

# Psychological Empowerment as Predictors of Job Involvement Among Secondary School Teachers in Benue North-West, Nigeria

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## Abstract:

This study examined psychological empowerment as a predictor of job involvement among secondary school teachers in Benue North-West, Nigeria. The cross-sectional survey design was adopted. Participants were 354 teachers comprising of 195(55.1%) males and 159(44.9%) females within the age range of 22–62 years, mean age of 40.25 years (SD=9.69). Systematic random sampling technique was used in selecting the schools while simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the participants. Data were collected using the Teachers' Job Involvement Scale (T-JIS) and Spreitzer's Empowerment Scale. The standard multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis. Results showed that psychological empowerment and its dimensions of meaningfulness, competence, self-determination and impact jointly predict overall job involvement significantly among secondary school teachers in Benue North-West. Independently too all the psychological empowerment dimensions, except competence, predicted job involvement of the teachers significantly. It was therefore concluded that psychological empowerment through meaningfulness, impact, and self-determination is a key factor in predicting job involvement of teachers. The study recommended that management of secondary schools and policy makers should always consult with the teachers when designing their work schedules.

**Key Words:** Empowerment, job involvement, secondary school, teachers, Benue State.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of job involvement is observed to have great importance and significance in organisational development. First conceptualised by Lodahl and Kejner [1] as the degree to which employees identify with their jobs or the degree of importance that employees' jobs have to their self-worth, job involvement has continued to receive the attention of scholars and management practitioners globally. The burgeoning interest in the concept of job involvement is linked to its important role in promoting positive organisational outcomes. It is considered to generally promote organisational effectiveness [2] and foster employee motivation, performance, and overall job satisfaction [3], [4]. Employees with high level of job involvement make the job a central part of their personal character and focus most of their attention on their job and may have low intention to leave the organization [5]. Such employees consider their workplace duties to be a very important part of their lives and whether or not they feel well about themselves is much closely related to how they perform on their respective jobs [1].

In the education sector, teachers with higher level of job involvement often identify with the teaching goals of the school more spontaneously and participate in teaching more eagerly [6]. The greater their job involvement, the greater their teaching efficiency tends to be [7]. Sethi and Mittal [8] asserted that if the teachers are highly involved in their job, they can produce good

results in their professional life. They will not show truancy, absenteeism and lack of duty towards their organization, while on the other hand, the teachers who have low level of job involvement tend to record low productivity in academic work which may adversely affect the students and consequently the society as a whole. Thimmaraju [9] demonstrated significant positive relationship between job involvement and employee satisfaction among teachers. Therefore, fostering the job involvement of teachers is an important organisational goal as it is considered to be a significant determinant of overall effectiveness in the education sector.

Research on the antecedents of work attitudes including job involvement has been approached from the angle of response to specific work situations or characteristics. One of such job characteristics often studied in relation to work attitudes is psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment exists when employees perceive that they exercise some control over their work life. According to Spreitzer [28], psychological empowerment is manifested in four cognitions reflecting an employee's active orientations to his/her work that include meaning (the value of the work in relation to expectations); competence (the ability to skillfully execute tasks); self-determination (deciding on the method, pace and effort when completing tasks), and impact (ability to influence outcomes at work). It is a subjective, cognitive and attitudinal process that helps individuals feel effective, competent and authorized to carry out tasks [10].

It has been well documented in the research literature that psychologically empowered employees possess innovative behaviour and initiative in their work [11], are more committed to, and more satisfied with their job [12], and have better mental health than individuals lacking empowerment [13]. Empowerment heightens employees' sense of personal control and motivates them to engage in their work [14], which in turn results in positive managerial and organisational outcomes [15], and promote job involvement [16]. Despite abundant studies on psychological empowerment in the literature, little or none of these studies are found on the influence of psychological empowerment on job involvement of secondary school teachers, especially in Nigeria. Rather, most of these studies have concentrated on examining the influence of environmental and organizational factors such as school and home environments [17], teacher motivation in terms of incentives, wages and salaries increase [18] [19] on job involvement of teachers. This research is therefore designed to bridge the gap by investigating the influence of psychological empowerment on job involvement of secondary school teachers in Benue North-West, Nigeria.

## II. LITRATURE REVIEW

### A. Job Involvement

The concept of job involvement was first proposed by Lodahl and Kejner [1] who presented the phenomenon of job involvement by discussing various data about the impact of job design elements on job involvement. They defined job involvement as the degree to which employees identify with their jobs or the degree of importance that employees' jobs have to their self-worth. Soon after Lodahl and Kejner proposed the concept of job involvement, researchers began to pay close attention to the concept. Kanungo [20] defined job involvement as a cognitive belief state that reflects an individual's psychological identification and level of involvement in their job. This definition implies that a job-involved person sees his/her job as an important part of his/her self-concept [21], and that jobs define one's self-concept in a major way [20]. Because of this, people who are high in job involvement genuinely care for and are concerned about their work. He further argued that a person's psychological identification with the job depends on both need saliency and perceptions about the job's potential for satisfying the salient needs.

Paullay et al. [22] defined job involvement as the degree to which one is cognitively preoccupied with, engaged in, and concerned with one's present job. Very similar to Lodahl and Kejner's definition, [23] define job involvement as the degree to which one shows emotional or mental identification with his/her job. Schaufeli [24] proposed that job involvement is based on pleasure and the activation of well-being. They defined job involvement as an active and satisfactory emotional and cognitive state associated with a job. The characteristics of this state include constancy and diffusivity. The state is not in connection with a certain goal, event, or situation but involves a positive experience of high energy and concentration whilst identifying strongly with work.

In further refining the concept of job involvement, Kanungo [20] observed that prior researchers' definitions were contaminated by other constructs such as intrinsic motivation, and that oftentimes experimenters interchanged the term job, with work, which is more general and non-equivalent. Job involvement refers to employees' faith in their current jobs and the degree to which those jobs can satisfy their personal needs, while work involvement refers to the value of work and its importance in the employees' lives. Thus, work involvement refers to an individual's personal code of ethics regarding work in general (i.e. their normative beliefs), which are formed based on the individual's previous experiences and social interactions in the workplace. On the other hand, job involvement considers an individual's cognitive beliefs regarding a specific job [20]. Paullay et al. [22] later verified Kanungo's distinction between job involvement and work involvement, which they called work centrality, via confirmatory factor analysis. In practicality, job involvement would simply mean the degree of commitment and interest one would give to their job compared to any other faculty of human life. It is the degree to which one is cognitively preoccupied with, engaged in, and concerned with one's present job [22]. Therefore, if a person has high job involvement, then, the job becomes part of his/her identity and a high priority in life.

Another set of distinction has been made between two similar constructs of job involvement and organisational commitment. These two constructs are somewhat similar to each other that they are both concerned with an employee's identification with the work experience. However, according to Brown [25], the constructs differ in the sense that job involvement is more closely associated with identification with one's immediate work activities whereas organisational commitment refers to one's attachment to the organisation. It is possible, for example, to be very involved in a specific job but not be committed to the organisation or vice versa [26].

Kanungo [20] considered involvement and alienation to be polar opposites. The concepts of involvement and alienation apply broadly to other fundamental aspects of life as well, such as family, marriage, parenthood, religion, and recreation. However, the focus of this research is specifically on involvement in the context of work. Although previous studies have been conducted linking job involvement with various antecedents, there is a paucity of studies on the influence of psychological empowerment and job involvement, particularly among secondary school teachers in Nigeria.

### B. Psychological Empowerment

The concept of empowerment was first introduced in the 1980s but received greater interest among researchers, academics and practitioners of organisational management in the 1990s [27], [28]. Employee empowerment became a buzzword in management trends in both the public and the private sector [29]. A review of the plethora of definitions of empowerment reveals both diversity and commonality. Most definitions focus on issues of gaining power and control over decisions and resources that determine the quality of one's life, while others also take into account structural inequalities that affect entire social groups rather than focus only on individual characteristics.

Rappaport [30] defined empowerment as a process by which people, organisations and communities gain mastery over issues which are of concern to them. In its broadest sense, empowerment is the expansion of freedom of choice and action; it involves increasing one's authority and control over the resources and decisions that affect one's life. Thomas and Tymon [31] suggested that empowerment be classified into three broad categories. These are namely; an act (structural approach), a psychological state of mind (motivational approach) or an energising aspect through leadership (leadership approach). This study however, focuses on empowerment from the psychological perspective.

The psychological approach to empowerment which is the hub of this study was pioneered by Conger and Kanungo [32] and conceptualised as "psychological enabling". They saw empowerment as a motivational construct rather than a leader-member relational construct. According to them, empowerment is a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organisational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness, and through their removal by both formal organisational practices and informal techniques. Building on the work of Conger and Kanungo [32], [33] defined psychological empowerment as four cognitions reflecting an employee's orientations towards his/her job namely impact (the ability employees have to affect organisational outcomes); competence (an employee's capability to perform the work); meaningfulness (the value of the work) and choice (deciding on how and the time to execute tasks). Spreitzer [28] somewhat changed what Thomas and Velthouse [33] found by defining psychological empowerment as manifested in four cognitions reflecting an employee's active orientations to his/her work that included meaning (the value of the work in relation to expectations); competence (the ability to skillfully execute tasks); self-determination (deciding on the method, pace and effort when completing tasks) and impact (ability to influence outcomes at work). Together, these four cognitions reflect an active rather than a passive orientation to a work role (an orientation in which an individual wishes and feels able to shape his or her work role and context). The four dimensions combine additively to create an overall construct of psychological empowerment.

Psychological empowerment has been reported as important antecedent of many positive organisational outcomes. Saeidi and Asgari [16] found among staff of Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon Branch that there is a direct relation between psychological empowerment and job involvement and all of the components of psychological empowerment were meaningful predictors for Job involvement. Similarly, Behtooee [34] showed direct positive influence of psychological empowerment on job involvement which in turn had a positive, significant and direct effect on organisational citizenship behaviour. Psychological empowerment particularly the meaning and impact dimensions are reported to have strong positive relationship with organisational identification [35], which is similar to job involvement. Jose and Mampilly [36] examined psychological empowerment and its dimensions as

predictors of employee engagement. They found significant positive association between psychological empowerment and employee engagement, with all the dimensions of psychological empowerment, other than self-determination, predicting employee engagement. Also, Abdullah [37] found among Malaysian secondary school teachers that, teachers' job satisfaction and commitment are influenced mainly by psychological empowerment. They further demonstrated that psychological empowerment dimensions of meaning and competence significantly influenced the affective and continuance commitment. From the foregoing, it is expected that psychological empowerment will exert positive influence on job involvement of secondary school teachers in Benue North-West, Nigeria.

### C. Theoretical Framework

This study draws from the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Deci [38] to explain the influence of psychological empowerment on job involvement of secondary school teachers. The SDT is centered on the belief that human nature shows persistent positive features, that it repeatedly shows effort, agency and commitment in their lives, which the theory calls "inherent growth tendencies." People also have innate psychological needs that are the basis for self-motivation and personality integration [38]. Deci and Ryan [39] proposed three main intrinsic needs involved in self-determination which include competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Competence is where individuals seek to control the outcome and experience mastery; relatedness is the universal want to interact, be connected to, and experience caring for others while autonomy is the universal urge to be causal agents of one's own life and act in harmony with one's integrated self. These needs form part of the job involvement concept.

It can be inferred from the framework of the Self-Determination Theory that teachers have their inherent psychological needs that must be satisfied in a workplace for them to be involved in their job. When psychological needs (which are also embodied in the psychological empowerment construct) are satisfied, then, the employees will be more motivated to initiate and sustain job involvement behaviour.

### D. Hypothesis

Deriving from the above literature, it is hypothesized that psychological empowerment dimensions (viz: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact) will jointly and independently predict job involvement significantly among secondary school teachers in Benue North-West.

## III. METHOD

### A. Design

This study is a cross-sectional survey involving collection of data from a relatively large number of teachers at a point in time to make inferences about their experience of psychological empowerment and job involvement.

### B. Setting

This study was conducted in secondary schools (both public and private) situated in Benue North-West, popularly known as Zone B Senatorial District of Benue State in Nigeria. The geographical location is made up of seven (7) Local

Government Areas and houses the state capital (Makurdi), and the commercial nerve center of the state (Gboko town) which both attract a large population of people leading to high demand for educational services.

### C. Participants

The participants for this study were three hundred and fifty four (354) teachers who were within the age range of 22 – 62 years of age with mean age of 40.25 (SD=9.69). Their demographic data showed that 195(55.1%) of the participants were males while 169(44.9%) were females; 123(34.7%) were single, 214(60.5%) were married, 2(0.6%) separated from their spouses, 7(2%) were widowed, while 8(2.3%) did not indicate their marital status. Data further showed that they had worked for at least 1 year, and 33 years maximum with 54(15.3%) as junior staff, 243(68.6%) senior staff, while 57(16.1%) did not indicate their rank. Furthermore, 230(65%) of the teachers were selected from the public secondary schools while 124(35%) were selected from private secondary schools.

### D. Instruments

The instrument for this study is the questionnaire consisted of the Spreitzer’s Empowerment Scale and the Teachers’ Job Involvement Scale (T-JIS). The *Teachers’ Job Involvement Scale (T-JIS)* is a 29 items scale that measures two domains of teachers’ job involvement: the physical and emotional involvement. The scale has high reliability with Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .97 for the entire scale while physical involvement had  $\alpha=.94$  and emotional involvement had  $\alpha=.70$  [40]. The *Spreitzer’s Empowerment Scale* [28] is 12-item scale with 3 items each to measure the 4 empowerment dimensions of meaning, perceived competence, self-determination and impact by asking respondents to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with each of the items on the scale of 1 – 5. Items on the scale were adapted to suit the present study. For instance, the word ‘teaching’ has been added to items to make it specifically suitable for teachers, e.g. “The teaching work I do is very important to me”. Also, the word ‘class’ has been used in place of ‘department’ e.g. “My impact in what happens in my class is large” instead of “my impact in what happens in my department is large.” Spreitzer [28] reported the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the overall empowerment construct to be 0.72 and 0.62 for two different groups. Tyokyaa et al. [40] confirmed overall Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .90 for Spreitzer Empowerment scale while on the subscales, meaningfulness had, competence, self-determination, and impact had  $\alpha=.70$ ,  $\alpha=.76$ ,  $\alpha=.62$ , and  $\alpha=.72$ .

### E. Procedure and Method of Data Analysis

The researcher visited the participants in their respective schools. Permission to collect data from the teachers was obtained from the Ministry of Education and Knowledge Management, which is in charge of all academic institutions in the state including the secondary schools. The researcher then visited selected schools with a letter of introduction. In each of the schools visited, the school principal or a management staff was approached to assist in process of data collection. Questionnaires were distributed through this process and retrieved for analysis. Data analysis involved the use of

descriptive statistics to summarize the demographic data of the participants while standard multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

## IV. RESULTS

The results from the study are presented in the table below:

### Multiple linear regression showing psychological empowerment dimensions as independent and joint predictors of job involvement among secondary school teachers in Benue North-West.

DV	IV	R	R <sup>2</sup>	df	F	P	$\beta$	t	p
JI	SD.						.169	3.34	.001
	Imp.	.33	.11	4,349	10.78	.000	.131	2.51	.013
	Mean.						.235	4.58	.000
	Comp.						.094	1.81	.071
PIJ	SD.						.193	3.67	.000
	Imp.	.20	.04	4,349	3.73	.006	.025	.45	.650
	Mean.						.050	.93	.351
	Comp.						.004	.08	.938
EJI	SD.						.106	2.18	.030
	Imp.	.43	.18	4,349	19.75	.000	.194	3.87	.000
	Mean.						.343	6.98	.000
	Comp.						.151	3.04	.003

**Note:** JI-Job involve, PIJ-Physical Job involvement; SD-Self-determination; Imp-Impact; Mean-Meaningfulness; Comp-Competence

The results presented in the table above show that psychological empowerment dimensions (viz: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact) jointly predict overall job involvement significantly among secondary school teachers in Benue North-West [ $R=.332$ ,  $R^2=.110$ ,  $F(4,349)=10.779$ ,  $p<.001$ ], accounting for 11% of the total variance observed in overall job involvement of the secondary school teachers. Independently, meaningfulness ( $\beta=.235$ ,  $t=4.582$ ,  $p<.001$ ) made the highest positive contribution of 23.5% to the total variance observed in overall job involvement of the teachers, followed by self-determination ( $\beta=.169$ ,  $t=3.337$ ,  $p<.001$ ) with significant positive contribution of 16.9%, and impact ( $\beta=.131$ ,  $t=2.506$ ,  $p<.05$ ) with significant, positive contribution of 13.1% in that order, while competence ( $\beta=.094$ ,  $t=1.810$ ,  $p>.05$ ) did not make any significant contribution to the total variance observed in overall job involvement of the secondary school teachers in Benue North-West.

In terms of the two dimensions of job involvement (physical and emotional), the results show that psychological empowerment dimensions jointly predicted physical involvement significantly [ $R=.202$ ,  $R^2=.041$ ,  $F(4,349)=3.726$ ,  $p<.01$ ], accounting for 4.1% of the total variance observed in physical job involvement among the secondary school teachers. Independently, only self-determination ( $\beta=.193$ ,  $t=3.671$ ,  $p<.001$ ) made significant positive contribution of 19.3% to the total variance observed in physical job involvement while impact ( $\beta=.025$ ,  $t=.454$ ,  $p>.05$ ), meaningfulness ( $\beta=.050$ ,  $t=.934$ ,  $p>.05$ ), and competence ( $\beta=.004$ ,  $t=.078$ ,  $p>.05$ ) made no significant independent contribution to the total variance in physical job involvement among secondary school teachers. Furthermore, psychological empowerment jointly predicted emotional job involvement significantly [ $R^2=.185$ ,  $F(4,349)=19.753$ ,  $p<.001$ ] accounting for 18.59% of the total

variance observed in emotional job involvement among the secondary school teachers. On their independent contributions, meaningfulness ( $\beta=.343$ ,  $t=6.984$ ,  $p<.001$ ) made the highest positive contribution of 34.3.6% to the total variance observed in emotional job involvement of secondary school teachers, followed by impact ( $\beta=.194$ ,  $t=3.873$ ,  $p<.001$ ) with significant positive contribution of 19.4%, competence ( $\beta=.151$ ,  $t=3.041$ ,  $p<.01$ ) with significant, positive contribution of 15.1%, and self-determination ( $\beta=.106$ ,  $t=2.180$ ,  $p<.05$ ) in that order. Based on this result, hypothesis three was confirmed for the joint aspect but partially for the independent aspect of the hypothesis.

Findings indicated that psychological empowerment and its dimensions of meaningfulness, competence, self-determination and impact jointly predict overall job involvement significantly among secondary school teachers in Benue North-West. The result was significant for both physical and emotional job involvement of the teachers. This means that teachers who are psychologically empowered by their task and job environment will be involved in their teaching job while those who do not experience sense of empowerment in their job will have less tendency to be involved in their job. This finding is in consensus with several other previous findings. It is in line with [16] who reported a similar significant correlation between psychological empowerment and job involvement. It also tallies with Behtooee [34] who also found that psychological empowerment and job involvement were significantly and positively correlated. The study is also in consonant with the current study is the result of study by Jose and Mampilly [36] who indicated that psychological empowerment is positively related with job involvement.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It is concluded from the study that psychological empowerment through meaningfulness, impact, and self-determination are key factors in predicting the job involvement of teachers, either physical or emotional. It was therefore recommended that the management of secondary schools and policy makers should always consult with the teachers when designing their work schedules as this is capable of giving them sense of self-determination and impact which are necessary for job involvement.

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