

# Dimensions of Cognitive Dissonance and the Level of Job Satisfaction among Counsellors in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria

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## Abstract

This study examined the dimensions of cognitive dissonance and the extent to which cognitive dissonance could influence the level of job satisfaction of guidance counsellors. The study was guided by three research questions and one null hypothesis. The design of the study was correlational survey. The population of the study was 158 practising counsellors in public secondary schools in Delta and Edo states. Owing to the small size of the population, there was no sampling as the entire population constituted the sample size. The instrument used for data collection was the Counsellor's Dissonance and Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (CDJSQ). The research questions were answered using percentages and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ) while the null hypothesis was tested using the Multiple Regression Analysis. The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance. Major findings of the study included: 1.the Nigerian counsellor is experiencing cognitive dissonance, though at various levels; 2.the respondents identified the following as the dimensions of job satisfaction experienced by the Nigerian counsellor: commitment, loyalty, involvement, performance and the desire to quit; 3. it was found that the Nigerian counsellor was satisfied with the job. The study revealed the percentage of the counsellors' level of satisfaction on each of the dimensions investigated; and 4. it was found that the dimensions of cognitive dissonance are significantly related to the level of satisfaction of counsellors on the job. In the same vein, the study identified some implications of the findings to the counselling profession and the education system generally. The observed implications prompted the study to make some recommendations.

**Keywords:** Cognitive dissonance; Dimensions of dissonance; Job satisfaction.

## 1. Introduction

Cognition refers to mental awareness while dissonance means disharmony. In the context of the counsellor's job (the school), cognitive dissonance is perceptible when the psychological and social variables within the organisational climate are antagonistic to the course of success of the counsellor on the job. It is a drive or feeling of discomfort caused by holding two or more inconsistent cognitions. Thus, cognitive dissonance is a psychological term which describes the uncomfortable tension that may come from having conflicting thoughts at the same time, or from engaging in behaviour that conflicts with one's beliefs. Hence, Idowu & Esere (2007:45) state that "cognitive dissonance is the psychological conflict arising from holding two or more incompatible beliefs simultaneously." On his part, Kolo (2006:15) says "dissonance is a state of psychological discomfort that is aroused when an event occurs which disconfirms any strong expectation". As noted by Alutu (2005) counsellors in secondary schools in Edo state are made to teach rather than practice counselling for which they were trained. This is role-conflict and counsellors, like other professionals, compare their professional expectations with their current job outcomes.

Thus, discrepancy in these expectations creates dissonance or conflict in the counsellor which threatens the psychological well-being or state of the worker (Abraham, 1999). In a nutshell, it is a condition of conflict or anxiety resulting from inconsistency between one's beliefs and actions such as opposing the slaughter of animals and eating meat. In the simplest explanation, cognitive dissonance is having two different and contradicting beliefs in an individual's brain at the same time. Operationally, therefore, cognitive dissonance is seen as the psychological tension experienced by the guidance counsellor as sequel to the realisation that he or she is being made to perform roles for which the counsellor did not train or carrying out activities that are diametrically opposed to the ethical code or the belief of the counsellor in the school system.

Cognitive dissonance is expressed from the following dimensions. Firstly, psychological tension, which is the mental anguish experienced by the individual as sequel to the awareness that the person has behaved stupidly, unethically, immorally, illegally or unconventionally. This distressing mental state occurs when people do things they would not want to do, or express opinions that are contrary to opinions they are holding. This, naturally, leads to the second dimension of this construct which is the motivation to reduce the tension. The situation is analogous to thirst or hunger drive which can only be mitigated by either drinking water or eating food. However, unlike these simple physiological processes which are reduced through physical actions, reducing dissonance is a mental and complex process. Reduction of psychological tension is accomplished through cognitive restructuring by changing the way we think about the world as well as the way we behave. People who are dissonant could adopt any of the following strategies to mitigate the psychological tension. Firstly, people change their attitude in order to synchronise their attitude and behaviour with the issue at hand. A second strategy of this phenomenon is that the dissonant person could add more cognition. Here, for instance, are

two discrepant thoughts that cause dissonance, “I like eating but it can lead to obesity”. The person could add the following cognitions in order to reduce dissonance: “eating makes me feel good and helps me stay alive” (Franzoi, 2000). Thirdly, the dissonant person can alter the importance by stating as follows: “it is better to stay alive than to worry about may be, becoming obese” (Franzoi, 2000). Fourthly, a dissonant person could rationalise that there was no alternative to the value of the perceived choice. Using this strategy, the person rationalises that there is little or no choice than to engage in the discrepant behaviour. Finally, the dissonant person could trivialise the importance of the event that culminated in the dissonance.

From the foregoing, if counsellors are compelled to take on roles such as full teaching load, as practised in states like Anambra, Imo, Abia, Delta and Ebony (Okonkwo, 2005); and Edo (Alutu, 2005); appointed to membership of disciplinary committee (Okonkwo, 2005) and even as vice principals or principals (Okonkwo, 2005), it is a clear case of role conflict. The implication of the above identified conflict is that the counsellor cannot effectively perform the guidance services for which he/she has been trained.

The aforementioned dimensions of cognitive dissonance clearly indicate that counsellors in Nigeria are not shielded from the onslaught of this psychological phenomenon. The dimensions also indicate that dissonance occurs when counsellors’ activities conform to organisational norms but run contrary to the counsellor’s beliefs and professional training. Similarly, the dimensions of dissonance discussed above paint picture of anguish rather than pleasure in the mind of the counsellor. It becomes imperative, therefore, for one to question how satisfied the counsellor has been with his/her counselling job in Nigeria.

Job satisfaction is an indispensable goal every worker aspires to attain during active service and after retiring from the job. This is the sense of inner fulfilment and pride achieved when performing a particular job. It can be conceived as a feeling of accomplishment and worth developed by an employee following the performance on the job.

Commenting on this construct, Akinade (2005:90) sees job satisfaction as: “gaining contentment in a given career or vocation. The satisfaction could be in terms of take home pay, conducive work environment, or co-operative colleagues, and fairness from the establishment or promotion that comes at objective period”. This definition agrees with Weiss (2002) who described job satisfaction as how content an individual is with his or her job. On his part, Adeyemo (2003:1) says:

Job satisfaction is a complex and multifaceted concept which means different things to different people. Analysts often define job satisfaction with reference to the needs and values of individual and the extent to which these needs and values are satisfied in the workplace.

In the context of this work, job satisfaction could, therefore, be seen as a worker’s sense of achievement and success. It is generally linked with productivity as well as worker’s personal well-being. It implies doing a job the individual enjoys, doing it well, and being suitably rewarded for the worker’s efforts. It further implies enthusiasm and happiness with one’s job. This attitude can be induced by some factors which can be classified into extrinsic and intrinsic variables. This position is espoused by Syptak, Marsland & Ulmer (1999).

Some important dimensions of job satisfaction have been identified (Muchinsky, 2000). The first dimension of note is commitment. This is described as attachment to the goals and values of the employing organisation (Ezoem, 1995). Commenting further, he stated that commitment could be conceptualised as a form of psychological bond between workers and organisations. Meyer (1997) stated that organisational commitment reflects the employee’s relationship with the organisation which usually, would affect the decision to either remain or quit the organisation. Three components of commitment are identification, involvement and loyalty (Ezoem, 1995). Identification refers to the worker’s adoption of the goals and values of the organisation while involvement describes the extent to which a worker identifies psychologically with the job and the importance of work to one’s self- image. Brown (1996) stated that people might be stimulated by and drawn deeply into their work, or they might be alienated from it mentally and emotionally. He, however, concluded by adding that job involvement is more strongly related to how people perceive their job and their approach to handling it. The third component, which is loyalty, refers to a feeling of affection for and attachment to the organisation (Ezoem, 1995).

The second dimension to job satisfaction is performance. The word “performance” conjures the notion of accomplishment, attainment, or the execution of task (Ezoem, 1995). Similarly, “performance is synonymous with behaviour; it is what people actually do, and it can be observed” (Muchinsky, 2000:206). Performance comprises those actions that are relevant to the organisational goals and can be measured in terms of each worker’s proficiency (that is, level of contribution by each worker). Performance could be evaluated in terms of being high or low; good or poor; and satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Usually, performance is considered high, good or satisfactory if the ratee had a positive score (Muchinsky, 2000). Conversely, performance is regarded as low, poor or unsatisfactory when the score is negative.

The third dimension to job satisfaction is referred to as withdrawal behaviour (Muchinsky, 2000). This behaviour reflects the worker’s withdrawal from noxious employment conditions and this could be expressed

through absenteeism (temporary withdrawal) and turnover (permanent withdrawal). The practical implication of the view expressed above is that workers who love or are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to make extra effort to get to work irrespective of any adverse conditions. On the other hand, when workers detest the conditions of their job they would most likely stay away from job on the slightest adverse condition (Muchinsky, 2000). Thus, job satisfaction refers to the pleasurable state of contentment expressed by the counsellor following the evaluation of the job he or she does or the activities the counsellor carries out in the school system.

Cognitive dissonance theory postulates that people would strive to minimize dissonance in their environment since the presence of dissonance would result in distress and dissatisfaction with a given situation and indeed, their job. Employees who experience less dissonance in their job would exhibit a higher level of job satisfaction (Okpara, 2002). The above assertion supports Schwepker (1999) who stated that employees desire consistency between their ethical value system and the ethical climate prevalent in their workplace. Thus, unethical behaviour by managers or supervisors provokes cognitive dissonance which, in turn, influences the level of satisfaction of workers on the job (Viswesvaran & Deshpande, 1996). The above conclusion correlates with practices by some school principals who force counsellors to engage in roles such as carrying full teaching loads, sitting on students' disciplinary committee and supervising students serving punishment. The consequence of the attitude of principals to the counsellors is that the latter experience role conflicts resulting in cognitive dissonance and this has negatively influenced counsellors' level of commitment to the counselling role.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Counsellors in Delta and Edo states, Nigeria, have been indifferent to guidance functions in the school system because government and principals have not given the service the attention it deserves. A visit to most schools in the area of study clearly shows that many schools have no counsellors and where they exist, the counsellor – students' ratio does not conform to national standards of one counsellor to five hundred students (1: 500). It has also been observed that in most schools counsellors have no private offices where they can attend to their clients. Rather, counsellors are located in the general staffroom where they attend to general school matters instead of counselling issues. Where the counsellor is fortunate to have a small office, it lacks basic physical facilities.

Counsellors are compelled to carry a full teaching load, appointed as member of students' disciplinary committee or made to supervise students serving punishments. Thus, most counsellors are experiencing role conflict, the consequence of which is that most counsellors are groaning under the psychological anguish known as cognitive dissonance. Though, most counsellors may not be satisfied on the job, but in order to retain their job, in the face of no alternatives, counsellors have resigned to fate. Thus, discrepancy in role expectations creates dissonance or conflict in the counsellor which threatens the psychological well-being or state of the worker. The counsellor may mitigate the tension created by changing his or her attitude because of irrevocability illusion (that is he has no alternative job). Thus, this study sought to find out the dimensions of cognitive dissonance the counsellor experiences, his level of satisfaction on the job and the relationship between the experienced dimensions of cognitive dissonance and the level of satisfaction. Against this background, the problem of the study is "How satisfied are guidance counsellors with their job in the face of deprivations they suffer and the role conflict experienced in the school system"?

### **2.1 Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between cognitive dissonance and level of job satisfaction among counsellors. Specifically, the researcher investigated the:

1. dimensions of cognitive dissonance experienced by counsellors;
2. dimensions of job satisfaction experienced by counsellors;
3. level of job satisfaction among counsellors;
4. relationship between cognitive dissonance dimensions and level of job satisfaction among counsellors.

### **2.2. Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study would be of great benefit to counsellors, private and public employers of labour, managers of human resource, especially school principals and the general society. The findings of the study would provide insight to the counsellor who would come to the realization that cognitive dissonance has strategies that could help him become more effective in the discharge of the counselling role for which he trained. Dissonance strategies would enable counsellors to undermine the negative environmental factors that tend to dampen the morale of counsellors and hamper their commitment to the counselling role in the school system. For example, espousing dissonance strategies such as changing one of the dissonant cognitions, adding consonant cognitions and trivializing the import of negative environmental conditions under which the counsellor is currently serving in the school system, would help him to take counselling as the primary responsibility in the school. Mobilising the dissonance strategies outlined above would help the counsellor to restructure the cognition thereby mitigating the impact of role conflict currently experienced by the counsellor on the job.

Similarly, school principals would also benefit from the findings of the study. Counsellors and principals are partners in progress and as such the work of the counsellor complements that of the principal to the benefit of the learner. The findings of the study would expose the principal to the understanding that counsellors who are experiencing role conflicts would grapple with the psychological phenomenon known as cognitive dissonance; a condition which stimulates low level of satisfaction on the job. From the findings of the study a counsellor who is performing roles of counselling, teaching, sitting on disciplinary panel that administer harsh punishment on the same child he is to counsel, cannot experience high level of satisfaction on the job because he is caught in the web of multiple cognitions. Thus, principals would benefit from the knowledge of this study in that a satisfied counsellor would be more disposed to executing preventive guidance which would create good psychological climate for the principal to administer the school. No doubt, the services of the counsellor promote discipline in the school, which in turn, is the bedrock for learning.

### **2.3 Scope of the Study**

The study investigated the relationship between cognitive dissonance and level of job satisfaction among guidance counsellors. Only trained counsellors who are practicing in public secondary schools in Delta and Edo states were investigated.

In order to provide empirical basis to ascertain whether or not counsellors are experiencing conflict in their job, the dimensions of cognitive dissonance such as psychological tension, motivation to reduce tension, level of reward, forced compliance and phoney were investigated. Similarly, dimensions of job satisfaction such as commitment, involvement, loyalty, performance, absenteeism and turnover were investigated.

### **2.4 Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. Which are the dimensions of cognitive dissonance experienced by guidance counsellors in Nigeria?
2. Which are the dimensions of job satisfaction among guidance counsellors?
3. What is the level of job satisfaction among guidance counsellors?
4. What is the relationship between cognitive dissonance dimensions and level of job satisfaction among guidance counsellors?

### **2.5 Hypothesis**

The study tested the following null hypothesis at ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between the dimensions of cognitive dissonance experienced by guidance counsellors and their level of job satisfaction.

## **3. Design of the Study**

The design of the study is correlational survey. A correlational study is the research design in which the investigator sets out to find the extent to which variation in one factor corresponds with variation in one or more factors based on correlation coefficient. According to Hassan (1995:142), "A correlational study consists of measuring one variable and then determining the degree of relationship between it and one or more other variables". The use of correlation method is appropriate where the variables are complex and do not lend themselves to experimental and controlled manipulation. Thus, this study attempts to determine the relationship between the dimensions of cognitive dissonance and the level of job satisfaction among guidance counsellors.

### **3.1 Population of the Study**

The population of the study consisted of practising guidance counsellors in all public secondary schools including Federal Government Colleges and Demonstration Secondary schools in Edo and Delta states. Thus, the population of the study was 158.

### **3.2 Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample of the study was made up of all practising counsellors in public secondary schools including Federal Government Colleges and Demonstration Secondary schools in Edo and Delta states. Since the population of 158 is small the entire population was studied. Thus, there was no sampling since all counsellors in the area of study were used.

### **3.3 Instruments for Data Collection**

Data for the study were collected using the Counsellors' Dissonance and Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (CDJSQ) developed by the researcher. The questionnaire had five sections (A-C). Section A concerns demographic data of the respondents. These included data on type of school, sex, age range, marital status and years of experience. Section B concerned some dissonance dimensions such as forced compliance; psychological tension; phoney;

level of reward; and motivation to reduce tension. Section C dealt with dimensions of job satisfaction such as commitment; loyalty; involvement; performance and desire to quit. In all, it was a 40-item instrument with Section B designed on a 4-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 4- Strongly Agree; 3- Agree; 2- Disagree; and 1- Strongly Disagree. Section C is a scale designed on a continuum of 4 points with 1 being the least while 4 the highest response.

### **3.4 Validation of Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument was subjected to face and construct validation. The instrument was presented to a specialist each in guidance and counselling, educational psychology from the Department of Educational Foundations and measurement and evaluation from the Department of Science Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, who critically reviewed the items one after the other. Their views were collated and incorporated into the instrument that was used for data collection for this study.

### **3.5 Reliability of the Instrument**

To determine the reliability, the instrument was administered on thirty practising counsellors in Anambra state. The choice of Anambra state was informed by the fact that it is an educationally advantaged state. It is also one of the states that have considered it necessary to utilize the services of guidance counsellors in the school system (though all the counsellors are now saddled with full teaching load).

The decision to conduct the reliability test outside the area of study was to avoid contamination of the instrument. The scores of the thirty counsellors were collated in order to obtain the measure of internal consistency of the instrument using Cronbach alpha statistics. This yielded coefficients of .95, .95, for Sections B and C respectively. The coefficient for the entire instrument is .95. These co-efficients were high, implying that the instrument was good enough to be used for the study.

### **3.6 Method of Data Collection**

Data were collected from the responses of professionally trained and practising counsellors from public secondary schools within the area of the study. Considering the geographical spread, the researcher employed three research assistants with each covering two senatorial districts. The research assistants were professional counsellors too. Before the commencement of the administration of the questionnaire, the researcher organised an interactive session for the assistants. Each section of the instrument was explained to the assistants. Clarifications were made on the items which the assistants had difficulty with. Thereafter, copies of the instrument were handed to the assistants according to the proportion required for the districts. The instrument was administered personally by the research assistants and these were retrieved immediately. This was meant to prevent misplacement or contamination of the instrument or inputs from external sources.

### **3.7 Method of Data Analysis**

In analysing the data, percentage and the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) were used in answering the research questions. The scoring of the ratings on each item of the instrument was done using limit of real number. Thus, a mean score of 3.00 and above was accepted as very high presence of the dimension; 2.00 to 2.99 was accepted as high; 1.00 to 1.99 was accepted as low; and .01 to .99 was accepted as very low presence of the dimension.

On the other hand, the null hypothesis was tested using the multiple regression analysis. This statistics is appropriate because it is amenable to drawing a relationship (correlation) between the dependent and the independent variables. It was also applied in predicting the degree of dissonance and level of job satisfaction of counsellors in Nigeria.

## **4. Results**

The results of the study were presented in a logical sequence with the research questions presented first and this is followed by the hypothesis.

### **4.1 Research Questions**

#### **Research Question 1**

Which are the dimensions of cognitive dissonance experienced by guidance counsellor?

Table 1 below, contains the data that provide answers to research question 1

**Table 1: Dimensions of Counsellors' Dissonance**

Dimensions of Cognitive Dissonance	Level	Number (N)	Percentage	Mean
Forced Compliance	Low	133	84.2	1.4624
	High	25	15.8	2.6600
	Total	158	100.0	1.6519
Psychological Tension	Low	135	85.4	1.4981
	High	23	14.6	2.8913
	Total	158	100.0	1.7009
Phoney	Low	151	95.6	1.5491
	High	7	4.4	2.8929
	Total	158	100.0	1.6086
Level of Reward	Low	147	93.0	1.6548
	High	11	7.0	2.6818
	Total	158	100.0	1.7263
Motivation to Reduce Tension	Low	103	65.2	1.7840
	High	55	34.8	2.7727
	Total	158	100.0	2.1282

The results in table 1 above showed the percentage of counsellors' responses to the dimensions of cognitive dissonance. From the results, the Nigerian counsellor is experiencing cognitive dissonance, though at various levels. Specifically, the Nigerian counsellor is experiencing the following dimensions of cognitive dissonance: forced compliance (Low, 84.2%, High, 15.8%); psychological tension (Low, 85.4%, High, 14.6%); phoney (Low, 95.6%, High, 4.4%); level of reward (Low, 93.0%, High, 7.0%); and motivation to reduce tension (Low, 65.2%, High, 34.8%).

**Research Question 2**

Which are the dimensions of job satisfaction among guidance counsellors?

**Table 2: Dimensions of Job Satisfaction of Counsellors**

Dimensions of Job Satisfaction	Level	Number (N)	Percentage	Mean
Commitment	Low	30	19.0	1.8556
	High	128	81.0	3.1348
	Total	158	100.0	2.8952
Loyalty	Low	120	75.9	1.6750
	High	38	24.1	2.8816
	Total	158	100.0	1.9652
Involvement	Low	42	26.6	1.8512
	High	116	73.4	3.1487
	Total	158	100.0	2.8038
Performance	Low	33	20.9	1.8485
	High	125	79.1	3.2220
	Total	158	100.0	2.9351
Desire to Quit	Low	108	68.4	1.7778
	High	50	31.6	2.7700
	Total	158	100.0	2.0918

Table 2 above shows the percentage of counsellors' responses to the dimensions of job satisfaction. From the results, it is revealed that the Nigerian counsellor is experiencing commitment, loyalty, involvement, performance and the desire to quit.

**Research Question 3**

What is the level of job satisfaction of guidance counsellors?

**Table 3: Level of Job Satisfaction of Counsellors**

Dimensions of Job Satisfaction	Level	Number (N)	Percentage	Mean
Commitment	Low	30	19.0	1.8556
	High	128	81.0	3.1348
	Total	158	100.0	2.8952
Loyalty	Low	120	75.9	1.6750
	High	38	24.1	2.8816
	Total	158	100.0	1.9652
Involvement	Low	42	26.6	1.8512
	High	116	73.4	3.1487
	Total	158	100.0	2.8038
Performance	Low	33	20.9	1.8485
	High	125	79.1	3.2220
	Total	158	100.0	2.9351
Desire to Quit	Low	108	68.4	1.7778
	High	50	31.6	2.7700
	Total	158	100.0	2.0918

The results from table 3 above show that the Nigerian counsellor experiences the dimensions of job satisfaction at various degrees. The study revealed the percentage of counsellors' level of satisfaction on each of the dimensions investigated. Specifically, counsellors expressed their level of satisfaction as follows: commitment (Low, 19.0%; High, 81.0%); loyalty (Low, 75.9%; High, 24.1%); involvement (Low, 26.6%; High, 73.4%); performance (Low, 20.9%; High, 79.1%); and the desire to quit (Low, 68.4%; High, 31.6%).

**Research Question 4**

What is the relationship between cognitive dissonance dimensions and level of job satisfaction of guidance counsellors?

**Table 4: Cognitive Dissonance Dimensions and Job Satisfaction**

	Job Satisfaction	Cognitive Dissonance
Job Satisfaction	1	- 0.064
Cognitive Dissonance	- 0.064	1

To determine the relationship between cognitive dissonance and job satisfaction of counsellors, table 4 was used to answer research question 4. The results revealed a low negative relationship between cognitive dissonance and the level of job satisfaction experienced by counsellors as indicated by a coefficient -0.064.

**4.2 Hypothesis**

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the dimensions of cognitive dissonance experienced by guidance counsellors and their level of job satisfaction.

**Table 5: Cognitive Dissonance Dimensions and Level of Job Satisfaction**

Model	Unstandardised Co-efficients		Standardised Coefficients	R Square	Adjusted R Square	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
1 (Constant)	2.691	.195				13.790	.000
Cognitive Dissonance	-0.087	.108	-0.064	.004	-0.002	-0.804	.423

a. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction

t – Critical at p<0.05, df 157 = 1.960

The regression results in Table 5 above revealed that cognitive dissonance dimensions are significant predictors of the level of job satisfaction of counsellors. The results show that the value of t – calculated of cognitive dissonance dimensions at P< 0.05, df 157 = 13.79 which is greater than the t- critical of 1.96. This also means that t – calculated is significant, implying a relationship between cognitive dissonance dimensions and the level of job satisfaction of counsellors. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between cognitive dissonance dimensions and the level of counsellors' satisfaction on the job is rejected.

**4.3 Discussion**

This study sought to identify the specific dimensions of cognitive dissonance experienced by the Nigerian counsellor. Five dimensions of cognitive dissonance were investigated. These were forced compliance, psychological tension, phoney, level of reward and motivation to reduce tension. Specifically, the Nigerian counsellor is experiencing all the dimensions of cognitive dissonance, either at a low or high level as indicated

by the results : forced compliance (Low, 84. 2%, High, 15.8%); psychological tension (Low, 85. 4%, High, 14.6 %); phoney (Low, 95. 6%, High, 4.4%); level of reward (Low, 93.0%, High, 7.0%); and motivation to reduce tension (Low, 65. 2%, High, 34. 8%).

This finding supported earlier work by Campbell & Dahir (1997); and Bunce & Willower (2001) who stated that counsellors' engagement in roles other than counselling for which they trained (role conflict) resulted in cognitive dissonance; the effects of which the counsellor attempts to mitigate through attitude change strategies. From observation, the few counsellors found in the school system are saddled with full load of teaching rather than counselling (Alutu, 2005). Counsellors were also found to be members of school disciplinary committee (Bunce & Willower, 2001); Okonkwo (2005) which contradict the counselling role of the counsellor.

The study also investigated the variables that could be regarded as predictors of counsellors' job satisfaction. The respondents confirmed the following as the dimensions of job satisfaction experienced by the counsellor: commitment, loyalty, involvement, performance and the desire to quit. Specifically, counsellors expressed their level of satisfaction as follows: commitment (Low, 19.0%; High, 81.0%); loyalty (Low, 75.9%; High, 24.1%); involvement (Low, 26.6%; High, 73.4%); performance (Low, 20.9%; High, 79.1%); and the desire to quit (Low, 68.4%; High, 31.6%).

The restraint to quit the job does not support Weisberg & Sagie (1999) who hypothesised that physical, emotional and mental exhaustion influenced teachers' intention to quit teaching but were constrained by age and tenure. The issue of tenure becomes paramount in the minds of counsellors, bearing in mind that many of them have grown along the ranks and have high hopes of rising to the level of school principals, which seems to be the highest aspiration of most secondary school teachers.

Cumulatively, therefore, the satisfaction expressed in commitment, involvement and performance as well as the low desire to quit the counselling job may be connected with lack of alternative jobs and the age barrier imposed on counsellors. This supports Pouliakas & Theodossiou (2006) who investigated the impact of insecure contracts on workers' perceived job quality. They argued that the attitude of indifference displayed by employees on insecure jobs was a clear evidence of the operation of cognitive dissonance, which appears to make people more content with their current state of affairs. Though phoney was found to be insignificant predictor of job satisfaction, it is a potent strategy in attitude change (Franzoi, 2000). Against the backdrop of age disadvantage, the tendency is for counsellors to accept the adverse conditions and apply coping strategy of cognitive restructuring with the pretentious self-verbalisation of enjoying the job with a view to mitigating the psychological distress provoked by dissonance.

Another concern of the study was an inquiry into the level of job satisfaction of the Nigerian counsellor. Five dimensions of job satisfaction were investigated. The counsellors expressed their level of satisfaction as follows: commitment (Low, 19.0%; High, 81.0%); loyalty (Low, 75.9%; High, 24.1%); involvement (Low, 26.6%; High, 73.4%); performance (Low, 20.9%; High, 79.1%); and the desire to quit (Low, 68.4%; High, 31.6%). A close examination of the results showed that counsellors' level of satisfaction is very high as supported by commitment, involvement and performance. Although 75. 9 % of the counsellors did show a low level of loyalty, which could have been prompted by school policies and level of supervision, majority of the counsellors were unwilling to resign their job because they found satisfaction in other aspects of the job. The findings of this study are in agreement with Garton & Robinson (2006) who found that graduates of Agricultural Education teaching in High School were highly satisfied on the job. However, the results of the present study are different from that of Nezaam (2005) who found that health workers in Western Cape of South Africa were marginally satisfied on the job. It could be speculated that the level of satisfaction of the participants in the present study and Nezaam (2005) is not the same. Environmental factors could have accounted for the variation in the level of job satisfaction. In a related development, the findings of this study support that of Ssessanga & Garrett (2005) who found that lecturers in Uganda were highly satisfied with teaching and interpersonal relationship.

The relationship between cognitive dissonance dimensions and level of job satisfaction experienced by counsellors was investigated by this study. The results, as shown in table 4, revealed a low negative relationship between cognitive dissonance and the level of job satisfaction experienced by counsellors as indicated by a coefficient -0.064.

In order to test the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) which stated that there would be no significant relationship between cognitive dissonance dimensions and level of job satisfaction experienced by counsellor, table 9 was computed. The results show that the value of  $t$  – calculated of cognitive dissonance dimensions at  $P < 0.05$ ,  $df$  157 is 13.79 which is greater than the  $t$ - critical of 1. 96. This also means that  $t$  – calculated is significant, implying a relationship between cognitive dissonance dimensions and the level of job satisfaction of counsellors. The results of this study support that of Pouliakas & Theodossiou (2006) who investigated the psychological cost of moving from riskless permanent job to the insecurity of temporary job. They found that the psychological cost was quite significant. However, the workings of adaptation, coping and cognitive dissonance appear to compel



people to be more content with their current state of affairs.

The researcher wishes to modestly submit that the system in which counsellors have found themselves may have created adverse conditions that are inimical to the survival of the counselling profession; counsellors must not resign to fate. Employing the strategy of attitude change canvassed by cognitive dissonance would help the counsellor render services to the ultimate consumers without experiencing any mental agony or distress.

#### **4.4 Implications of the Study**

This sub – section concerns itself with the implications of the study which are a direct fall out from the findings. Thus, the following were deduced. Firstly, the motivation to reduce tension by counsellors is clear indication that counsellors are experiencing psychological tension due to forced compliance. The implication is that the Nigerian counsellor is experiencing inner conflict due to split in personality. The realisation by counsellors of the discrepancy between professional preparations and the duties they discharge presently in the school system, no doubt, results in cognitive dissonance. The counsellor may be mobilising the dimension of phoney as a buffer between reality and the ideal in order to remain in the system. Mobilising internal resources to cope with the reality of role conflict does help the counsellor to render services to the best of the ability. For example, compelling the counsellor to teach rather than performing the traditional role of counselling is an indication that danger lies ahead for the counselling profession. Counselling may slide into oblivion since counsellors are forced to assume teaching responsibility in secondary schools.

Secondly, the finding that Nigerian counsellors are satisfied on the job runs counter to the reality of the counsellor. From the field work it was observed that counsellors are experiencing role conflict as they are saddled with a full teaching load. It was also observed that counsellors lack personal offices but share the staff room with other teachers. A quick comparison of the results of the study with the reality on ground in the school system, it may not be out of place to conclude that the participants in the study could be responding to the phenomenon of social desirability of sounding positive rather than coming to terms with reality.

Thirdly, the findings showed that counsellors are highly satisfied as revealed by the high level of commitment, involvement and performance. The implication is that, if the enabling environment is provided by Government and Principals, the impact of counselling would be felt among in – school adolescents in the vocational, educational and personal – social aspects of life.

Another implication deducible from the findings of the study is that since a significant relationship exists between the dimensions of cognitive dissonance and the level of job satisfaction among counsellors, counsellors could have taken other variables into consideration to adapt in order to undermine the prevailing adverse working environment.

Finally, cognitive dissonance dimensions were found to be significant predictors of the level of satisfaction of counsellors on the job. Counsellors could be mobilising dimensions of phoney and motivation to reduce tension as coping strategies to bridge the gap created between the ideal and their present job definition in the school system.

#### **4.5 Recommendations**

Arising from the findings of this study the following recommendations were made.

1. The presence of cognitive dissonance is an indication of conflict in the cognition of the counsellor. The Federal Government should revisit its original policy of training counsellors who would be saddled with the responsibility of discharging guidance functions only. Federal government should set the pace by ensuring that counsellors in unity schools do not combine teaching load with counselling.
2. Cognitive dissonance is an attitude change theory. Therefore, the study recommended that counsellors should mobilise the strategies provided by the theory as means of coping with the realities about the job of the counsellor in the school system, while still maintaining the ethics of the profession.

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