

# MARITAL SATISFACTION AND GENDER AS DETERMINANTS OF BURNOUT AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN OWERRI

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## Abstract

*This research investigates the impact of marital satisfaction and gender on burnout among civil servants in Owerri, Nigeria. The study, comprising 304 participants selected through convenience sampling from Imo State Ministries of Works, Agriculture, Education, and Finance, tests two hypotheses. The participants' demographic includes 200 males and 104 females, with 171 married and 133 single individuals, aged between 27 and 44 years (Mean = 38.51, SD = 9.23). Measures utilised for data collection included the Marital Satisfaction Scale by Hudson (1982) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) by Maslach and Jackson (1986). A cross-sectional survey design was employed, and the data were analysed using a 2-Way Analysis of Variance. Results revealed that neither marital satisfaction nor gender wielded a significant impact on burnout among civil servants in Owerri. However, civil servants reporting poor marital satisfaction (Mean = 36.73, SD = 9.47) exhibited higher burnout levels compared to counterparts with adequate marital satisfaction (Mean = 34.64, SD = 9.88). The study addresses key gaps in understanding determinants of burnout and emphasized the need for organizations to adopt holistic approaches, considering organizational culture, leadership styles, and job demands, to address burnout effectively.*

**Keywords:** Marital Satisfaction, Gender, Burnout, Civil Servants, Owerri.

## Introduction

In contemporary work environments, the mismanagement and disorganization of professional settings can have profound implications for individuals, leading to the depletion of psychological resources and the emergence of burnout (Han, Sinsky, Award & Dryrbye, 2019). Burnout, which is recognized for its detrimental effects on both individuals and organizations, has evolved beyond its initial association with caregiving professions, affecting a diverse range of occupational groups and professions (Hewitt et al., 2020).

Burnout is a state of emotional and physical depletion due to long exposure to stressful working environment (Chuang, Tseng, Lin, Lin & Chen, 2016). It is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Work-related burnout is a persistent issue that has gained increasing attention in recent years due to its detrimental effects on employee well-being and organisational productivity (Maslach et al., 2001).

The World Health Organization (WHO,

2022) has acknowledged the significant impact of burnout by including it in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), recognizing it as a phenomenon exclusive to the occupational context. Legal considerations, such as compliance with the European Union Framework Directive on Health and Safety, further underscore the need to address burnout systematically.

The work settings within the Nigerian Civil Service are not well organized and managed as it is obtainable in other advanced climes. This could have adverse consequences for workers as the process of getting work done would be more physically engaging thereby consuming more of the employees' psychological resources. This outcome, coupled with several other debilitating family and economic issues could result in burnout. As a result of the high demands and responsibilities Nigerian civil servants often face within and outside their job settings, understanding the factors that contribute to burnout becomes crucial for developing effective intervention strategies.

Marital satisfaction and gender have been identified as significant factors that may influence an individual's susceptibility to burnout in the workplace (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). Marital satisfaction, as an essential component of an individual's personal life, can impact emotional well-being and resilience to workplace stressors (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Similarly, gender differences in coping mechanisms and societal expectations may contribute to variations in burnout experiences (Maslach & Leiter,

2016). However, the interplay between these variables, particularly in the specific context of civil service in Owerri, remains relatively unexplored.

Owerri, the capital city of Imo State in Nigeria, is home to a diverse population of civil servants operating within various government sectors. The unique socio-cultural and economic characteristics of this region may introduce distinct factors influencing the relationship between marital satisfaction, gender, and burnout. Investigating these dynamics is essential for tailoring interventions that address the specific needs of civil servants in Owerri and may have implications for similar contexts globally.

Several studies have highlighted the relevance of marital satisfaction and gender in understanding burnout among employees. For instance, a study by Demerouti et al. (2003) found that individuals with high levels of marital satisfaction were more likely to exhibit lower levels of burnout. Additionally, research by Maslach and Leiter (2016) suggested that gender differences play a role in shaping the experience and manifestation of burnout, emphasizing the need for gender-specific interventions.

In light of these considerations, the present study aims to fill the existing gap in the literature by examining the relationship between marital satisfaction, gender, and burnout among civil servants in Owerri. By exploring these variables within a specific cultural and occupational context, this research intends to contribute to the broader understanding of burnout determinants, with

implications for both local and global workplace well-being.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Observations in Ministries in Owerri, Imo State, reveal a prevalent issue within the civil service - a pervasive lack of work involvement and commitment among employees. A critical examination of the problem revealed various stressors contributing to this observed lack of commitment among civil servants. The working conditions, job placement practices, and interpersonal relationships within the civil service play significant roles in fostering an environment that hinders employees' dedication to their roles (Hewitt et al., 2020). Outdated tools and unclear job specifications further compound the challenges faced by civil servants.

Additionally, married employees appear to bear the brunt of heightened stress at home, creating a spill-over effect in the workplace. Balancing family responsibilities with work commitments becomes a delicate task, leading to burnout and observable reductions in job involvement (Ahola et al., 2007). Furthermore, the prevalence of gender biases in hiring and promotion practices raises concerns about equitable employment opportunities within the civil service. The potential preference for male employees over equally qualified females not only perpetuates stereotypes but may also result in a workforce misaligned with job requirements (Presley, 2021).

Moreover, the limited exploration of how burnout intersects with marital satisfaction and gender dynamics among civil servants in

Owerri highlights a critical gap in understanding.

This amalgamation of factors raises serious concerns about the overall well-being of civil servants, potentially impacting job satisfaction, productivity, and the delivery of public services. The need for a comprehensive investigation into the predictive roles of marital satisfaction and gender on burnout is evident. Such an inquiry aims to provide insights that can inform targeted interventions, policies, and support mechanisms tailored to the specific challenges faced by civil servants in Owerri, Nigeria. Addressing these issues is essential not only for the welfare of individual employees but also for the sustained effectiveness and efficiency of the civil service as a whole.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study seeks to address the identified gaps in knowledge by investigating the predictive capabilities of gender and marital satisfaction on burnout among civil servants in Owerri, Imo State. Specifically, the study aims to:

- i. Examine the influence of gender on burnout among civil servants in Owerri.
- ii. Assess the significant impact of marital satisfaction on burnout among civil servants in Owerri.

### **Empirical Review**

#### **Marital Satisfaction and Burnout**

Recent empirical research offers valuable insights into the intricate relationship between marital satisfaction and burnout

across diverse professional contexts. Koleoso et al. (2020) conducted a study involving 181 married nurses in Nigeria, revealing depersonalization, personal accomplishment, and behaviour-based conflict as significant predictors of marital satisfaction. The findings highlight the necessity for interventions addressing negative reactions associated with these factors, particularly in healthcare settings. In Iran, Bagherzadeh et al. (2016) explored work-family conflict, burnout, and marital satisfaction among 420 married women, establishing noteworthy associations between overall marital satisfaction and work-family conflict. This study contributes to the limited research available in this cultural context.

Hungarian midwives were the focus of Kiss et al.'s (2024) longitudinal study, indicating a concerning increase in emotional exhaustion. The research exposed the complexity of factors influencing burnout over time, including workplace conditions and personal circumstances. Salihu et al. (2023) investigated burnout prevalence among 176 resident doctors in Nigeria, identifying younger age, extended duty hours, and work-related stress as significant predictors. The study emphasizes the urgent need for legislative interventions to address burnout within the Nigerian healthcare sector. Olatubi et al. (2022) explored perceived stress, sexual satisfaction, and marital satisfaction among 150 healthcare workers in Nigeria. Low perceived stress levels, coupled with poor sexual satisfaction and a correlation between perceived stress and marital satisfaction, were identified as mitigating workplace stressors.

Additionally, Uwaoma et al.'s (2019) investigation into job burnout, gender, and marital satisfaction among 202 university lecturers in South-East Nigeria revealed weak correlations between job burnout and marital satisfaction. The study suggests the need to educate lecturers about early signs of burnout to safeguard their marital satisfaction. Sen et al.'s (2023) exploration of marital satisfaction, spouse burnout, and psychological well-being in 183 married individuals identified low marital satisfaction, medium-level spouse burnout, and medium-level psychological well-being. The study underscores the importance of considering these variables collectively to understand marital dynamics.

#### **Gender and Burnout**

Uwaoma et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between job burnout, gender, and marital satisfaction among university lecturers in South-East Nigeria. The cross-sectional study, involving 202 lecturers, revealed a weak correlation between job burnout and marital satisfaction. Although increasing job burnout was associated with decreased marital satisfaction, the correlation was not strong. No significant gender differences were observed in marital satisfaction. The study recommends educating lecturers about burnout signs to safeguard marital satisfaction. In another study, Bernard Ubom et al. (2023) explored health, well-being, and burnout among Early Career Doctors (ECDs) in Nigeria. Utilizing measures such as Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) and Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), the study identified male and lower cadre ECDs as more prone to anxiety, burnout, and depression. Health

issues, including musculoskeletal and cardiovascular diseases, were prevalent, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions.

Nwosu et al. (2022) surveyed 129 anaesthetists in Nigeria to determine occupational burnout and assess general and mental health. The study highlighted a high prevalence of burnout (68.3%), with a significant association between burnout and depression, especially among resident anaesthetists. Professional grade emerged as a contributing factor, but no significant correlations were found with age, gender, or marital status. Additionally, Lwiza and Lugazia (2023) investigated burnout among healthcare workers in Tanzania, revealing a 62% prevalence and associating it with work-related factors like longer shifts. Social factors, including fewer night-time sleeping hours and tobacco use, were also linked to elevated burnout levels.

Liu et al. (2023) examined academic burnout among 22,983 Chinese college students, revealing a significant gender difference and higher burnout scores in upper-grade students and smokers. The study underscores the complex factors influencing academic burnout. Hyseni et al. (2023) explored coping skills, mental health, and burnout among healthcare professionals in Kosovo during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study identified emotional fatigue and depersonalization, with significant gender differences. Emotional fatigue and depersonalization were correlated with various mental health indicators, highlighting the need for interventions and coping strategies for healthcare

professionals, particularly women, amid the pandemic.

### **Hypotheses**

- i. There will be no statistically significant impact of marital satisfaction on burnout among Civil Servants in Owerri.
- ii. There will be no statistically significant impact of Gender on burnout among Civil Servants in Owerri.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

A total of 304 participants were involved in this study, consisting of 200 males and 104 females. The participants were selected from the Imo State Ministries of Works, Agriculture, Education, and Finance using a convenience sampling technique. The selection of ministries was carried out through a simple random sampling process. Among the participants, 171 were married, and 123 were single. The age range of the participants was 27-44 years, with a mean age of 38.51 years and a standard deviation of 9.23.

#### **Instruments**

Two instruments were utilized for data collection: The Index of Marital Satisfaction and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The Index of Marital Satisfaction Scale, developed by Hudson (1982), comprises 25 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Rarely or none of the time) to 5 (Most of the time). Hudson (1982) and Anene (1994) reported psychometric properties for American and Nigerian

samples. The final score, obtained by subtracting 25 points, indicates the level of marital satisfaction, with Nigerian norms set at 28.09 for males and 31.28 for females.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), designed by Maslach and Jackson (1986), assesses burnout syndrome, mental fatigue, and physical exhaustion. It consists of 22 items scored on a 6-point Likert scale. Coker (1999) provided psychometric properties for Nigerian samples, reporting a Cronbach Alpha of .86 and other reliability coefficients. Norms for males and females were established at 32.16 and 30.38, respectively, with scores higher than the norm indicating burnout.

### Procedures

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the selected ministries, including the ministries of Works, Agriculture, Education, and Finance. The researchers presented a letter of permission and identification to the

management, facilitating engagement with the workers. Trained individuals assisted in questionnaire administration and collection. The researchers and their assistants introduced the study, explained its purpose, and distributed questionnaires to willing civil servants across the four ministries.

The distribution process resulted in 350 questionnaires being administered, with 304 (86.85%) returned as valid and completed. A total of 46 questionnaires (15.13%) were excluded due to incomplete or missing information. The entire process took approximately one month to complete.

### Design and Statistics

A Cross-Sectional Survey Design was employed, as samples from a large population were studied at a single point in time. The statistical analysis adopted for this study was a 2-way analysis of variance, considering marital satisfaction and gender as independent variables, while burnout served as the dependent variable.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Marital Satisfaction and Gender on Burnout among Civil Servants in Owerri**

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Adequate Marital Satisfaction	34.64	9.88	197
Poor Marital Satisfaction	36.73	9.47	107
Male	36.24	9.37	200
Female	33.72	10.34	104

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics depicting the levels of marital satisfaction and gender among civil servants in Owerri. Upon closer examination of the means, a minor difference is observed between participants with adequate marital

satisfaction (Mean = 34.64) and those experiencing poor marital satisfaction (Mean = 36.73). Additionally, a slight disparity is observed between the mean scores of males (Mean = 36.24) and females (Mean = 33.72).



**Table 2: Summary of Two-Way ANOVA of Marital Satisfaction and Gender on Burnout among Civil Servants in Owerri**

Source	Type III sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Marital Satisfaction	605.07	1	605.07	6.58	0.11
Gender	212.39	1	212.39	2.310	.130
Error	27220.027	296	91.960		
Total	409350.000	304			

Based on the results presented above, the first hypothesis positing no statistically significant impact of marital satisfaction on burnout among civil servants in Owerri is accepted ( $F(1, 296) = 6.58, p = 0.11$ ). Specifically, civil servants experiencing poor marital satisfaction ( $M = 36.73, SD = 9.47$ ) did not demonstrate significantly higher burnout compared to their counterparts with adequate marital satisfaction ( $M = 34.64, SD = 9.88$ ).

Similarly, the second hypothesis suggesting no significant impact of gender on burnout among civil servants in Owerri is also upheld ( $F(1, 296) = 2.31, p = 0.13$ ). This indicates that burnout is not significantly influenced by gender differences among civil servants in Owerri.

### Discussions

The study explored the impact of marital satisfaction and gender on burnout among civil servants in Owerri. Findings on the first hypothesis which posited no statistically significant impact of marital satisfaction on burnout among civil servants in Owerri was accepted. This finding aligns with Uwaoma et al.'s (2019) investigation into job burnout, gender, and marital satisfaction among 202 university lecturers in South-East Nigeria which revealed weak correlations between job burnout and marital satisfaction.

However, the findings contradicts an earlier study by Olatubi et al. (2022) which identified a correlation between perceived stress and marital satisfaction.

However, the modest effect size uncovered in the present study prompts a re-evaluation of the overarching impact of marital satisfaction on burnout. This aligns with the perspective presented by Koleoso et al. (2020) and Bagherzadeh et al. (2016), emphasizing that while marital satisfaction remains relevant, its influence may be mediated by additional contextual factors within the civil service environment. This accentuates the complexity of the burnout phenomenon, indicating that the organisational and interpersonal dynamics characteristic of the civil service setting may significantly contribute to elevated burnout levels, even in the presence of satisfactory marital relationships.

On the second hypothesis testing the impact of gender on burnout among civil servants in Owerri, the study found that burnout is not significantly influenced by gender differences. This finding was corroborated by a study by Uwaoma et al. (2019) which found no significant gender differences between job burnout and marital satisfaction.

Contrary to the findings of this study, Hyseni

et al. (2023) identified significant gender differences in burnout among healthcare professionals in Kosovo during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Liu et al. (2023) identified a significant gender difference and higher burnout scores in upper-grade students and smokers while Bernard Ubom et al. (2023) identified males as more prone to burnout.

One plausible explanation is that in the specific context of civil servants in Owerri, occupational demands and organisational factors may play a more prominent role in determining burnout than gender-specific experiences. The civil service in this region might exhibit a level of gender equality or uniformity in job demands that mitigates the traditionally observed gender differences in burnout. Furthermore, societal expectations and coping mechanisms may differ in this cultural context, influencing how gender interacts with burnout.

### **Implications of the Study**

The findings of this study have several implications for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in the field of organisational psychology, human resource management, and public administration.

- i. The study suggests that marital satisfaction alone may not be a strong predictor of burnout among civil servants. Organisations need to adopt a holistic approach in addressing burnout, considering organizational culture, leadership styles, and job demands.
- ii. The lack of significant gender differences in burnout among civil servants in Owerri challenges the

assumption that gender plays a central role in burnout experiences. Organizations should strive to implement gender-neutral policies and practices, ensuring equal opportunities and support for both male and female employees. This may involve addressing gender biases in hiring, promotion, and workload distribution.

- iii. While marital satisfaction may not be a direct predictor of burnout, organizations should recognize the unique challenges faced by married employees, especially in balancing work and family responsibilities.
- iv. The study emphasises the importance of considering cultural and contextual factors when examining burnout. Interventions and policies should be culturally sensitive and tailored to the specific needs of civil servants in Owerri

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study adds to the existing literature on burnout among employees, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing workplace well-being. While marital satisfaction and gender were explored as potential determinants of burnout, the study highlights the complex interplay of organizational factors in influencing burnout levels. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on occupational burnout and provide a basis for further research in similar contexts.

### **Recommendations**

- i. Organizations should invest in training programs to enhance employees' resilience, coping mechanisms, and



- stress management skills. This can empower civil servants to navigate the challenges of their work environment more effectively.
- ii. Periodic assessments of workplace conditions, job specifications, and interpersonal relationships should be conducted to identify potential stressors and areas for improvement. This proactive approach can help organizations address issues before they escalate into burnout.
  - iii. Organizations and policymakers should review existing policies to ensure they are inclusive, equitable, and supportive of employees' well-being. This includes family-friendly policies, mental health support, and mechanisms to address gender biases.
  - iv. Future research could delve deeper into the specific organizational factors that contribute to burnout in the civil service context in Owerri. Longitudinal studies and qualitative approaches may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play.

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