

Effect of Employee Competence on Employee Job Satisfaction in Federal Unity Schools in the FCT, Abuja, Nigeria

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Abstract: While employee competence is recognized as a pivotal determinant of workforce satisfaction: globally, its dynamics within Nigeria's federal education sector remain insufficiently examined. This study investigates the effect of employee competence, operationalized through technical and social skills, on job satisfaction in Federal Unity Schools, Abuja, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design targeted 1,229 teaching staff across six institutions. Using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula, 311 valid survey responses were obtained and analysed via multiple regression using SPSS Version 28. Findings reveal that both technical and social skills exert significant positive effects on employee job satisfaction, jointly explaining 69.4% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.694$). Continuous investment in educators' professional development was recommended as being critical to sustaining workforce satisfaction. Consequently, policymakers and school administrators must institutionalize structured competence programs targeting both the technical proficiencies and interpersonal capabilities of teachers.

Keywords: employee competence, technical skills, social skills, job satisfaction, unity schools

INTRODUCTION

We often hear of politicians canvassing to be elected into offices on the basis of character, capacity, credibility and competence. In the contemporary global knowledge economy, employee competence has transcended its traditional role as a mere functional requirement to become the primary determinant of organizational resilience, adaptability, and long-term sustainability (Draganidis & Mentzas, 2006; Boyatzis, 2008). As the World Economic Forum (2023) anticipates that over 50% of the global workforce will require significant reskilling or upskilling by 2025, the link between professional proficiency spanning both technical and social domains and psychological well-being has moved to the forefront of human resource strategy. While studies in developed economies indicate that high perceived competence can increase job satisfaction indices by as much as 37% (Society for Human Resource Management, 2022), the reality in Sub-Saharan Africa is often complicated by structural underfunding and a persistent misalignment between

employee skills and assigned institutional roles (Asante & Dartey-Baah, 2021; African Development Bank, 2022).

In the Nigerian context, this challenge is acutely felt within the public sector, where the National Human Capital Development Policy has explicitly identified skills gaps as a fundamental constraint on service effectiveness (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2021). Gado (2021) emphasised the place of human capital development in Nigeria's attainment of economic development, emphasising that Nigeria needs to break through the low Human Capital Development Index (HDI) to medium, high and very high HDI. Consequently, the National Bureau of Statistics (2022) reports that 42% of Nigerian public sector employees cite inadequate job-related training as a primary source of professional dissatisfaction. This systemic issue is particularly salient within the Nigerian education sector, where the Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (2023) has noted that deficiencies in pedagogical and technological mastery have contributed to diminished morale and low job satisfaction across the profession. Federal Unity Schools are currently at a critical juncture characterized by an annual teacher turnover rate of 18.3%, a figure that significantly exceeds the 10% threshold identified as institutionally sustainable (Federal Ministry of Education, 2024; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Despite government-led interventions, the persistence of staff attrition suggests that the competence-satisfaction relationship is more nuanced than existing policy responses acknowledge (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2021).

Furthermore, the empirical literature remains inconclusive regarding the precise nature of the competence-satisfaction pathway. While some scholars have established significant positive associations (Al-Omari et al., 2020; Mensah & Tawiah, 2020), others argue that in high-stress public environments, structural role demands may moderate or even nullify the effect of individual competence on satisfaction (Seibert et al., 2021). Within Nigeria, findings have been equally varied (Nduka & Obi, 2022; Nansubuga & Munene, 2019; Nzinga et al., 2021). Given this lack of academic consensus and the notable geographic gap in research concerning the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), this study evaluates the specific impact of technical skills and social skills on job satisfaction among staff in FCT Federal Unity Schools. By testing the null hypotheses that neither technical nor social skills significantly affect satisfaction levels, this investigation seeks to provide empirical clarity and guide future human capital development policies within Nigeria's flagship educational system.

LITERATURE/THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Conceptual Review and Research Opinions

The concept of employee competence has been the subject of sustained scholarly debate. Competence has historically been defined as an underlying characteristic causally related to criterion-referenced effective performance (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). More recently, it is described as the integration of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and personal characteristics that determines an individual's capacity to perform assigned tasks effectively (Draganidis & Mentzas,

2006). Furthermore, Al-Omari et al. (2020) conceptualised employee competence within the public sector as the degree to which an employee possesses, applies, and continuously develops the capabilities necessary to fulfil professional obligations effectively and with demonstrable quality.

Omotayo and Adenike (2021) offered a contextual definition within the Nigerian public sector, describing employee competence as the measurable combination of job-relevant knowledge, technical abilities, behavioural dispositions, and social capacities that determine a worker's performance outcome in an institutional setting. Mensah and Tawiah (2020) emphasised the dynamic dimension of competence, arguing that it is not a fixed attribute but a developmental construct shaped by training, experience, and organisational context. Okafor et al. (2022) further stressed that competence in educational institutions must encompass both subject-matter mastery and relational capability, as teachers are required to manage complex social dynamics alongside technical instructional responsibilities. From the perspective of this study, employee competence should not be viewed merely as a static inventory of skills, but as a dynamic, evolving capacity. In the demanding environment of modern classrooms, traditional definitions fall short if they do not account for the continuous adaptation required by educators. Within the context of Federal Unity Schools in the FCT, employee competence manifests through two primary operationalised dimensions: technical skills (TCS) and social skills (SCK).

Technical skills refer to the domain-specific content knowledge, pedagogical skills, assessment competencies, and technological proficiencies deployed in instructional practice (Katz, 1955; Stronge, 2018). Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasised that technical skills in teaching encompass not only subject matter expertise but also curriculum design capability, differentiated instruction, and the competent use of educational technology platforms. The relationship between technical skills and job satisfaction has been examined in several empirical studies. Mensah and Tawiah (2020) found that Ghanaian public secondary school teachers who rated their technical competence highly reported significantly greater job satisfaction scores, particularly in dimensions related to work meaningfulness and performance accomplishment. Adeyemi and Adu (2021) established that Nigerian secondary school teachers who received consistent technical skills development opportunities reported higher intrinsic job satisfaction than those who did not, with a Pearson correlation of $r = 0.68$ ($p < 0.01$) between technical competence self-assessment and job satisfaction.

Social skills refer to the communicative, relational, and socio-emotional competencies that enable an individual to build productive, trust-based relationships with students, parents, and professional peers (Riggio & Reichard, 2008; Hargreaves, 2000). Empirical evidence on the role of social skills in shaping job satisfaction in educational settings is substantial. Nzinga et al. (2021) found that Kenyan secondary school teachers who rated their social competence highly reported significantly greater satisfaction with their working relationships and organisational climate, dimensions that are among the most potent predictors of overall job satisfaction. Nansubuga and Munene (2019) reported that social skills mediated the relationship between organisational support and job

satisfaction among Ugandan civil servants, suggesting that relational competence amplifies the effect of institutional enablers on satisfaction outcomes.

It is the a-priori opinion of this research that technical mastery without relational competence is insufficient in modern Nigerian schools. A teacher may possess exceptional subject-matter knowledge, but without the empathy and social awareness to manage diverse student populations, institutional effectiveness and personal job satisfaction will inevitably suffer. Employee job satisfaction is described as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job experience (Locke, 1976). It is defined in this study as the cumulative positive evaluation that teaching staff make of their professional roles, based on perceived role competence, social climate, instructional achievement, and institutional recognition.

Empirical Review

A review of recent empirical literature highlights the complex relationship between competence and satisfaction, revealing critical gaps. Mensah and Tawiah (2020) investigated public secondary school teachers in Ghana, finding that both technical competence ($\beta = 0.45$) and social competence ($\beta = 0.38$) significantly predicted teacher job satisfaction. Similarly, Al-Omari et al. (2020) established that technical skills ($\beta = 0.44$) and social skills ($\beta = 0.36$) were positive predictors of job satisfaction in Jordanian public universities. In the Ugandan civil service, Nansubuga and Munene (2019) found that social skills actually recorded the strongest correlation with job satisfaction ($r = 0.71$), surpassing technical skills.

Conversely, contrasting evidence exists. Seibert et al. (2021) examined United States public sector workers in high-pressure environments and found no statistically significant relationship between technical competence and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.09$) when workload was controlled. Within Nigeria, Nduka and Obi (2022) surveyed teachers in Imo State and found that while technical competence predicted satisfaction, social competence did not ($\beta = 0.11$), attributing this to a poor collegial climate in state-owned schools.

Synthesizing these findings, this study identifies a clear research gap. The contradictory findings particularly regarding the utility of social skills in different school climates (Nansubuga & Munene, 2019 versus Nduka & Obi, 2022) suggest that the competence-satisfaction pathway is highly vulnerable to institutional context. This study argues that generalizing findings from state-owned schools or foreign public sectors to Nigeria's elite Federal Unity Schools is analytically flawed. The unique, culturally diverse ecosystem of Unity Schools requires a distinct empirical evaluation to resolve these academic discrepancies, which this study addressed.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by three foundational theories. Frederick Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory posits that motivators (such as achievement and recognition) generate intrinsic job satisfaction. This theory explains how technical and social skills function as motivators by generating achievement experiences and professional recognition. Frimpong et al. (2022) applied the Two-Factor Theory in a study of Ghanaian public-school teachers and showed that

competence-based achievement was the most robust predictor of intrinsic job satisfaction, validating its explanatory utility in the African educational context. Albert Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, centred on self-efficacy, aligns with technical skills; when teaching staff perceive themselves as technically competent, their self-efficacy is elevated, reinforcing effective instructional performance and generating job satisfaction. Nzinga et al. (2021) applied Social Cognitive Theory in the Kenyan educational context and found that teacher self-efficacy, driven by perceived technical competence, was a significant predictor of job satisfaction, validating its application to this study.

Lastly, Kristof's (1996) Person-Environment Fit Theory proposes that job satisfaction is maximised when there is congruence between individual characteristics and work environment demands. Okafor et al. (2022) applied Person-Environment Fit Theory in a study of Nigerian secondary school teachers and found that fit between social capability and relational role demands significantly predicted job satisfaction, lending direct empirical support to its application in the present study. Teaching in Federal Unity Schools demands high social capability, and when teachers' social skills align with these relational demands, person-environment fit is achieved, fostering satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive survey research design to investigate the phenomena under study. The survey design serves as a robust quantitative framework, allowing a researcher to capture attitudes, behaviours, and professional characteristics at a fixed point in time without altering the natural environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach is further supported by Sekaran and Bougie (2019), who noted that descriptive research is uniquely suited for providing an accurate profile of variables as they exist in situ. The target population is the entire teaching faculty of Federal Unity Schools within the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, which comprised 1,229 educators across six specialized institutions according to the 2025 nominal roll (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025).

To ensure the findings were statistically representative, the sample size was determined using the formula proposed by Yamane (1967) at a 5% margin of error, where n is the sample size, N is the population size (1,229), and e is the level of precision (0.05). The calculated sample size was 302 respondents. To account for possible non-responses, a 10% attrition rate was added, as recommended by Hair et al. (2019), resulting in a final sample size of 332 respondents. Quota sampling technique was adopted to ensure proportional representation, and Bowley's proportional allocation formula was used to determine the number of respondents per institution.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure technical skills, social skills, and job satisfaction. The internal consistency of the research instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, meeting the 0.70 benchmark recommended by Nunnally (1978).

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Technical Skills (TCS)	12	0.853
Social Skills (SCK)	10	0.841
Employee Job Satisfaction (EJS)	14	0.867

Table 1: Reliability Statistics (Source: SPSS Version 28 Output, 2025).

The gathered data were analysed using SPSS Version 28 through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. The regression model was specified as follows:

$$EJS = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 TCS + \beta_2 SCK + \varepsilon$$

Where: EJS = Employee Job Satisfaction (dependent variable); TCS = Technical Skills (Proxy 1); SCK = Social Skills (Proxy 2); α_0 = constant (intercept); β_1 and β_2 = regression coefficients for TCS and SCK, respectively; ε = stochastic error term.

Prior to regression analysis, a normality test was conducted to confirm that the data met the parametric assumption required for multiple regression. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was employed given the large sample size ($n = 311$), as it is appropriate for samples exceeding 50 observations (Field, 2018). Results are presented in Table 2 below.

Variable	N	K-S Statistic	df	Sig.	Distribution
Technical Skills (TCS)	311	.048	311	.073	Normal
Social Skills (SCK)	311	.051	311	.064	Normal
Employee Job Satisfaction (EJS)	311	.044	311	.081	Normal

Source: SPSS Version 28 Output, 2025. Note: Significance values > 0.05 indicate the data are normally distributed (Field, 2018).

Table 2: Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test

As shown in Table 2, all three study variables — Technical Skills ($K-S = .048$, $p = .073$), Social Skills ($K-S = .051$, $p = .064$), and Employee Job Satisfaction ($K-S = .044$, $p = .081$) — returned non-significant Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics ($p > .05$), confirming that the data follow a normal distribution. This satisfies the parametric assumption underlying multiple regression analysis (Field, 2018), thus justifying the inferential procedures employed in this study.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

A total of 332 questionnaires were distributed, and 311 were found suitable for analysis, resulting in a valid response rate of 93.67%, which is significantly higher than the 70% adequacy level proposed by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003).

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Technical Skills (TCS)	311	1.00	5.00	4.23	0.641
Social Skills (SCK)	311	1.00	5.00	4.09	0.673
Employee Job Satisfaction (EJS)	311	1.00	5.00	3.97	0.702

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics (Source: SPSS Version 28 Output, 2025).

The descriptive statistics reveal that Technical Skills recorded the highest mean score of 4.23, Social Skills recorded a mean of 4.09, and Employee Job Satisfaction returned a mean of 3.97.

Variable	TCS	SCK	EJS
Technical Skills (TCS)	1	.684**	.791**
Social Skills (SCK)	.684**	1	.763**
Employee Job Satisfaction (EJS)	.791**	.763**	1

Source: SPSS Version 28 Output, 2025. Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4: Correlation Matrix

Technical Skills (TCS) recorded a strong positive correlation with Employee Job Satisfaction ($r = 0.791$, $p < 0.01$), and Social Skills (SCK) also recorded a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.763$, $p < 0.01$).

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.	Model Statistics
Constant	0.631	0.147	—	4.292	.000	R = 0.839; R ² = 0.694; Adj. R ² = 0.689; Std. Error = 0.391; F = 82.473; Sig. = 0.000; Durbin-Watson = 1.927
Technical Skills (TCS)	0.441	0.056	0.412	7.843	.000	
Social Skills (SCK)	0.398	0.055	0.389	7.214	.000	

Source: SPSS Version 28 Output, 2025.

Table 5: Regression Output (Dependent Variable: Employee Job Satisfaction)

The coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.694$ revealed that Technical Skills and Social Skills, taken together, explained 69.4% of the total variance in Employee Job Satisfaction. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.927 fell within Field's (2018) acceptable range. For Technical Skills, the regression coefficient was $B = 0.441$ ($p < 0.001$), and for Social Skills, the regression coefficient was $B = 0.398$ ($p < 0.001$). Consequently, the null hypotheses stating that technical skills and social skills have no significant effect on employee job satisfaction were rejected.

DISCUSSION

The finding revealed that technical skills exerted a significant positive effect on employee job satisfaction in Federal Unity Schools in the FCT, Abuja, indicating that teaching staff who perceived their technical competencies as well-developed reported markedly higher levels of job satisfaction. This finding was consistent with conclusions from previous research in Ghanaian public secondary schools (Mensah & Tawiah, 2020) and Jordanian public universities (Al-Omari et al., 2020), both of which found technical competence to be a significant predictor of job satisfaction. In partial contrast, Seibert et al. (2021) reported a non-significant relationship between technical competence and job satisfaction due to moderating workload pressures, a condition that appears mitigated in the specific operational environment of the FCT Unity Schools.

The study findings also revealed that social skills exerted a significant positive effect on employee job satisfaction, indicating that teaching staff who perceived their relational competencies as strong reported substantially higher job satisfaction. This finding aligned with research on Ugandan civil servants (Nansubuga & Munene, 2019), confirming the importance of relational competence as a driver of satisfaction. In contrast, Nduka and Obi (2022) reported that social competence was not a significant predictor of job satisfaction in their Imo State sample due to poor collegial climates. The significant positive result obtained in the present study validates Kristof's (1996) Person-Environment Fit Theory, suggesting that the institutional culture of Federal Unity Schools — characterised by structured professional standards and diverse student populations — created conditions in which social skills translated readily into positive job satisfaction outcomes.

IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The management of Federal Unity Schools in the FCT, Abuja, should institutionalise structured annual technical skills development programmes for all teaching staff, incorporating subject-matter refresher courses, digital literacy training, and competency-based curriculum workshops aligned with current Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria's (TRCN's) standards. School administrations should formally integrate social skills development into their staff capacity-building calendars through structured workshops on effective communication, classroom relationship management, conflict resolution, and culturally responsive education.

From a policy standpoint, the Federal Ministry of Education should revise its competence development policy to explicitly mandate both technical and social competence dimensions as core components of teacher professional development, establishing a monitoring framework to assess

the impact of these investments. Theoretically, this study reinforces the Person-Environment Fit Theory, proving that congruence between teaching staff's social capabilities and the high relational demands of classrooms produces positive satisfaction outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effect of employee competence on employee job satisfaction in Federal Unity Schools in the FCT, Abuja, Nigeria, with technical skills and social skills as the operationalised proxies of employee competence. The findings established that both proxies exerted significant positive effects on employee job satisfaction, with the two predictors jointly explaining 69.4% of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.694$). Both null hypotheses were rejected, confirming that technical skills and social skills are individually and collectively significant determinants of how teaching staff in Federal Unity Schools evaluate their professional roles. These results affirm the central propositions of Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory, Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, and Kristof's (1996) Person-Environment Fit Theory, all of which predicted that the alignment between employee capability and role demands would generate intrinsic satisfaction outcomes.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should address the limitations of existing literature by expanding examinations beyond a single administrative region or a specific federal school system to improve the generalisability of findings. Additional investigations should explicitly explore the dynamics within decentralised educational institutions and state-owned schools to provide a comparative institutional data point. Finally, future studies could investigate how structural moderators, such as role demands and workload pressures in high-stress environments, might attenuate the competence-satisfaction pathway over time.

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