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Employee Emotional Dissonance and Quiet Quitting in Commercial Banks in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the link between employee emotional dissonance and quiet quitting in commercial banks in Rivers State. The specific objectives of the study, centred on assessing the role of emotional dissonance in the outcome of employee detachment, isolation and absenteeism in the commercial banks in Rivers State. The correlational design was adopted in the investigation and data for generated using the structured questionnaire instrument from 38 full-time staff of five commercial banks in Rivers State. Instrument reliability was carried out using the Cronbach alpha coefficient with all instruments revealed to be substantial (where $\alpha > 0.70$). The correlation test revealed that employee emotional dissonance significantly impacts workers quiet quitting, that way, contributing to their experience of detachment, isolation and absenteeism from work. It was therefore concluded that the leadership of commercial banks in Rivers State, need to be more deliberate in addressing issues associated with emotional dissonance; especially in the development of support systems and frameworks that ensure the social and emotional well-being of the employee. It was also recommended that training is offered to the management staff of the commercial banks, in line with equipping them with the required skills for helping and providing support for their subordinates in coping with emotional dissonance in the workplace.

Key words: Emotional dissonance, quiet quitting, detachment, isolation, absenteeism

Introduction

The nature of work, particularly within the service industry, can be exerting (Raman et al, 2016). Adegbaju et al (2020) observed that within the Nigerian banking industry, the competitive pressure is such that substantially imposes on the workers' social and functional well-being. This corresponds with Okojie's (2023) position that the banking industry is highly unpredictable, with jobs precariously balanced on the stability of the economy. Thus, most workers are constantly on the lookout for other opportunities in other sectors and industries of the economy. Dan-Awoh (2023) reported that in 2023, the banking sector suffered from a mass exit of specialised staff, primarily due to their pursuit of greener pastures inother industries and also in other countries. However, as Dan-Awoh (2023) pointed

out, more disturbing is those who don't leave, but remain with the organisation, with their lacklustre approach to work negatively impacting the overall performance of the organisation. Scheyett (2023) described this as quiet quitting; a disposition toward roles or responsibilities that is mindless, unenthusiastic and lacking in terms of sincere effort. Formica and Sfodera (2022) identified quiet quitting as the condition inwhich workers lose interest in their roles and only offer the minimum of what of required in their roles. Galanis (2023) affirmed to quiet quitting as transversing most Nigerian industries but none so much as the banking industry. Research (Adegbaju et al, 2020; Dan-Awoh, 2023) shows that the uncertainty and level of job insecurity that characterises the industry places the workers on edge, and which takes a toll on their relationships at the workplace. Research (Becker et al, 2018; Anafarts, 2015, Hu & Shi, 2015) links poor work conditions and stress to outcomes of quiet quitting and eventual turnover in the organisation. Studies such as those of Nasir and Mahmood (2016), also identified the impact of work culture on workers' alienation and frustration, hinting at the likelihood of such in contributing to outcomes of quiet quitting. One of such forms or attributes of work culture is the emphasis on emotional labour, or the management of emotions and expressions in line with the professional requirements of one's role or job (Han & Bae, 2015; Becker et al, 2018). Akinyemi (2014) noted that within the banking industry, professional relationships and the prioritisation of customer satisfaction is considered imperative for success. Such implies the masking of emotions by workers, in ensuring customers feel important, and comfortable with the staff. However, as Akinyemi (2014) pointed out, these too, come with repercussions on the emotional well-being of the staff, especially with regard to feelings of emotionaldissonance. Emotional dissonance describes the feeling of disconnectedness workers experience between their actual emotions or personality, and the masks or superficial personalities that are projected in the workplace. As Vennila and Vivekananda (2017) noted, emotional dissonance can have a negative impact on the workers self-esteem, and also lead to emotional strain. However, despite extant research on quiet quitting, its outcome has scarcely been addressed from the standpoint or lens of emotional dissonance. This research is an attempt to address this knowledge gap, as it investigated the role of emotional dissonance in employee quiet quitting within commercial banks in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Emotional Dissonance

Professional behaviour, particularly within the banking system, suggests a stance or disposition that is unfaltering, courteous and warm, especially when dealing, transacting or interacting with the customers or clients of the organisation (Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017; Grandey, 2015). This position draws on the view of the clients as key to the organisation's survival (Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017). However, when overly emphasized, such actions can create emotional dissonance for the employee; leading to occasions of identity conflictand a sense of emotional strain (Yozgat et al, 2012). According to Cheung and Tang (2010), concerns of emotional dissonance are more often relegated within the framework of human resource management practices, given the more emphasized need for professionalism in dealing with customers and in selling the organisation as warm, friendly and welcoming. However, Kundu and Gahlawat (2015) argued that engagement in professional behaviour does not necessarily preclude to evidence of emotional dissonance if the required mitigating structures, programs and

support systems are provided. Kundu and Gahlawat (2015) argued that the provision of emotional infrastructure in the form of emotional support, counselling, mentoring and other related programs designed to aid and provide emotional balance for workers in the organisation. These factors, as Kundu and Gahlawat (2015) pointed out, are however poorly reflected or provided in most organisations. Zuzelo (2023) posited that the use or emphasis on emotional masks in the workplace should be accompanied by the necessary emotional support that is reassuring of workers' significance to the organisation and the value of their true identities and emotions as well. Kundu and Gahlawat (2015) on the other hand, identified relationships and the structuring of workplaces for social support as crucial in addressing the related ills or outcomes of emotional dissonance within the workplace. According to Kundu and Gahlawat (2015), people wear emotional masks on a daily basis, in their interaction at the marketplace, social events and other places, just as they do at work. However, the difference is that while they are at liberty to wear and remove such masks whenever they please, at the workplace, they are obligated, in fact, it is contractually binding for them to have these masks on as it is a primary condition for effectiveness in their roles.

Quiet Quitting

The concept of quiet quitting refers to a disposition toward work that is lack-lustre and as such, a nonchalant attitude towards work (Chiedu et al, 2017; Gaij et al, 2017). Schevett (2022) noted that quiet quitting describes the extent to which the employee is less motivated and offers only the minimum effort in the performance of their roles or responsibilities. Gaij et al (2017) posited that one of the major effects of quiet quitting is that it drains the organisation, sapping its operations as the worker offers no creative input, but merely contributes what is basic or as Tray et al (2013) put it, simply being present at the workplace. Nasir and Mahmood (2016) however, observed that the effects of quiet quitting on the organisation were not solely of an individual nature, or anchored on an individual action, but rather, such behaviour or disposition toward work has a way of influencing or affecting the behaviour and attitude of others in the workplace. According to Formica and Sfoders (2022), it can impact the workflow given its implications for collaboration and functional support in the organisation. This agrees with Schevett (2022) position that quiet quitting has the tendency to severe relationship ties in the workplace, impacting work interdependence and the extent of cooperation between workers and groups.

Emotional Dissonance and Quiet Quitting

Mishra and Bhatnagar (2010) posited that the identity clash, experienced as a result of emotional dissonance, creates within the workers, a lack of placement and a low sense of value to the organisation. This is because workers tend to feel inadequate in themselves as they have to constantly wear the emotional mask to function effectively within the organisation. Raman et al (2016) however, argued that such masking of emotions and identity, is constraining and as workers are unable to air their actual feelings or emotions, they become frustrated. It is this frustration as Vennila and Vivekananda (2017) observed, and their need for the job, that combine and is manifested as quiet quitting. According to Vennila and Vivekananda (2017), work frustrations that are not effectively addressed or voiced will be channelled through other means, some of which include the workers' detached approach to work,

doing only what is required or necessary, their poor level of collaboration or communication with other staff, and thus isolation and also their frequent excuses for staying away or being absent from work. These hold significant implications for the performance of the worker and also for the overall success of the organisation as well (Vennila & Vivekananda, 2017). However, despite these observations and review, scant evidence exists that ties outcomes of quiet quitting to workers' experience of emotional dissonance; hence the following hypothetical statements are tested in this research:

HO_1 : There is no significant relationship between employee emotional dissonance and detachment in commercial banks in Rivers State

HO_2 : There is no significant relationship between employee emotional dissonance and isolation in commercial banks in Rivers State

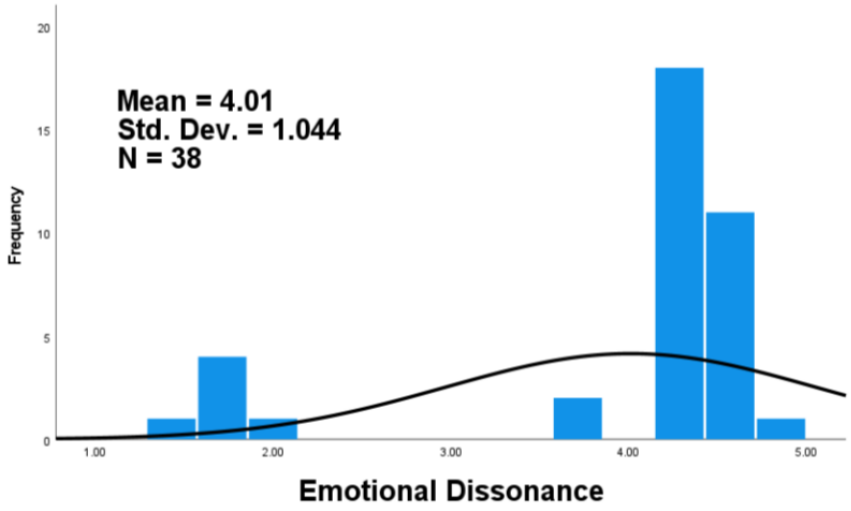
HO_3 : There is no significant relationship between employee emotional dissonance and absenteeism in commercial banks in Rivers State

Materials and Methods

The design for this study is the correlational research design. The choice of the correlational design was hinged on the nature and purpose of the research; which is to explain the outcomes of quiet quitting based on workers' experience of emotional dissonance in the organisation. Measurement units for the study comprised of population of 38 full-time employees, randomly selected from five top tier banks in Rivers State. Data was generated using the questionnaire instrument. The questionnaire instrument was based on a 4-item instrument for emotional dissonance (Vennila & Vivekananda, 2017), while a 12-item instrument was adapted from the quiet quitting scale (QQS) advanced by Scheyett (2022), and utilised in the measurement of quiet quitting. Each measure of quiet quitting (detachment, isolation and absenteeism) was examined using a 4-item instrument; all scaled on a 5-point Likert scale. A Cronbach alpha coefficient of α = 0.925 was observed for the instrument for emotional dissonance, while quiet quitting had an alpha of α = 0.882; demonstrating the substantiality of the instruments in terms of their reliability.

Results and Discussion

The evidence on the variables (emotional dissonance and quiet quitting), their distribution, and correlation is presented in this section of the research. Thus, the analysis details a descriptive as well as inferential assessment of the variables, as is particular to the commercial banks in Rivers State. Presented in the Figure 1 and 2 are the summaries for the data distributions for employee emotional dissonance and quiet quitting in the commercial banks in Rivers State



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Figure 1: Distribution of employee emotional dissonance

The summary distribution foremployee emotional dissonance is presented in Figure 1, demonstrating evidence of workers' experience and feelings of emotional dissonance in the workplace. Where x = 4.01; the result identifies emotional dissonance as characterising a good number of the worker's behaviours, within the organisations.

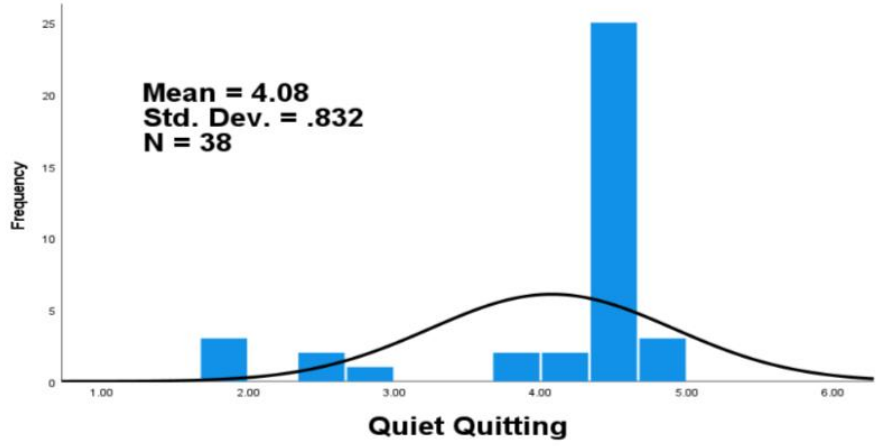


Figure 2: Distribution for quiet quitting

The summary of the data distribution for quiet quitting (Figure 2) shows that generally, quiet quitting is expressed and evident within the context of the commercial banks investigated. The result affirms to the prevalence and experiences, of quiet quitting within the workforce of the banks, thus identifying such as expressed within the context of the commercial banks in Rivers State.

Table 1: Correlation for emotional dissonance and quiet quitting

		Emotional Dissonance	Detachment	Isolation	Absenteeism
Emotional Dissonance	Pearson Correlation	1	.962**	.913**	.604**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	38	38	38	38
Detachment	Pearson Correlation	.962**	1	.925**	.663**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	38	38	38	38
Isolation	Pearson Correlation	.913**	.925**	1	.613**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	38	38	38	38
Absenteeism	Pearson Correlation	.604**	.663**	.613**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	38	38	38	38

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Research Data (2024)

The test for the hypotheses, reveals that the emotional dissonance, impacts and as such contributes to employee detachment (R = 0.962 and P = 0.000), isolation (R = 0.913 and P = 0.000) and absenteeism (R = 0.604 and P = 0.000). The result identifies the correlation between the variables as positive, indicating that increases in the level or experience of emotional dissonance, also lead to increased levels of quiet quitting in the commercial banks. All three null hypothetical statements are thus rejected as the results affirm to the link and significant relationship between emotional dissonance and outcomes such as detachment, isolation and absenteeism.

The findings of this research affirm to the significance of emotional dissonance, and its impact on quiet quitting within the banking organisations examined. The findings affirm to the position of Ho and Shi (2015) who identified emotional dissonance as not only characterising the banking system, but also as a growing challenge for human resource management within the context of today's work environment. The evidence generated thus corroborates Cheung and Tang's (2010) assertion for improved focus in tackling and reducing its related effect on the behaviour and attitude of workers, that way stemming outcomes of quiet quitting within the organisation. The observed prevalence of emotional dissonance within the banking industry justifies concerns foremployee well-being by related research (Kundu & Gahlawat, 2015) that suggests such is not given due diligence, and often is relegated to the background when addressing the interaction between the organisation and its customers. The findings of this research thus agree with the observations of Kundu and Gahlawat (2015) that there is the need for organisations to incorporate work systems that are reflective, constantly assessing internal functionality and well-being, and not only fixated on the external or economic goals of the organisation.

The findings of this research, offer implications that emphasize the development of frameworks and supportive systems that effectively address the problems of emotional dissonance in the organisation. Managers and supervisors can be trained and equipped with the required tools to effectively engage themselves in the counselling and mentoring of subordinates. This follows Hu and Shi's (2015) view

that when it comes to concerns of emotional or social well-being, a lot of its issues often stem from the workers' experience with their superiors, or their inability to cope with the overarching conditions of the organisation. This is in line with Kundu and Gahlawat's (2015) identification of the need for improved communication and social support in the organisation, ensuring that workers with emotional or social well-being challenges are easily identified in the organisation and provided the necessary aid or attention in line with their particular needs or concerns in the organisation. These are crucial in controlling for the outcomes of quiet quitting within the workplace.

Conclusion

It is the conclusion of this research that workers experiences or feelings of emotional dissonance, explains their disposition toward their roles andthe organisation; thus, determining their quiet quitting in the workplace. While the drive for competition and professionalism is imperative for organisational success, it is nonetheless pertinent that considerations are offered in terms of support systems that cushion the effect of emotional labour in the workplace. Thus, it is the position of this research that in other to effectively address quiet quitting as a problem within the banking system, commercial bank leadership need to be more involved and deliberate in their development of functional frameworks and the extent to which such frameworks address the organisations objectives and at the same time, safe-guards against the strain of job demands on the workers emotional and social well-being. Based on this, this research recommends as follows:

i. The management of commercial banks in Rivers State, should train and develop their senior staff, and supervisors in line with equipping them with the necessary skills for mentoring and coaching subordinates on related challenges or issues linked to emotional dissonance, ensuring that workers can effectively cope with the demands of their roles and responsibilities in the organisation.
ii. More focus should be channelled toward investing in the emotional infrastructureof the commercial banks. This is important in ensuring workers have the required social support and are afforded the necessary working environment, systems, work conditions and framework that enable their functionality and well-being within the context ofthe organisation.
iii. The management of commercial banks in Rivers State, should develop programs that inform and educate staff as well as the leadership of organisations on the related models and practices that support emotional balancing in the workplace, ensuring that workers cannot only act professionally with the clients or customers of the organisation but at the same time, maintain their self-esteem and identity within the context of the organisation.

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