables (gender, age, marital status, job tenure and education) were first entered in the regression model as covariates (see table 2)



which collectively accounted for 6.8% [$R^2\Delta = .068$; $F\Delta (5, 121) = 1.752$, $p = ns.$] variation in CWB.

Job burnout dimensions (comprising emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment) entered in the second step of the regression model (see table 2) collectively accounted for 34% [$R^2\Delta = .343$; $F\Delta (3, 118) = 22.845$, $p < .001$] variation in CWB. Emotional exhaustion significantly and positively predicted CWB ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$) and is consistent with hypothesis H_{1a} . Furthermore, depersonalisation also significantly and positively predicted CWB ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$) which supported H_{1b} . In addition, reduced personal accomplishment failed to significantly predict CWB ($\beta = -.21$, $p = ns.$) which is at contrast with H_{1c} .

Table 2: Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for the prediction of Counterproductive Work Behaviours (CWB) by Job Burnout and Personal Life Interference with Work (PLIW)

Variables	Beta (β)	t	R^2	$R^2\Delta$	$F\Delta$
Step 1					
Age	-.120	-1.356			
Gender	.167	1.744			
Marital Status	.142	1.410	.068	.068	1.752
Job Tenure	.038	.427			
Highest Education	-.084	-.827			
Step 2					
Emotional Exhaustion	.478	6.447***			
Depersonalization	.255	3.424***	.410	.343	22.845***
DPA	-.021	-.283			
Step 3					
PLIW	.720	14.565***	.790	.380	212.126***

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; DPA: Diminished Personal Accomplishment, PLIW: Personal Life Interference with Work.

Furthermore, the addition of PLIW in the third and final step of the equation significantly and positively predicted CWB ($\beta = .72$, $p < .001$) which collaborates the second hypothesis. The variance in counterproductive work behaviour explained on account of the addition of personal life interference with work was 38.0% [$R^2\Delta = .380$; $F\Delta (1, 117) = 212.126$, $p < .001$]. PLIW made the highest contribution in predicting counterproductive work behaviour ($t = 14.57$), followed by emotional exhaustion ($t = 6.45$), and then depersonalisation, ($t = 3.42$). Diminished personal accomplishment made the least contribution in predicting CWB ($t = -.283$).

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal critical insights into the predictors of counterproductive work behavior (CWB) among private sector employees in Awka City, with outcomes that align with and diverge from existing empirical evidence. Emotional exhaustion significantly and positively predicted CWB, a result consistent with the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989). This theory posits that individuals experiencing resource depletion, such as emotional exhaustion, are more likely to engage in CWBs as a form



of coping or self-preservation. Similar studies by Balducci et al. (2011) have demonstrated a strong association between emotional exhaustion and workplace deviance, as employees who are emotionally drained often resort to CWBs to alleviate stress or retaliate against perceived organizational demands.

The significant positive prediction of CWB by depersonalization is also consistent with existing literature. Depersonalization, marked by cynicism and detachment from one's work and colleagues, creates an environment where employees feel less committed to organizational norms and are more inclined toward CWBs. This finding aligns with the work of Leiter et al. (2010), who highlighted that, depersonalized employees are more likely to justify counterproductive actions as they disengage emotionally from workplace accountability.

Interestingly, diminished personal accomplishment did not significantly predict CWB, diverging from the patterns observed in the other dimensions of burnout. This result may suggest that feelings of reduced efficacy, while indicative of burnout, do not necessarily translate into behavioral deviance. Similar findings have been reported in studies by Taris et al. (2006), where personal accomplishment had weaker or non-significant links to CWBs, possibly because this dimension reflects an internalized perception that may not outwardly manifest in workplace behaviors.

Finally, the significant positive prediction of CWB by personal life interference with work supports the Spillover Theory, which suggests that stress and conflicts from personal life can extend into work settings (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Employees struggling to balance personal and professional roles may exhibit CWBs as a way to manage or mitigate the resulting stress. Empirical evidence by Demerouti et al. (2005) supports this finding, emphasizing that work-life conflicts are a significant antecedent of workplace deviance due to the emotional strain they impose on employees.

Practical Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study have several practical implications for human resource (HR) management, organizational policies, and private sector employees, particularly in addressing counterproductive work behaviors (CWB). The significant positive prediction of CWB by emotional exhaustion underscores the urgent need for organizations to prioritize employee well-being and stress management. HR practitioners can implement initiatives such as workload redistribution, regular breaks, and wellness programs to mitigate emotional exhaustion (Hobfoll, 1989). Stress management workshops and access to employee assistance programs (EAPs) can also equip employees with coping mechanisms, thereby reducing the likelihood of CWBs stemming from resource depletion (Balducci et al., 2011).

The finding that depersonalization significantly predicts CWB highlights the importance of fostering positive workplace relationships and a sense of belonging among employees. Managers should focus on creating an inclusive work environment and encouraging interpersonal connections through team-building activities and regular feedback sessions. Interventions to rebuild trust and engagement, such as mentoring programs or open-door policies, can help counteract the disengagement and cynicism associated with depersonalization (Leiter et al., 2010). By promoting emotional investment in workplace responsibilities, organizations can reduce the risk of CWBs linked to detachment and disinterest.

Reduced personal accomplishment's lack of a significant prediction for CWB suggests that while feelings of inefficacy may not directly lead to deviance, they could contribute to



other negative outcomes such as decreased morale or productivity. This finding implies that organizations should still support employees in developing a sense of achievement by recognizing accomplishments, providing opportunities for skills development, and aligning tasks with individual competencies. Taris et al. (2006) argue that even when reduced personal accomplishment does not manifest as CWB, it can undermine overall organizational performance if left unaddressed.

The significant positive prediction of CWB by personal life interference with work underscores the necessity for organizations to adopt policies that facilitate better work-life balance. Flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options or adjustable schedules, can alleviate the strain caused by conflicting personal and professional demands (Demerouti et al., 2005). Additionally, organizations should encourage a supportive culture where employees feel comfortable discussing personal challenges that may affect their work. This aligns with the Spillover Theory, which suggests that reducing personal life stressors can have a direct positive impact on workplace behavior (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000).

Overall, these findings highlight the shared responsibility of employees and organizations in addressing the predictors of CWB. While organizations must create a supportive and flexible work environment, employees should be encouraged to develop personal resilience and effective time management skills. By fostering a culture that prioritizes employee well-being and acknowledges the interplay between work and personal life, organizations can enhance productivity and reduce the prevalence of CWBs.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Studies

This study, while offering valuable insights into the predictors of counterproductive work behavior (CWB), has several limitations that warrant acknowledgment and consideration for future research. First, the study's reliance on a cross-sectional design limits its ability to establish causal relationships between the predictors and CWB. While significant associations were observed, longitudinal or experimental designs are needed to confirm the directionality of these relationships and understand how they evolve over time (Taris & Kompier, 2003). For instance, emotional exhaustion may lead to CWB, but the possibility of reciprocal effects, where engagement in CWB exacerbates burnout, cannot be ruled out.

Second, the sample was drawn exclusively from private sector employees in Awka City, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other sectors or geographical locations. Variations in organizational culture, economic conditions, and workplace norms could influence the dynamics of burnout, personal life interference, and CWB (Balducci et al., 2011). Future research should consider expanding the sample to include diverse industries and regions to enhance the external validity of the findings.

Third, the study relied on self-reported measures, which are susceptible to common method bias and social desirability effects. Employees may have underreported their engagement in CWB or overemphasized the extent of burnout and personal life interference to align with perceived norms (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Incorporating multi-source data, such as supervisor ratings or objective behavioral measures, could help mitigate these biases and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study.

Fourth, the study primarily focused on burnout and personal life interference as predictors of CWB, potentially overlooking other significant factors such as organizational justice, personality traits, or job characteristics. Research has shown that factors like perceived unfairness or high job demands also play critical roles in shaping employee behavior (Fox et



al., 2001). Future studies should adopt a more holistic approach by incorporating these variables to capture the multifaceted nature of CWB.

Lastly, cultural factors specific to the Nigerian context may have influenced the findings. For instance, societal expectations around extended family responsibilities might amplify the impact of personal life interference on workplace behavior (Epie, 2010). Future research should explore cross-cultural comparisons to examine how cultural differences modulate the relationships observed in this study.

In light of these limitations, future research should employ longitudinal designs, diversify samples across industries and regions, and integrate multi-source data collection methods. By addressing these gaps, future studies can build on the current findings to develop more robust theoretical frameworks and practical interventions for reducing CWB.

Conclusion

This study provides important insights into the predictors of counterproductive work behavior (CWB) among private sector employees in Awka City, emphasizing the significant roles of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal life interference with work. The findings underscore the critical need for organizations to address workplace stressors and facilitate work-life balance through targeted HR practices and managerial interventions. While diminished personal accomplishment did not significantly predict CWB, the broader implications of employee burnout and life-work conflicts remain vital for organizational performance and employee well-being.

Limitations such as the study's cross-sectional design, reliance on self-reported data, and the exclusive focus on Awka City suggest caution in generalizing the findings. Future research should employ longitudinal methods, explore diverse cultural and organizational contexts, and examine additional predictors to build a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics influencing CWB. Ultimately, addressing these predictors through proactive organizational policies and supportive work environments can help mitigate CWB and enhance employee productivity and engagement.

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