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Role Of Organisational Justice And Gender In Burnout Among Academic Staff Of Polytechnics In Southwest Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the role of organisational justice and gender in burnout among academic staff of polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria. The population comprised all academic staff of government-owned polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria. The study involved 480 participants selected through multi-stage sampling procedure. The sample consists of 297 male and 183 female lecturers aged 22–65 years with a mean age of 33.84 (SD= 7.95). A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, employing a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected using the Measure of Organisational Justice (MOJ) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), and analysed using descriptive statistics, multiple regression and independent t-test methods via SPSS version 25. The results showed that organisational justice significantly contributed to burnout among the participants, with distributive justice and interpersonal justice showing significant negative correlations with burnout. Findings also revealed no significant differences in burnout levels between male and female polytechnic lecturers. The study recommends that government, regulatory body and institutions' management, should actively promote fairness, equity, and equality in both resource allocation and interpersonal interactions as a strategic approach to reducing burnout among academic staff. Higher perceptions of fairness in resource allocation and interpersonal treatment would serve as buffers against burnout, thereby reduce its negative impact on lecturers' well-being.

Keywords: Academic staff, burnout, lecturer, organisational justice, polytechnics, southwest Nigeria

Introduction

Burnout is a syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, resulting from prolonged exposure to stressors (Oluwadiya et al., 2023; Agyapong., 2022; Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Burnout among academic staff results from prolonged exposure to unfavourable working conditions, leading to emotional, mental, or physical exhaustion with significant consequences for well-being and job performance. These consequences include health crises, depressive disorders, reduced confidence, and mental distress, as well as work-life imbalance affecting family relationships (Eni, 2023; Elnaem et al., 2024). In the workplace, burnout contributes to job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, turnover, and reduced organisational engagement and efficiency (Nwosu et al., 2020).

In the context of academic staff in polytechnics, burnout is a pressing issue, with reported cases of lecturers experiencing disengagement, poor work performance, and health challenges (Eni, 2023; Chukwuemeka et al., 2023). Academic staff in polytechnics face pressures from institutional management, regulatory bodies, and multiple responsibilities, including teaching, research, administrative tasks, and community service, which may contribute to perceptions of unfairness (Takwa et al., 2021). Academic staff of polytechnics face pressures from overcrowded classrooms, excessive workloads, inadequate research facilities, rigorous promotion criteria, and demands from students, colleagues, and management, which may foster perceptions of organisational injustice.

One organisational factor that plays a critical role in shaping employees' stressful experiences is organisational justice which is defined as employees' perceptions of fairness in organizational settings, significantly influences attitudes, behaviour, and performance (Folger et al., 2021). It is characterized by perceived unfairness in outcomes, procedures, or interactions, and linked to agitation, low self-esteem, job dissatisfaction, and burnout (Lambert et al., 2024; Cropanzano et al., 2023). Organisational justice encompasses distributive justice (fairness of outcomes), procedural justice (fairness of decision-making processes), interpersonal justice (fairness of interpersonal treatment) and informational justice (fairness in explanation given for procedures and decisions making). Perceived organisational injustice can lead to agitation, low self-esteem, job dissatisfaction, stress, and ultimately burnout (Adamovic, 2023). Research has reported a negative relationship between organisational justice and burnout among public and private sector workers (Bes et al., 2023; Odetola et al., 2026).

Gender has long been examined as a demographic factor associated with employee burnout, although recent evidence suggests that its influence is complex and often shaped by occupational, organisational, and social contexts rather than gender alone. Recent literature indicates that women generally report higher levels of emotional exhaustion, whereas men are more likely to exhibit higher levels of depersonalization or cynicism (Demerouti's 2024., Westafer, L. M., et al. 2025). However, overall burnout prevalence did not differ significantly between men and women, suggesting that gender

influences how burnout is experienced rather than whether it occurs. Research also suggests that gender differences in burnout are partly explained by differential exposure to workplace stressors. Women often experience greater work-family conflict, emotional demands, limited career advancement opportunities, and workplace discrimination, all of which increase vulnerability to burnout. Men, on the other hand, may encounter greater pressure to suppress emotional distress and conform to traditional masculine roles, increasing their tendency toward depersonalization rather than emotional exhaustion (Fida et al. 2023). A systematic review and meta-analysis of burnout among university lecturers, also revealed that gender did not significantly moderate the relationship between job stress and burnout. Rather, cultural context and organisational factors accounted for much of the variation in burnout across studies (Yingying et al. 2025., Cadena-Povea et al. 2025).

However, there seems to be paucity of research on the impact of organisational justice and gender on burnout among polytechnic academic staff in Southwest Nigeria, despite their unique work environment combining theoretical and practical instruction. This study addresses this gap by examining how organisational justice influences burnout in this context.

The Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) Model originally proposed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) and subsequently refined through several empirical and theoretical advancements (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017); and Equity Theory which was first introduced by Adams (1965) seminal work and subsequently

explored by other researchers served as the theoretical framework for this research. JD-R model proposes that although employees may face substantial job demands, provision of adequate resources by the organisation can mitigate stress and enhance well-being. The theoretical framework clarifies how the interaction between job demands and job resources affects employee well-being and consequences like burnout. Equity is determined by the perception of outcomes being consistent with the norm for reward allocation. The Equity Theory of employee motivation in organisations aims to strike a fair balance between an employee's inputs, such as hard work, skill level, tolerance, and enthusiasm, and their outputs, such as salary, benefits, and intangibles. Justice is achieved when inputs and outputs are distributed fairly among participants, with less emphasis on the objective criteria of the situation than on how individuals evaluate the value and relevance of the inputs and outputs of different participants (Colquitt et al., 2021; Cropanzano et al., 2023).

Despite evidence of a negative relationship between organisational justice and burnout in other sectors, there seems to be limited research on this relationship among polytechnic academic staff in Southwest Nigeria. The unique demands of polytechnic institutions, requiring both theoretical and practical instruction, may exacerbate perceptions of unfairness, and increase burnout risk. As such, this study is deemed necessary as it explores the predictive power of organisational justice on burnout among academic staff of polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria. It addressed a critical issue in Nigeria's higher education ecosystem, by examining polytechnic

lecturers' perceptions of fairness; the study also contributes to academic literature by filling the gap in research on organisational justice and burnout in the context of Southwest Nigerian polytechnics.

Objectives

1. To determine whether the dimensions of organisational justice (distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice) independently and jointly predict burnout among academic staff of polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria.
2. To determine whether there is a significant difference in burnout between male and female academic staff of polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria.

Hypotheses

1. Organisational justice dimensions (distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice) will independently and jointly significantly predict burnout among academic staff of polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria.
2. There will be a significant difference in burnout between male and female academic staff of polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria.

Method

Participants

The population for this research consists of all academic staff of government-owned polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria, covering the six States of Ekiti, Lagos, Ondo, Ogun, Osun, and Oyo. The respondents are 480 academic staff members from the selected institutions. This sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size

determination table deemed appropriate for a population exceeding 25,000, which remains widely used for finite populations in survey research. The respondents comprised 297 male (61.88%) and 183 female (38.12%) lecturers; respondents age were categorised as 22–35 years (78, 16.46%), 36–45 years (189, 39.38%), 46–55 years (134, 27.92%), and 56–65 years (79, 16.46%) selected using simple random sampling technique.

Instruments

The instruments used for this research is a structured questionnaire comprising three relevant sections. Section A gathers demographic information, including gender and age categorically, to provide context for the findings. Section B includes the Measure of Organisational Justice (MOJ), developed by Colquitt (2001), to evaluate perceptions of organisational justice among respondents. The MOJ consists of 20 items and assesses distributive justice (fairness in resource allocation), procedural justice (fairness in decision-making processes), interpersonal justice (fairness in interpersonal treatment) and informational justice (fairness in explanation given for procedures and decisions making) using a 5-point Likert-type scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree). Some sample questions include: Does your outcome reflect what you have contributed to the organisation? Have those procedures been based on accurate information? Are you treated with dignity? and Were explanations regarding the procedures reasonable? The scale has a Cronbach's alpha coefficients of $\alpha = .78$ to $.93$. High ratings in each dimension indicate high level of fairness.

Section C contains the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), developed by Maslach and Jackson (1986), to measure burnout, the dependent variable. The MBI consists of 22 items and evaluates three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation () and personal accomplishment (), using a 7-point Likert-type scale (Never, A Few Times a Year or Less, Once a Month or Less, A Few Times a Month, Once a Week, A Few Times a Week, Every Day). Some sample questions include I feel emotionally drained from my work, I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work, and I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job. The scale has a Cronbach's alpha coefficients of $\alpha = .90$ for emotional exhaustion, $\alpha = .79$ for depersonalization, and $\alpha = .71$. Higher scores on emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation and lower score on personal accomplishment, indicate greater burnout.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from Ekiti State Polytechnic Research Ethical Review Board. Respondents were selected using multi-stage sampling technique which includes three stages: total enumeration to identify and select all government-owned polytechnics in the six Southwestern states; stratified random sampling to draw one federal and one state-owned polytechnic from each state, totalling 12 polytechnics; and simple random sampling to select 40 academic staff members from each of the 12 polytechnics totalling 480 respondents. The 12 Polytechnics from which respondents were drawn are: Ekiti State- Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State and Ekiti State

Polytechnic, Isan-Ekiti, Ekiti State. Lagos State- Yaba College of Technology (YABATECH), Yaba Lagos and Lagos State Polytechnic (LASPOTECH), Ikorodu, Lagos. Ondo State- Federal Polytechnic, Ile-Oluji, Ondo State and Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State. Ogun State- Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State and Moshood Abiola Polytechnic (MAPOLY), Ojere, Abeokuta, Ogun State. Osun States- Federal Polytechnic, Ede, Osun State and Osun State Polytechnic, Iree, Osun State. Oyo State- Federal Polytechnic, Ayede, Oyo State and The Polytechnic, Ibadan, Oyo State. This approach ensured that respondents were representative of both Federal and State Government-owned polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria. Respondents were fully informed of their rights to decline participation or withdraw at any point without consequence. Only respondents who provided consent were given questionnaire. To ensure compliance with ethical standards in human research, no identifying information was collected, all responses were treated with the utmost confidentiality through data aggregation and anonymisation to protect individual respondents' privacy before analysis. Researcher also ensured data collected were used solely for the research purpose. With the help of research assistants, 500 self-administered questionnaires (MOJ and MBI) were distributed to selected staff of the institutions in their various offices, accompanied by clear instructions for completion. Respondents were given sufficient time to respond, and their privacy and confidentiality are ensured. Out of the 500 questionnaires, 20 not properly filled were discarded, the remaining 480 were used for data analysis.

Design and Statistic

This study adopts a cross-sectional survey design to examine the predictive power and influence of organisational justice on burnout among academic staff of polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria. This survey approach is suitable as the variable of interest, organisational justice, is not manipulated by the researcher and data were collected at a single specific point in time.

Data are scored and analysed using appropriate statistical tools. Descriptive statistics, including

frequencies, means, and standard deviations, are computed to summarize the characteristics of organisational justice and burnout. Inferential statistics, specifically, a multiple regression analysis is performed to assess the independent and joint predictive effect of organisational justice dimensions on burnout and an independent samples t-test to test the difference in burnout level between male and female respondents. Data analysis is conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25, with statistical significance level set at 0.05.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of Socio-Demographic Data

N = 480	n	%
Gender		
Male	297	61.88
Female	183	38.12
Age		
22-35 years	78	16.46
31-45 years	189	39.38
46-55 years	134	27.92
56-65 years	79	16.46

The Table 1 above shows that most 297 (61.88%) polytechnic lecturers in this study were males and majority 189(39.38%) of the respondents were aged 31-45 years. The findings also showed that the youngest 22-35 years and oldest 56-65 years age groups were almost equally represented and the least populated.

Table 2: Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD) and Bivariate Correlations between Organizational justice dimensions and Burnout among Respondents

Variable	M (SD)	Burnout (r)
Procedural justice	22.45 (4.35)	.09
Distributive justice	10.89 (4.56)	-.56**
Interpersonal justice	11.75 (4.62)	-.62**
Informational justice	15.67 (5.18)	.21*
Burnout	68.18 (17.79)	-

* $p < .05$ (2-tailed), ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

The correlation analysis revealed that procedural justice was positively but not significantly related to burnout ($r = .09$, $p > .05$). This suggests that employees' perceptions of fairness in organisational procedures were not significantly associated with their experience of burnout. A significant negative relationship was found between distributive justice and burnout ($r = -.56$, $p < .01$). This indicates that employees who perceived greater fairness in the distribution of organisational outcomes (such as rewards, promotions, and workload) tended to report lower levels of burnout. The magnitude of this relationship is moderately strong, suggesting that distributive justice is an important factor associated with reduced burnout. Similarly, interpersonal justice demonstrated a significant and strong negative relationship with burnout ($r = -.62$, $p < .01$). This implies that employees who believed they were treated with dignity, respect, and courtesy by supervisors were less likely to experience burnout. Among the organisational justice dimensions examined, interpersonal justice showed the strongest association with burnout.

In contrast, informational justice was found to have a significant positive relationship with burnout ($r = .21$, $p < .05$). This indicates that higher perceptions of informational justice were associated with slightly higher levels of burnout. Although statistically significant, the relationship is weak.

Overall, the findings suggest that while distributive justice and interpersonal justice are associated with lower burnout, procedural justice shows no significant relationship, and informational justice exhibits a weak positive association with burnout. These results highlight the importance of ensuring fairness in the distribution of organisational outcomes and in interpersonal treatment as potential strategies for reducing employee burnout.

Table 3.

Multiple Regression Analysis Examining the Independent and Joint Prediction of Burnout by Organisational Justice Dimensions among Academic Staff of Polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria

Predictor	B	T	p
Procedural justice	-.15	-1.02	> .05
Distributive justice	-.68	-3.02	< .05
Interpersonal justice	-.92	-4.16	< .05
Informational justice	.05	0.34	> .05
Model Summary			
R	R ²	F(4, 475)	P
.58	.28	46.18	< .05

Note. β = standardized regression coefficient. * $p < .05$.

Table 3 above shows the results of a multiple regression analysis used to examine whether the four dimensions of organisational justice jointly and independently predicted burnout among academic staff of polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria. The model was significant ($R^2 = .28$, $F(4, 475) = 46.18$, $p < .05$), indicating that organizational justice dimensions jointly account for approximately 28% of the variation in burnout. Independently, interpersonal justice ($\beta = -.92$, $t = -4.16$, $p < .05$) and distributive justice ($\beta = -.68$, $t = -3.02$, $p < .05$) significantly predicted burnout, with higher levels of these dimensions associated with decreased burnout. Procedural justice ($\beta = -.15$, $t = -1.02$, $p > .05$) and informational justice ($\beta = .05$, $t = 0.34$, $p > .05$) did not independently predict burnout. Thus, Hypothesis One “Organisational justice dimensions (distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice) will independently and jointly significantly predict burnout among academic staff of polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria.” was supported.

Hypothesis Two: There will be a significant difference in burnout level between male and female academic staff of polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria. The hypothesis was tested using t-Test and the result presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Independent t-Test Results Examining the Differences in Burnout between male and female academic staff of polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria.

Variable	Sex	N	M	SD	t(478)	P
Burnout	Male	297	34.40	8.31	-0.92	> .05
	Female	183	33.72	7.59		

Note: SD = Standard Deviation; t = independent samples t-test statistic. $p > .05$ indicates no statistical significance at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 above shows the results of an independent t-test examining sex differences in burnout. Male lecturers ($n = 297$) reported a mean burnout score of 34.40 ($SD = 8.31$), while female lecturers ($n = 183$) reported a mean of 33.72 ($SD = 7.59$). The t-test indicated no significant difference in burnout level between male and female lecturers, $t(478) = -.92$, $p > .05$. Thus, Hypothesis Two “There will be a significant difference in burnout between male and female academic staff of polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria” was not supported.

Discussion

This study investigated the predictive influence of organisational justice on burnout among academic staff of polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria and examined difference in burnout between male and female participants. The results of hypothesis one revealed that all dimensions of organisational justice jointly and significantly predicted burnout accounting for 28% of the variance in burnout. This finding suggests that employees' perceptions of fairness in

organisational processes, reward distribution, interpersonal treatment, and information dissemination collectively play a substantial role in explaining burnout among academic staff. The result supports Organisational Justice Theory, which posits that employees who perceive fairness within their organisation experience lower levels of psychological strain and emotional exhaustion because equitable treatment promotes trust, commitment, and psychological well-being.

Independently, result revealed that distributive justice and interpersonal justice significantly predicted burnout, whereas procedural justice and informational justice did not make significant independent contributions. The significant negative effect of distributive justice connotes that academic staff who perceive fairness in the allocation of rewards, workload, promotion opportunities, and other organisational outcomes are less likely to experience burnout. Likewise, the significant negative influence of interpersonal justice indicates that respectful, dignified, and courteous treatment by supervisors and management reduces employees' emotional exhaustion and psychological distress. These findings are consistent with the findings of Lambert et al. (2024), who found that distributive and procedural justice were significantly associated with lower emotional exhaustion among prison officers, highlighting workplace fairness as an important protective factor against burnout. The results are also in tandem with Odetola et al., (2026), who reported that organisational justice significantly predicted burnout among employees in the Nigerian private sector, suggesting that fair organisational practices contribute to reducing employee burnout across occupational settings.

Result for hypothesis two revealed no significant difference in burnout between male and female academic staff, suggesting that male and female lecturers experience similar burnout levels. This finding is consistent with recent evidence from a systematic review and meta-analysis of burnout among university lecturers, which found that gender did not significantly moderate the relationship between job stress and burnout. Rather, cultural context and organisational factors accounted for much of the variation in burnout across studies (Yingying et al. 2025., Cadena-Povea et al. 2025). This finding is also in tandem with research of Fida et al. (2023), whose systematic review revealed that, for all stressors, a significant proportion of studies found no significant gender differences, and the review found mixed evidence of greater exposure for both men and women.

Implications of the findings

The findings of this study imply that organisational justice is a critical factor in understanding and reducing burnout among academic staff in Nigerian polytechnics, as the joint predictive effect of justice dimensions supports Organisational Justice Theory and the Job Demands–Resources Model by showing that perceptions of fairness function as important

workplace resources. Specifically, the significant roles of distributive and interpersonal justice connote that fair allocation of rewards, workload, promotions, and institutional resources, as well as respectful and dignified treatment by management, are especially important in lowering burnout. Empirically, the study contributes to the limited literature on burnout in Nigerian polytechnics by demonstrating that organisational justice should be examined as a multidimensional construct, since not all dimensions showed equal predictive strength.

Insignificant gender difference further implies that burnout is more strongly shaped by organisational conditions than by gender, indicating that interventions should target the entire academic workforce rather than one gender group. Practically, administrators, policymakers, and human resource managers should prioritise equitable administrative practices, people-centred leadership, transparent reward systems, workload management, counselling services, mentoring, and institutional support programmes to promote employee well-being, reduce occupational stress, and enhance productivity and educational quality.

Limitations of the study

Although this study offers valuable insights into the relationship between organisational justice and burnout among academic staff in polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria, the findings have limitations that future research may consider. Firstly, the adoption of a cross-sectional survey design restricts the extent to which causal inferences can be drawn, as data were collected at a single point in time. Secondly, the reliance on self-report questionnaires may have introduced common method variance and social desirability bias, which could have influenced respondents' perceptions and responses. Thirdly, even though organisational justice accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in burnout, a substantial proportion remained unexplained, suggesting that other relevant factors such as work-life balance, resilience, and coping strategies may also contribute to burnout.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study concludes that organisational justice, particularly distributive and interpersonal justice, significantly influence burnout among academic staff of polytechnics in Southwest Nigeria. Higher perceptions of fairness in resource allocation and interpersonal treatment serve as buffers against burnout, reducing its negative impact on lecturers'

well-being. The absence of significant gender differences in burnout indicates that both male and female lecturers are equally affected by workplace fairness perceptions. Enhancing organisational justice is crucial for mitigating burnout and fostering a supportive academic environment.

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, it is recommended that institutions should actively promote fairness, equity, and equality in both resource allocation and interpersonal interactions as a strategic approach to reducing burnout among academic staff. Polytechnics must set clear, transparent processes for rewards and promotions to enhance perceptions of distributive and procedural justice. Management should also cultivate a culture of respectful and impartial interpersonal treatment to enhance interpersonal justice and mitigate burnout. In addition, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) should intensify its oversight role to ensure that institutions adhere to fair practices in resource distribution and decision-making processes. Training programmes should be introduced to educate both academic staff and administrators on the principles and importance of organisational justice, encouraging behaviours and policies that reinforce fairness. Furthermore, the government should provide

adequate support to polytechnics in implementing policies that promote equitable treatment and fair resource allocation, thereby fostering a supportive work environment that helps reduce burnout.

Conflict of Interest

The Author declares no conflict of interest

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