



## ECHOES FROM THE BACK-STAGES: EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION AS PREDICTOR OF JOB INVOLVEMENT AMONG RECENT THEATRE ARTS GRADUATES

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### ABSTRACT

*Feedback from the streets continues to filter in about negative experiences surrounding efforts by recent graduates of Theatre Arts from Nigerian universities, to secure work opportunities. This study examined the emotional exhaustion experienced by these graduates and how it influences job involvement in the same population in Southwest Nigeria. Cross-Sectional survey research utilizing an ex-post factor design was employed for this study. Three hundred and fifty recent Theatre Arts graduates in Southwest Nigerian metropole responded to Job Involvement Questionnaire and Maslach Burnout Inventory. A simple linear regression analysis produced a statistically significant P-value of .002 and an adjusted R square (0.027) that shows that emotional exhaustion accounts for 2.7% of the total variation in job involvement. Age was also found to predict job involvement with age even accounting for 2.7% of the total variation in job involvement. Gender did not significantly determine job involvement among the sample surveyed, which was corroborated by existing literature. The results were discussed, and so were the implications of the study. Recommendations were also drawn.*

*Key Words: Recent Theatre Arts Graduates, Emotional Exhaustion, Job Involvement*

### INTRODUCTION

Recent graduates of Theatre Arts continue to face rigors that are debilitating to their newly acquired skills. These fresh graduates plod the streets looking for roles to engage in, at upcoming shows or performances. If and when they do find a role, they are made to climb mountains and jump hoops to get into such positions, after which they are given minor roles to play and worked hard to their bones to remain on board. The psychological impact of what they meet on the job or the psychological impact of the futility in finding befitting jobs typically results in their decision to be involved in the job they may or may not have even gotten yet. Clifford (1973) identifies one of the most compelling reasons for educational theatre as one which provides a vocation for earning a living for graduates of Theatre Arts. In the light of this, through careful selection of courses, qualitative pedagogy and practice, students specialize in preferred fields like the arts of the theatre, Media and other areas which prepares them for the demands and intricacies of professional theatre, stage, and screen. The anticipation and expectations of many of these graduates are however often doused on discovering that hardly does the art world have room for their services, nor enable them to express their talents and creativity thereby limiting their chances of earning a living from theatre practice. When they can get parts in performances, their abilities is often underestimated, and they invariably become underdogs and extras on cast. In the course of this, many of the hitherto, enthusiastic theatre graduates steep into discouragement and disillusionment. It is this, which we refer to as 'emotional exhaustion' in this paper. It thus seems reasonable to investigate the psychological influence of emotional exhaustion in recent theatre graduates and how emotional exhaustion invariably influences their decision to be involved in the job.

Some of the observed reasons for the emotional exhaustion experienced by these graduates are as follows:

### **Chronic Rejection at Auditions**

Many of these recent graduates attend one tryout after another, with the hope of getting a role as cast or crew, but unfortunately, many do not get beyond the audition stage. This way, expending time, money, energy, and even more so, vain hopes on such exercise become a recurring matrix.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Some of these theatre hopefuls have reported that the sexual decadence and harassment that happens behind the scene is a phenomenon that leads to emotional exhaustion. The emotional exhaustion is because, to get reasonable roles, many aspiring or upcoming artist may have to engage in this act unwillingly with resultant psychological effects.

### **Small or Unimportant Roles**

Again, some of these theatre graduates become weary of playing minor roles, otherwise known as 'waka pass', since such parts can hardly make them grow or relevant in the profession, it leaves room for emotional fatigue.

### **Demands of Some Scripts**

Some directors believe that in desperation, some new and upcoming artists, among who are theatre graduates would take any role, no matter the demands, which sometimes, might go against their cultural ethos and compromise their personal values, for example taking roles that are sexually explicit.

### **Godfatherism**

Since some of them are new in the industry, they hardly have anyone to recommend their skills and talent, since attendance at auditions may not be the only criterion for selection.

Kanungo (1982) defined job involvement as the level both psychologically and emotionally at which an individual partakes in performing the job that he is responsible for in an organization. It is generally opined that every worker should conduct his or her role in an organization to the best of their ability. Being emotionally exhausted, however, can influence performance on the part of the individual and their job and possibly predict their level of job involvement in the organization. Job involvement can be referred to as the extent of commitment that gives a description of an employee's relationship with his present job or predicting future career as it may be (Kuruuzum, 2009). Flexibility, conformity, and motivation serve as a positive involvement in job involvement (Kuruuzum, 2009). According to Kanungo (1982), job involvement deals with an individuals' identification or commitment which he shows to his or her job. It is related to how a job can satisfy the needs of the employer.

Concerning performance in Theatre Arts, job involvement, therefore, deals with the level of interest an artist has towards the activities that surround the expression of talents in theatre performance. If a person's motivational force is hampered, he/she will be unable to satisfy job needs and expectations which may lead to aggression, regression, and withdrawal from the job activities (Lubakaya, 2014). Frustration may refer to the negative response to the obstruction that was being made to prevent him from getting what he desires; aggression can be a verbal attack while withdrawal can be giving up or resignation (Lubakaya, 2014). Emotional exhaustion is a constant state of losing some level of interest in the job one is involved in, or feeling exhausted about it as a result of him being over loaded with too much work, over whelmed with personal demands and too much stress which occurs continuously (Hobfoll, 1989). People strive to get, retain and safeguard their resources (Hobfoll, 1989). It can either be clothing, money or shelter, social support or status, self-esteem or sense of autonomy. People may try to guide themselves from resource loss, regain loss or recover the loss. The feeling that these personal resources may not be safeguarded can also serve as a gateway to mental imbalances which manifests in the individual not having a zeal for life, having a feeling that whatever one does will not result to any good thing, lacking the cognitive ability to concentrate on their work and so on.

This study examines the emotional exhaustion of recent graduates who are either looking for employment or are yet to find one over a considerable period. Theatre or theater, according to The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4th edition (2006), is a collaborative form of fine art that uses live performers, typically actors or actresses, to present the experience of a real or imagined event before a live audience in a specific place, often a stage. The performers may communicate this experience to the audience through combinations of gesture, speech, song, music, and dance. Elements of art, such as painted scenery and stagecraft such as lighting are used to enhance the physicality, presence, and immediacy of the experience Carlson (1996). The specific place of the performance is also named by the word "theatre" as derived from the

Ancient Greek θέατρον (théatron, "a place for viewing"), itself from θεάομαι (theáomai, "to see," "to watch," "to observe") (Carlson, 1996).

Graduates of Theatre Arts expect to find jobs directly related to performing arts; these include, among many others: acting, community arts work, dance, music therapy or theatre directing. According to Theampta (2016), the theatre, dance and other performing arts can teach people how to express themselves adequately, and can also be a tool through which people with disabilities can communicate, while it teaches society about itself, hoping to point out the attitudes and mindsets of current social and being a tool used to educate people about their current conditions. Another importance of theatre is maintaining the history and understanding of a country's citizens. Creativity is also pointed out as the most important derivative of theatre arts. Without a creative voice, a society may become all but dead inside, and a social group without any creativity is likely to be repressive and tyrannical rather than a force for good (Theampta, 2016). The importance of having people in society who can express themselves creatively is without doubt. Biologists have argued that the formation of creativity was the essential step in human development and that society cannot move forward without creative people (Theampta, 2016).

There is a dearth of literature surrounding the efforts that recent Nigerian theatre arts graduates make in the bid to continue expressing the importance of theatre to their societies and communities. There is a dearth of literature surrounding the psychological impact of emotional exhaustion as experienced by recent graduates of the Theatre Arts on job involvement.

The objective of this study is therefore to determine the predictive significance of emotional exhaustion on job involvement among young Nigerian graduates of Theatre Arts that either have had their first job or have been unable to find one several year after graduation in southwest Nigeria. Specific objectives include the following:

1. To determine if emotional exhaustion will be a predictor of job involvement among the recent graduates.
2. To examine age as a predictor of job involvement among the recent graduates.
3. To investigate gender as a significant determinant of job involvement among recent graduates.

## **THEORIES**

### **Motivational Approach to Job Involvement (Kanungo, 1979, 1982)**

The motivational approach of Kanungo (1979,1982) integrates the different approaches to job involvement, including both psychological and sociological factors, using the basic concept that job involvement is affected by the potential for personal socialization experience and the likelihood that the work environment can satisfy individual demand.

Kanungo (1979, 1982) hypothesizes that, employee perceptions concerning a job's potential to satisfy their needs represent a more proximal influence on job involvement. Kanungo contends that individuals develop beliefs that a job's context potentially provides an opportunity for them to satisfy their most important future needs. Consequently, job involvement depends on employees' needs (both extrinsic and intrinsic), as well as their perceptions of the job's potential to satisfy those needs.

### **Biological Theories of Emotion**

Different theories explain the close ties between the subjective psychological phenomena that we know as emotions and the activity of the visceral organs such as the brain, heart, or stomach which is controlled by the autonomic nervous system. Carl. G. Lange (1834-1900), for instance, proposed that different emotions feel differently because a different constellation of physiological responses generates them. James Lange theory initiated many studies that attempted to link emotions to biological reactions. Psychologists Walter Cannon and Philip Bard claimed that the experience of emotion starts before the autonomic changes, which may seem very slow (Cannon, 1929). Autonomic changes accompanying strong feelings are very much the same, even if the experience was anger, fear or great surprise. These bodily reactions serve as an emergency response of an organism to a sudden threatening condition, producing maximal activation of the sympathetic nervous system, readying the body for flight or fight (Cannon, 1929). The function of the emotion is to enable us to deal with a changing environment. It is the job of the brain to tell which particular emotion serves an appropriate response to the stimuli. The cerebral cortex will simultaneously decide on the proper response and activate the sympathetic system for the body to be ready for appropriate action, as the brain chooses to (Breedlove and Watson, 2007). Breedlove and Watson (2007) opined that individuals interpret visceral activation in terms of the elicit stimuli, the surrounding situation, their cognitive states, and experience. According to him, anger, fear, and joy usually depend on the interpretations of a situation. An emotional state is a result of an interaction between physiological activation and cognitive interpretation of that arousal.

**Research Hypotheses**

The following are research hypotheses that guide the direction of this study.

1. Emotional exhaustion will be a significant predictor of job involvement among Theatre Arts graduates.
2. Age will be a significant predictor of job involvement among theatre arts graduates.
3. Gender will be a significant determinant of job involvement among Theatre Arts graduates.

**METHODS**

**Design:** A cross-sectional survey research utilizing an ex-post factor design was employed to determine the predictive influence of emotional exhaustion on job involvement among recent graduates of Theatre Arts in Southwest Nigeria. The independent variable is emotional exhaustion while the dependent variable is job involvement.

**Population Sample:** 350 respondents participated in this study. The respondents were purposively and conveniently sampled from Lagos, Abeokuta, Ibadan and Akure metropolis in Southwest Nigeria.

**Instruments:** Two different instruments were employed to collect data from the respondents. A section of the survey collected demographic data which included age, gender, and educational qualification. The other two parts include two different standardized instruments to measure emotional exhaustion and job involvement.

**Job Involvement Questionnaire (Kanungo, 1982)**

Job involvement was measured by the 10-item Job Involvement Questionnaire (Kanungo, 1982). Kanungo (1982) reported this to be a uni-dimensional variable yielding a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.81. The response scale categories on a 10-point scale varied between "do not agree/not applicable to me" to "fully agree/fully applicable."

**Psychometric Properties**

Kanungo (1982) reports the questionnaire to have reasonably high levels of internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and validity. Test-retest coefficients of respectively 0.74, 0.85 and 0.82 and both convergent and discriminant validity are reported (Kanungo 1982b). The Principal Factor Analysis carried out in the present study indicated a one-factor solution with the scale having a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.88 (Van Wyk, 1998). All the items in this solution loaded >0.35 on the single dimension.

**Maslach Burnout Inventory**

A sub-scale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory measures Emotional Exhaustion. The items are a seven-point Likert scale type rated from Strongly Disagree to Agree Strongly. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the sub-scales is 0.896 for Emotional Exhaustion.

**Data Analysis:** The data obtained was analyzed using SPSS version 21, involving both descriptive(standard deviation and mean) and inferential statistics(Analysis of variance, multiple correlation, T-test, and ANOVA) with the data subjected to adequate statistical analysis and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**Ethical Consideration:** A thoroughly informed consent letter was presented and explained to the participants before the questionnaires were handed to them. Their anonymity and confidentiality were also guaranteed. The respondents were not required to put their names or any other information on the questionnaire that could identify them.

**RESULTS**

The results for the three hypotheses tested for this study are presented in this section. The statistics include the *t*-Test for independent samples and Simple Linear Regression Analyses statistics.

**Hypothesis One**

Emotional exhaustion will be a significant predictor of job involvement among Theatre arts graduates.

**Table 1: Summary of simple linear regression showing prediction of emotional exhaustion on Job Involvement**

MODEL	SS	Df	Mean Sq	F	P-value	R	R2	Adj R2
Regression	672.67	1	672.67	9.622	.002	.164	.027	.024
Residual	24258.09	347	69.91					
Total	24930.76	348						

**Predictors: (constant) Emotional exhaustion**

The result in Table 1 shows a linear correlation coefficient (R) of 0.16 which is a low but acceptable level of prediction on the dependent variable. The adjusted R square (0.027), shows that emotional exhaustion accounts for 2.7% of the total variation in job involvement. The table also reveals that analysis of variance of the simple linear regression, produced a statistically significant F-ratio value ( $F(1,347) = 9.62, P < 0.05$ ) (P value = .002). The result indicates that emotional exhaustion significantly predicts job involvement hence the hypothesis is supported.

**Hypothesis Two**

Age will be a significant predictor of job involvement among Theatre Arts graduates.

**Table 2: Summary of simple linear regression showing prediction of Age on Job Involvement**

MODEL	SS	Df	Mean Sq	F	Pvalue	R	R2	Adj R2
Regression	679.172	1	679.172	9.698	.002	.165	.027	.024
Residual	24232.032	346	70.035					
Total	24911.20	347						

**Predictors: (constant) Actual Age**

The result in Table 2 shows a linear correlation coefficient (R) of 0.17 which is a low level of prediction on the dependent variable. The adjusted R square (0.027), shows that age accounts for 2.7% of the total variation in Job Involvement. The table also reveals that analysis of variance of the multiple regression data produced a statistically significant F-ratio value ( $F(1,347) = 9.69, P < 0.05$ ) (P value = .002). The result indicates that age significantly predicts job involvement hence the hypothesis is therefore supported.

**Hypothesis Three**

Gender will be a significant determinant of job involvement among recent Theatre Arts graduates.

**Table 3: t-Test Table for the job involvement scores of male teachers and those of female teachers**

GENDER	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	T	P
MALES	129	48.72	8.80	-1.511	>.05
FEMALES	219	50.14	8.23		

The t-Test scores showed that there were 129 male graduates and 219 female graduates while the mean job involvement scores were 48.72 and 50.14 respectively. The P value associated with this test was .132. The t-Test failed to reveal a statistically significantly reliable difference between the mean of the job involvement scores that the male graduates have ( $M = 48.72, SD = 8.80$ ) and that of the female graduates ( $M = 50.14, SD = 8.23$ ),  $t(346) = -1.511, p = .132, \alpha = .05$ . It can therefore be concluded that the job involvement levels of the male graduates is not significantly different from that of the female graduates. The hypothesis was therefore rejected.

**DISCUSSION**

The general objective of this study is to show how emotional exhaustion, age and gender of recent Nigerian graduates of Theatre Arts serve as a predictive influence and determinants of job involvement among the same population in Southwest Nigeria.

The first hypothesis which states that emotional exhaustion will be a significant predictor of job involvement among Theatre Arts graduates showed that emotional exhaustion is a predictor of job involvement among recent Nigerian graduates and also accounts for 2.7% of the total variation in Job Involvement. While there is a dearth of literature examining the relationship between emotional exhaustion and job involvement among Nigerian graduates seeking for work or recent graduates of Theatre Arts who have either found a first job or are yet to find one, it is noteworthy to analyze the results of this study in that regard. Emotional exhaustion reduces personal accomplishment and describes the feeling of an individual that may not be willing to make any contribution on the work assigned to him/her and subsequently reduce overall efficacy at work (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leither, 2001). This understanding can explain why the result of the analyzed hypothesis has shown

emotional exhaustion to be a predictive influence of job involvement. Based on the result of this study, emotional exhaustion that takes place before a job is finally acquired can also predict if there is likely to be a resultant influence on the position itself. Emotional exhaustion can take place if the recent graduate eventually earns a spot in a job, where they feel unfulfilled because they are still looked over or think that their freshly acquired talents are grossly under-utilized.

Based on the second hypothesis which states that age will be a significant predictor of job involvement among Theatre Arts graduates, the study identified age as a significant predictor of job involvement among recent Nigerian graduates and also accounts for 2.7% of the total variation in job involvement. The result of this hypothesis is not largely substantiated by previous studies looking into the two variables. Manikandan and Jayan (2006) for instance did not find age to be a significant determinant of job involvement in their study. Ebeh, Njoku, Ikpeazu and Nwiana-Ana (2017) in a study of Nigerian samples also found that age was not a significant determinant of job involvement. These findings are also corroborated by the findings of other researchers studying Nigerian samples and otherwise (Jonathan, Darroux and Masseur, 2013; Salami, 2008). The finding that age is a significant predictor of job involvement will invariably contribute to existing literature examining the influence of age on job involvement.

The third hypothesis which states that gender will be a significant determinant of job involvement among recent Theatre Arts graduates did not identify gender as a significant determinant of job involvement among the sample of recent theatre arts graduates in this study. This finding is most consistent with the literature examined in this study. Again, Ebeh, Njoku, Ikpeazu and Nwiana-Ana (2017) in a survey of Nigerian samples also found that gender was not a significant determinant of job involvement. Similarly, Oguebe, Joe-Akunne, and Edoga (2015) found no significant main effect for gender on job involvement among a sample of bankers. This finding implies that emotional exhaustion is experienced alike between genders. The outcome is so because the presumed resultant influence of emotional exhaustion on job involvement did not exhibit any significant difference on job involvement between genders.

#### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The finding of this study contributed meaningfully to the ever existing literatures on emotional exhaustion, age, gender and job involvement. Most importantly, this study has reaffirmed the strong need for leaders in the Theatre Arts to ensure that the policies they adopt are geared towards enhancing opportunities for recent graduates who are recipients of the latest research in theatre arts education. Universities are centers for excellence in research. The results or findings of research are included in undergraduate training, making recent graduates beneficiaries of latest innovations. The contributions of recent graduates, who agreeably do not have the experience that the seasoned theatre artists have, can still not be undermined. The experiences they build eventually should not be foundational on emotional exhaustion and low job involvement. If fairness in the availability of opportunities for these recent graduates are abounding, then involvement of employees to their jobs will likely increase. The study has also been able to enrich the literature bordering on the key variables under study.

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