



## **COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION: CASE STUDY OF MENTAL HEALTHCARE FRONTLINERS**

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigated the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on job satisfaction among mental health staff of University College Hospital, Ibadan. Job satisfaction was divided into three aspects; intrinsic, extrinsic and general job satisfaction. The study adopted the research Onion approach, which comprised of different layers. Quantitative research method was adopted through cross-sectional design. Data was gathered through a well-structured questionnaire from 71 mental healthcare workers. Analyses were done using descriptive statistics (mostly frequencies and percentages). More of the respondents 69% were males, while the other 31% were females. Findings revealed that intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction, and overall job satisfaction were highest pre-Covid-19 pandemic era, compared to when COVID-19 virus became a pandemic. Conclusions and recommendations were made based on the findings.*

*Keywords: Job satisfaction, COVID-19 pandemic, mental health, frontliners, employees*

## INTRODUCTION

Every organization seeks for a high level of productivity and performance. However, this cannot be achieved without the high performance of the employees. Therefore, it is safe to state that employees are one of the most important and key resources an organization possesses (Efendi, 2021). Employees are recruited to carry out assigned tasks to meet the set organizational goals and objectives, which cut across strategic, tactical as well as operational levels (Bienkowska et al. 2020). To carry out organizational tasks, employees need to show a high level of satisfaction with their job (Davidescu et al. 2020). In other words, the job satisfaction of employees is key to the growth of any organization.

While job satisfaction is considered to be vital to the productivity of any organization, Various factors and trends contribute to reporting poor job satisfaction. One of the most recent factors that might have contributed to the level of job satisfaction in the world of work is the emergence of Coronavirus in 2019. The emergence of the Coronavirus, also known as the COVID-19 pandemic affected every aspect of the world, from personal life to social, medical, educational, sports, and even work status and schedules (Sandhu & Wolf, 2020; Edelheim, 2020). It is an epidemic that has spread to over 140 million cases globally and killed over 3,000,000 people (World Health Organization, 2021).

To contain the spread of the virus, a series of policies were made. Part of the policies includes total or partial lock-down, social distancing rules, use of protective materials such as nose cover, and constant sanitization, among others (Teslya, 2020). These policies affected various sectors, including the healthcare sector. Cheng and Kao (2022) reported that the perceived threat of covid-19 virus had a significant and negative relationship with job satisfaction among hotel employees. Afulani et al., (2021) also reported that less preparedness for the virus significantly reduced the level of job satisfaction.

While many of the previous studies have focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on organizational workers and healthcare workers, there are very few empirical studies on mental healthcare workers (Fashola et al. 2018). Given the fact that mental health care staff was also considered frontline workers during the peak of COVID-19, it is important to also examine how the COVID-19 pandemic affects the job satisfaction of mental health staff. Specifically, the study will investigate how the fear of contracting the COVID-19 virus contributed to their level of job satisfaction, with a focus on mental health staff

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizations need to keep their personnel satisfied and motivated during pandemic circumstances (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020). Ali et al., (2021) carried out a study on the rate of

job satisfaction among teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was discovered that teachers reported weak job satisfaction during COVID-19 pandemic. However, it was established by Hidayat et al., (2021) that organizational workers exhibited a high level of job satisfaction during COVID-19 pandemic only when they feel their job security is guaranteed.

Cheng and Kao (2022) investigated the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on job satisfaction among employees in the hotel industry. It was discovered that the perceived threat of covid-19 virus had a significant and negative relationship with job satisfaction among hotel employees. Also, Joshua et al. (2021) investigated the impact of COVID-19 epidemic on job satisfaction among Nurses in critical care units. It was discovered that COVID-19 pandemic reduced their level of job satisfaction drastically because it increased their level of perceived job stress. Further, Chanana (2021) examined the influence of COVID-19 pandemic on job satisfaction among school teachers. It was discovered that covid-19 pandemic reduced the level of job satisfaction among teachers.

Further, Afulani et al., (2021) unraveled job satisfaction among healthcare workers in Ghana and Kenya during COVID-19 pandemic. The healthcare workers include; medical laboratory staff, Pharmacists, and Public health workers). It was discovered that less preparedness for the virus significantly reduced the level of job satisfaction. This was also corroborated by Alrawashdeh et al., (2021) investigated job satisfaction among physicians during COVID-19 pandemic. It was discovered that job satisfaction reduced significantly among Physicians during COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, Diala and Nemani (2011) showed that autonomy and opportunities for advancement are the most important factors influencing work satisfaction among IT personnel in D.C. According to Aharon et al. (2021), imposing a lockdown causes a decrease in travel rates, resulting in a sales loss for the hotel industry.

COVID-19 endangers employees' psychology negatively, such as dread or tension. Park et al. (2019) demonstrate that in the hotel sector, there is a continuing need for happy, pleased, motivated, and engaged employees who will serve as a strong foundation for delighted consumers.

Further, Said and El-Shafei (2020) investigated the demographic and psychological determinants of job satisfaction among healthcare workers during COVID-19 pandemic. It was discovered that the major reason for job dissatisfaction was found to be the high level of workload and the traumatic experience that comes with dealing with a high rate of death.

Zanabazar et al. (2022) carried out a study on the impact of stress caused by COVID-19 on job satisfaction among organizational workers. The study sampled two hundred and seventy-

five (n = 275) through the quantitative method. It was discovered that COVID-19 had an indirect impact on the job satisfaction of the employees. The direction was negative.

Sousa-Uva et al. (2021) investigated the impact of telework during covid-19 on job satisfaction in Portugal. The study adopted cross-sectional survey research and gathered data from one thousand and four (n = 1,004) employees. It was discovered that telework, which was necessitated due to the outbreak of COVID-19 had a positive impact on job satisfaction.

Islam and Al-Shams (2021) also carried out a study on the role of COVID-19 on job satisfaction among employees in Bangladesh. Through a cross-sectional method, it was discovered that employees reported slightly lower levels of job satisfaction during COVID-19 pandemic than before the outbreak of the virus.

Further, Sudibjo and Manihuruk (2022) carried out a study on the level of happiness reported by employees during COVID-19 pandemic. The study adopted a quantitative research method and gathered data from four hundred and ninety (n = 490) teachers in Indonesia. It was discovered that job satisfaction had a weak relationship with happiness at work during COVID-19 pandemic. This connotes that COVID-19 pandemic might have negatively affected the employee's extent of happiness to carry out their daily activities.

Theoretically, Herzberg's two-factor theory (also known as the dualfactor theory or motivator hygiene theory) explains workplace motivation and satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). According to the Herzberg two-factor hypothesis, a lot of factors influence an employee's unhappiness and contentment, including motivation and cleanliness.

Herzberg (1966) discovered that there are aspects that lead to job satisfaction and factors that lead to job dissatisfaction among individuals in the workplace based on the two types of motivators. According to Herzberg, extrinsic factors are associated with job discontent, whereas inner factors are linked to job satisfaction.

Extrinsic rewards have a considerable impact on employee engagement, whereas intrinsic rewards have little effect (Chris & Awonusi, 2004). Staff will be de-motivated by an ineffective incentive system, whereas an effective reward system will be a terrific motivator. As a result, both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards may be utilized to motivate employees, resulting in enhanced job satisfaction, productivity, and performance (Reio & Callahon, 2004).

The broad objective of the study is to investigate the influence of COVID-19 pandemic on job satisfaction among mental health care staff. The following hypotheses will be tested;

1. Intrinsic satisfaction will be higher before COVID-19 pandemic than during the pandemic among mental health staff.
2. Extrinsic satisfaction will be higher before COVID-19 pandemic than during the pandemic among mental health staff.

3. General satisfaction will be higher before COVID-19 pandemic than during the pandemic among mental health staff.

The conceptual framework is presented in figure 1;

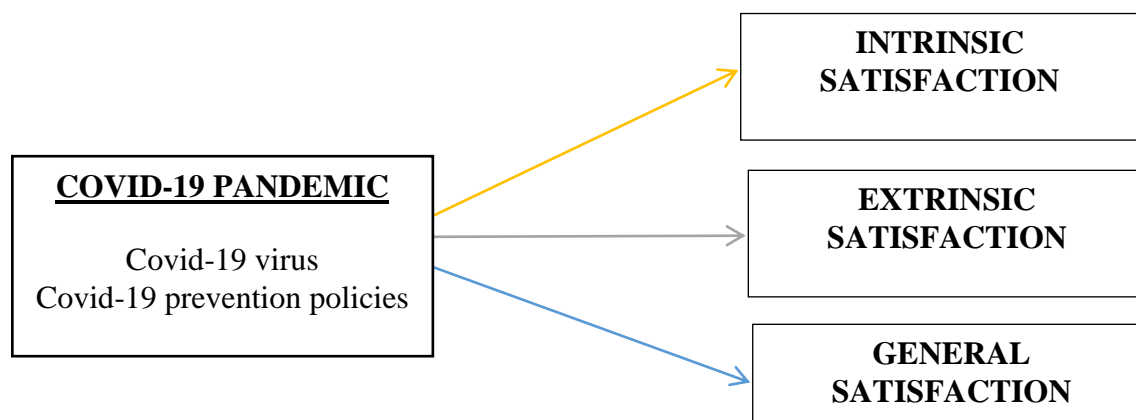


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the research onion approach, propounded by Saunders (2016). The research onion refers to the steps adopted in carrying out research. As the nature of the Onion is, it depicts that there are layers and stages of researching to achieve the set aims and objectives. The reason for adopting the research Onion approach is the fact that it can be adapted to any form of research approach and can as well be applied in any research setting. Each layer of the research onion approach has details as it concerns the stage. Specifically, therefore, the research onion comprises the following stages; research philosophy, approach, strategy, choice, time horizons, and data collection.

### Research Philosophy

This is the first stage of the research onion. According to Saunders (2016), there are three basic research philosophies in carrying out this research; ontology, epistemology, and axiology. This study sets out to adopt the positivism approach under the epistemology philosophy. This is because this research sets out to contribute to the scientific body of knowledge regarding the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on job satisfaction. This will also help to answer the main research question, as the nature of the data to be gathered will be quantitative.

### Research Approach

This is the second layer of the research onion. There are two different research approaches; deductive and inductive. In this study, the deductive approach was selected

because there is a research question that informs the adoption of the quantitative approach, which will subsequently assist in unraveling whether COVID-19 pandemic predicts job satisfaction among mental health staff or not.

### **Research Choice**

The next layer on the research onion is research choice. This refers to adopting either of the following choices; mono method, mixed method, or multi-method. For this study, the quantitative approach will be used, hence, implying the adoption of the mono technique.

### **Research Strategy**

This refers to the plan through which the researcher plans to carry out the research (Saunders, 2016). This includes either of the following; Experimental research, action research, case study, interview, surveys, or a systematic review of the literature. From the strategies outlined, the case study strategy fits the focus of the study. This is because the study will only be carried out among mental health staff.

However, the experimental strategy requires the researcher to have complete control of the research environment to reduce the effect of extraneous factors. Action research is for instance used in solving problems and improving professional practices. Survey research requires the gathering of a large set of data, which this study is not interested in.

### **Time Horizons**

This refers to either of two categories; longitudinal or cross-sectional. Longitudinal has to do with gathering data from a sample of respondents over a long period. However, cross-sectional gathers data from a set of the population that shares similar characteristics at once. This study adopted the cross-sectional design as the researcher is focused on a setting that is identified to have a busy schedule.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The study sampled a total of 100 respondents, however, only seventy-one ( $n = 71$ ) were retrieved. Respondents comprised mental health staff in University College Hospital, University of Ibadan. Respondents were selected through convenience sampling, considered to be a non-probabilistic sampling technique.

## Data Collection

The primary data set was gathered from respondents. This was gathered using a well-structured questionnaire designed purposely for this study. The questionnaire comprised of three sections; Section A - C.

*Section A: Demographic Information* - This section comprised of socio-demographic variables of respondents. This includes; age, level of education, and years of experience. Age and work experience were measured on a continuous scale of measurement. Gender was measured on a categorical scale of measurement, with just two options; Male and Female. Level of education was measured on a categorical level, which will range as follows; No formal education, Primary, High School, and Tertiary.

*Section B: COVID-19 Pandemic and Job Satisfaction* - This section comprised of 27-items, adapted from the Minnesota Satisfaction questionnaire. Some other items were adapted and generated by the researcher to achieve the research objectives. Respondents responded to the items twice concurrently, having in mind their level of satisfaction before the pandemic and during the pandemic. The response rating ranged on a 5-point which ranged as follows; SD - Strongly Disagree, D - Disagree, U - Undecided, A - Agree, SA - Strongly Agree. The scale was found to have an internal consistency of 0.87.

## Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were adopted in this study. Descriptive statistics such as simple frequencies and percentages were adopted. Inferential statistics such as Pearson r correlation and regression analysis were adopted in this study.

## RESULTS

### Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Table 1: Sex Distribution

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	22	31
Female	49	69
<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 presents results on sex distribution of mental health staff. It is shown that 22 (31%) were males, while the other 49 (69%) were females.

Table 2: Age Distribution (Mean = 33.72; SD = 6.17)

Age Distribution	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 25 years	2	2.8
25-34 years	37	52.1
35-44 years	29	40.8
45 years above	3	4.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 presents results of frequency distribution according to age. It is show that 2 (2.8%) of the respondents were less than 25 years old, 37 (52.1%) were between 25 and 34 years old, 29 (40.8%) were between 35 and 44 years old, while the other 3 (4.2%) were 45 years old and above. It is depicted from the analysis that more of the mental health staff in UCH were between ages 25 and 44 years old.

Table 3: Distribution by Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	2	2.8
Secondary	22	31
Further education	38	53.5
Higher education	9	12.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 presents results on frequency distribution according to educational qualification. It is shown that 2 (2.8%) of the mental health staff were primary school certificate holders, 22 (31%) were secondary school certificate holders, 38 (53.5%) has certificate for further education, while the other 9 (12.7%) had certificate of higher education. This means that more of the mental health staff in UCH were certificate holders of further education.

Table 4: Years of Experience

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Two years	3	4.2
Three years	16	22.5
Four years	25	35.2
Five years	17	23.9
Above 5 years	10	14.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100</b>



Table 4 shows results on frequency distribution according to years of experience of Mental health staff. It is shown that 3 (4.2%) of the respondents indicated to have worked as mental health staff for two years, 16 (22.5%) worked for three years as mental health staff, 25 (35.2%) has four years of working experience, 17 (23.9%) has five years of working experience, while the other 10 (14.1%) has above five years of working experience as mental health staff.

## Hypotheses testing

Table 5: T-test for independent sample summary table showing results on the role of covid-19 on job satisfaction

Dependent	COVID-19 Era	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
General satisfaction	Covid-19 era	71	92.04	14.74	4.20	140	< .01
	Pre-Covid-19	71	103.75	18.27			
Intrinsic satisfaction	Covid-19 era	71	40.93	9.23	5.24	140	< .01
	Pre-Covid-19	71	50.24	11.79			
Extrinsic satisfaction	Covid-19 era	71	43.06	7.17	8.22	140	< .01
	Pre-Covid-19	71	53.51	7.96			

Hypothesis one stated that intrinsic satisfaction will be higher before the COVID-19 pandemic than during the pandemic among mental health staff. As presented in Table 5, it is shown that mental healthcare staff reported the highest satisfaction pre-Covid-19 pandemic era (Mean = 103.75; SD = 18.27) compared to during Covid-19 pandemic era (Mean = 92.04; SD = 14.74). This is found to be significant [ $t(140) = 4.20$ ;  $p < .01$ ]. This confirmed the stated hypothesis.

Hypothesis two which stated that extrinsic satisfaction will be higher before COVID-19 pandemic than during the pandemic among mental health staff was tested using t-test statistics. As presented in Table 5, mental healthcare staff reported the highest intrinsic satisfaction pre-Covid-19 pandemic era (Mean = 50.24; SD = 11.29) compared to during Covid-19 pandemic era (Mean = 40.93; SD = 9.23). This is found to be significant [ $t(140) = 5.24$ ;  $p < .01$ ]. This confirmed the stated hypothesis and was retained in this study.

Hypothesis three stated that general satisfaction will be higher before COVID-19 pandemic than during the pandemic among mental health staff. This was tested using a t-test

for independent samples and it was discovered that mental healthcare staff reported the highest satisfaction pre-Covid-19 pandemic era (Mean = 53.51; SD = 7.96) compared to during Covid-19 pandemic era (Mean = 43.06; SD = 7.17). This is found to be significant [ $t(140) = 8.22; p < .01$ ]. This confirmed the stated hypothesis.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study investigated the role of COVID-19 pandemic on job satisfaction among mental health staff in UCH. It was discovered from this study that COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on intrinsic satisfaction among mental health staff. It was discovered that job satisfaction was reported to be higher pre-Covid-19 pandemic than post-Covid-19 era. Regarding extrinsic satisfaction, it was discovered that COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the extrinsic satisfaction of mental health staff. In relation to the findings, Sousa-Uva, Sousa-Uva, Sampayo, and Serranheira (2021) investigated the impact of telework during covid-19 on job satisfaction in Portugal. The study adopted cross-sectional survey research and gathered data from thousand and four ( $n = 1,004$ ) employees. It was discovered that telework, which was necessitated due to the outbreak of COVID-19 had a positive impact on job satisfaction. Also, Islam and Al-Shams (2021) also carried out a study on the role of COVID-19 on job satisfaction among employees in Bangladesh. Through a cross-sectional method, it was discovered that employees reported slightly lower levels of job satisfaction during COVID-19 pandemic than before the outbreak of the virus.

COVID-19 pandemic was also discovered to affect the general satisfaction of the mental health staff. For instance, it was discovered from this study that many of the staff reported a drop in their overall job satisfaction since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. It was also discovered almost all of the mental health staff reported less motivation at work since the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Diala and Nemani (2011) showed that autonomy and opportunities for advancement are the most important factors influencing work satisfaction among IT personnel in D.C.

## IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have a series of business implications. First is the affirmation that COVID-19 pandemic has a significant impact on the level of job satisfaction of mental health staff. This implies that being a mental health staff also comes with some levels of needs, which need to be satisfied. The inability to satisfy these needs leads to low levels of job satisfaction, and subsequent reduced levels of work output.

The findings also have implications for the managerial and business outcome in UCH. For instance, when a mental health staff is reported to experience a low level of job satisfaction, being a frontline worker, it could jeopardize the integrity of the organization. This is because directly or indirectly, the level of job performance will be affected, which might also drop. This, in many ways, could tell on the organizational productivity.

In addition, COVID-19 pandemic is a virus that has affected a series of business, the findings of this study provides evidence of the need to be creative and innovative ensuring that the organization records a high level of productivity despite the reduced pandemic.

### SCOPE FOR FUTURE STUDIES

A series of recommendations were made for future studies that would replicate this study.

1. Firstly, future studies should consider investigating the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on general health workers through a comparative design. This would help ascertain in relative terms, which group of health workers experiences the highest and lowest level of job satisfaction. This would help to make informed decisions as regards exact policies to change to ensure a high level of job satisfaction.
2. It is also recommended that future studies should introduce a moderating variable in the study. Specifically, future studies can investigate the moderating role of organizational support on the relationship between COVID-19 pandemic and job satisfaction. This would help ascertain whether a high level of organizational support would ensure an increased level of job satisfaction, despite the pandemic.
3. In addition, it is recommended that future studies should cover a wider scope of mental health staff if the focus will still be on the same population study. This will ensure that the selected participants are a representative sample of the population of mental health staff in Nigeria as a country. This could be ascertained by ensuring that a certain number of service-providing organizations is sampled.

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