



Fear of Covid-19 and Employees' Turnover Intentions among State-Owned Hospitals in Zamfara State: The Role of Job Estrangement

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Abstract

There has been a call on the federal government of Nigeria to declare a state of emergency on the Nigerian health sector owing to the high rate of employee turnover. The main objective of the study is to explore the mediating role of job estrangement in the relationship between fear of covid-19 and employees' turnover intentions among the employees of state-owned hospitals in Gusau metropolis Zamfara State, Nigeria. The study employed survey and cross-sectional research designs. The population of the study comprised the entire 1372 employees (medical and non-medical) of the state-owned hospitals in Gusau metropolis Zamfara State, Nigeria. The sample size of 301 was derived using the Dillman sample size formula. To decrease sampling error, the sample size was increased by 30% to 391. A self-administered structured questionnaire was used to solicit responses from the respondents using a stratified random sampling technique. Data cleansing and preliminary analysis were undertaken using SPSS 24. Structural Equation Modelling specifically, SmartPLS 3.3 was employed to compute the two main models; structural and measurement models for the test of the hypothesised relationship. The findings showed that fear of Covid-19 and job estrangement have a significant effect on employee turnover intentions. Furthermore, job estrangement significantly partially mediated the relationship between fear of covid-19 and employee turnover intentions. The study recommended governmental interventions in providing necessary mechanisms to alleviate employees fear of covid-19 and job estrangement.

Keywords: Fear of Covid-19, Job Estrangement, Employee Turnover Intentions

1. Introduction

More than ever before, the importance of the health sector cannot be over-emphasised, owing to its role in providing quality health service to major stakeholders of the economy and its contribution to the economy at large. Trivitron Healthcare (2019) asserted that a good healthcare system is critical for reducing family burdens and contributing to national progress. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCED) Observer cited by Trivitron Healthcare (2019), a solid healthcare system supports a healthy economy; in fact, their analysis found that a modest 10% increase in life



expectancy results in 0.4% annual economic growth. However, both demand and supply will continue to fall short of population health needs in low- and lower-middle-income nations (World Health Organisation, 2017). Sadly, Nigeria is among the countries with a very poor doctor-to-patient ratio in the world as reported by (The Cable, 2019). Particularly, in Zamfara state where there is a ratio of one doctor to fourteen thousand (14,000) patients (Onwuzoo, 2020). In 2018, Research my Africa Check showed that at least 12 doctors leave Nigeria for the United Kingdom every week (Premium Times, 2018). In a survey by Noipolls (2018) eight (8) out of ten (10), medical doctors are seeking opportunities abroad. Furthermore, The Punch (2021) reported that over 15,000 trained Nigerian nurses have relocated to the United Kingdom alone in five years with many having the intention to quit. According to the theory of planned behaviour, the intention to perform a behaviour is the determinant of the actual behaviour (Otori, 2018). Belete (2018) noted that the stage before the actual turnover happens is the turnover intention. In fact, empirical evidence suggests that many employees who quit their jobs already had the intention to quit before leaving the job (Li, Sawhney, & Tortorella, 2019). Additionally, The Punch (2021) reported that the number of medical practitioners leaving their jobs has continued to rise. For instance, they reported that while 2,771 nurses quit their job in 2019, it increased slightly to 3,205 nurses in 2020 nationwide. However, as of November, 2021 in Cross-Rivers state alone over 4,000 nurses have quit their job rendering the sector ineffective with many health practitioners having intentions to leave. In addition, over 100 doctors quit their jobs in Zamfara, Kogi, Niger and Yobe state for better employment in Saudi Arabia (ThisDay, 2018). Hence, call on the federal government of Nigeria to declare a state of emergency on the Nigerian health sector, and look into the security of health workers in the country.

Turnover intention often predicts actual quitting behaviour (Windon, Cochran, Scheer & Rodriguez, 2019). Turnover intention may be defined as employees' decision and willingness to quit the organisation (Olowookere, Adekeye, Adeyemo, Agoha & Sholarin, 2016). To Mbah and Ikemefuna (2012), turnover intentions are conscious, deliberate and willful actions taken by the employee(s) to leave the organisation. It is simply an employee's desire to quit the organisation (Kaur & Pankaj, 2013). Fear of Covid-19 is the unprecedented pressure exerted by the pandemic on individuals caused by intense anxiety of being infected or unknowingly infecting others (Labragu et al., 2020). Plethora of studies have linked fear of Covid-19 to employee turnover intentions (e.g., Nashwan et al., 2021; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2020; Labragu & De Los Santos 2020). The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) has put further strain on the global healthcare system spreading to over 260 nations, affecting millions of people globally (Nashwan et al., 2021). Labragu and De Los Santos (2020) pointed out that an increased level of the fear of Covid-19 was associated with decreased job satisfaction, increased psychological distress and increased organisational and professional turnover intentions. Job estrangement has long piqued the interest of academics and practitioners (Tummers, Bekkers, Thiel & Steijn, 2014). Job estrangement reduces worker motivation, psychologically separates them from their jobs,



and reduces work involvement. Gözükara, Mercanl, Capuk and Yıldırım (2017) defined work estrangement as simply the psychological state of being alienated from one's work. Saari (2015) pointed out that job estrangement is associated with job dissatisfaction, job stress, anxiety, depression, and other forms of psychosomatic illness at the individual level, while it is associated with low morale, high absenteeism and turnover, and various forms of social maladies such as increased crime rates, sabotage attempts, increased health care costs, and a depressed economy at the organisational level. Meanwhile, Kozhina and Vinokurov (2020) asserted job estrangement had significantly increased during the pandemic. Many workers were psychological more detached from work than ever before.

Consequently, it is becoming worrisome that many medical practitioners have been reported to be leaving the profession or quitting their current job while some are nursing the intention of quitting the job, thereby denying citizens the opportunity to quality healthcare (Otori, 2018). This is particularly worrisome in Zamfara state which is presently experiencing human insecurity amidst fear of the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 are arguably the greatest and largest distortion of the health sector in Zamfara state and in the history of Nigeria. As such, the study presumes that because of the fear associated with Covid-19 in terms of infections and transmission to loved ones, many medical practitioners first alienate themselves from their work, eventually quitting. Based on the recommendations of Baron and Kenny (1986), we believed that fear of Covid-19 with an intervening variable (job estrangement) could explain why many health practitioners are leaving the country for better opportunities abroad. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to investigate the mediating role of job estrangement in the relationship between fear of covid-19 and employee turnover intentions within the employees of state-owned hospitals in Gusau metropolis Zamfara State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to ascertain whether fear of Covid-19 significantly affects employees' turnover intentions within the employees of state-owned hospitals in Gusau metropolis, job estrangement significantly affects employees' turnover intentions within the employees of state-owned hospitals in Gusau metropolis, and job estrangement significantly mediates the relationship between fear of Covid-19 and employees' turnover intentions within the employees of state-owned hospitals in Gusau metropolis

2. Literature Review

The section reviews relevant literature on the concept of employees' turnover intentions, Fear of Covid-19, Job estrangement, empirical review and conceptual framework.

Concept of Employees' Turnover Intentions

Turnover intention often predicts actual quitting behaviour (Windon, Cochran, Scheer & Rodriguez, 2019). Turnover intention may be defined as employees' decision and willingness to quit an organization (Olowookere, Adekeye, Adeyemo, Agoha & Sholarin, 2016). To Mbah and Ikemefuna (2012), turnover intentions is conscious, deliberate and willful actions taken by the employee(s) to leave the organization. It is simply an employee's desire to quit the organization (Kaur & Pankaj, 2013). Belete (2018) opined



that every organization regardless of its location, size or nature of business has always given a key concern on employees' turnover intention because employee turnover is a waste of investment in the selection and training of personnel. Besides, the high rate of employee turnover in an organization adversely affects the motivation of existing personnel, increases the workload, makes work planning difficult (Belete, 2018), decrease customer service and quality (Li et al., 2019) and negativity affects the ease at which organizational objectives are achieved (Ramadhani, 2014).

Concept of Fear of Covid-19

Fisher (2012) posited that there is no single universally accepted definition of fear as different scholars have conceptualised the construct base on their perception and discipline. Ledoux (2014) fear is an affective state protecting one against danger. McBride-Walker (2017) defined it as the lived experience of a defensive state constructed for the purpose of self-preservation. Consequently, fear of Covid-19 can therefore be defined as the unprecedented pressure exerted by the pandemic on individuals caused by intense anxiety of being infected or unknowingly infecting others (Labragu et al., 2020). Taking a cue from Ströbel (2014) fear of Covid-19 can be perceived as a state anxiety because of loss of control that may be associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. We defined fear of Covid-19 as the perception of a threat that is real or imaginary caused by coronavirus.

Concept of Job Estrangement

Job estrangement also termed work alienation is seen as the psychological separation of the subject of labour from employment, and it is a subjectively perceived condition connected with the loss of interpersonal connections, manifested by the subject's impression of powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-alienation (Kozhina & Vinokurov, 2020). To Gözükarar et al. (2017) work estrangement is simply the psychological state of being alienated from one's work. Dağlı and Averbek, (2017) opined that alienation, indifference, inability to be genuinely dedicated to anything, lack of job involvement, withdrawal, separation in relationships, and isolation are all indicators of estrangement. To Saari (2015) it is a cognitive disconnection from one's job and other work-related contexts; a sense of frustration and the accompanying negative effect caused by a perceived failure to achieve one's goals through job and organizational-related behaviours.

Fear of Covid-19 and Employees' Turnover Intention

Few studies have investigated the effect of fear of Covid-19 on employee turnover intentions. For instance, Labragu and De Los Santos (2020) explored the influence of fear of Covid-19 on nurses' psychological distress, work satisfaction and intent to leave their organization and the profession. Cross-sectional research design involving 261 frontline nurses in the Philippines, and five standardized scales were used for data collection. The finding showed that, an increase in level of fear of Covid-19 decreases job satisfaction, increase psychological distress and increase organisational and professional turnover intentions. The study recommended vital organization measures to support the mental health of nurses through therapy, and guidance and counselling.



In a similar study, De Los Santos and Labrague (2020) examined the impact of Covid-19 on the psychological well-being and turnover intentions of frontline nurses in the community: a cross-sectional study in the Philippines. The study employed a convenient sampling technique as the study targeted 400 nurses to participate; however, only 385 nurses (a response rate of 96.25%) participated. The results revealed that nurses display moderate to high fear of Covid-19 and that the female gender is correlated to fear of the virus. Moreover, the nurses' fear influences their psychological distress and organizational and turnover intentions to quit the profession.

Nashwan, Abujaber, Villar, Nazarene, Al-jabry and Fradelos (2021) investigated the impact of Covid-19 on nurses' turnover intentions before and during the pandemic in Qatar. The cross-sectional study was conducted using the turnover intention scale and a convenience sample of participants from the largest healthcare provider in Qatar between August and September 2020. A total of 512 nurses were included in the final analysis. The majority were between 31 and 40 years of age and had less than 5 years of experience. The turnover intentions were higher compared with before Covid-19. The finding revealed nurses in Qatar have higher turnover intentions during Covid-19. The participants' characteristics and stress levels are playing a major role in nurses' decision to quit during Covid-19. H_{01} : Fear of Covid-19 does not have a significant effect on employee turnover intentions among employees of state-owned hospitals in Gusau metropolis.

Job Estrangement and Employees' Turnover Intention

Job estrangement as a predictor of employee turnover intentions has been confirmed in a plethora of studies (e.g., Nawafleh, Alkhalayleh & Qerba 2021; Taboli 2015 & Tummers, Bekkers, Thiel & Steijn, 2014). Nawafleh et al. (2021) investigated work alienation feelings on turnover intention in the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority located in Jordan. A cross-sectional research design; a self-administered questionnaire was used to solicit responses from one hundred employees. Data were analysed for descriptive and inferential statistics (Correlational analysis). The finding showed that work alienation has significant effect on employee's turnover intentions. Another study by Taboli (2015) conducted to examine burnout, work engagement and work job estrangement as predictors of turnover intentions of employees of universities in Kerman, Iran. Data were retrieved from two hundred and ten universities' employees aged between 25 and 45 years old. The finding revealed that work engagement is inversely related to turnover intentions while burnout and job estrangement are positively related to turnover intention. Tummers et al. (2014) explored the effects of job estrangement and policy alienation on the behaviour of public employees based on a survey of seven hundred and ninety (790) respondents. The study found that job estrangement leads to less effort, dedication and absorption but greater intention to leave in the organisation. H_{02} : Job estrangement does not have a significant effect on employees' turnover intentions among employees of state-owned hospitals in Gusau metropolis



Job Estrangement as a Mediator

Gözükara et al. (2017) explored impact of turnover intention on loneliness and the mediating effect of work alienation. Data were collected from 440 aviation company employees using convenience sampling design. The finding revealed that turnover intention significantly predicts loneliness and work alienation partially mediated the relationship between turnover intentions and loneliness. To the best of our knowledge, no prior study has investigated the possibility that job estrangement mediates relationships between fear of Covid-19 and employee turnover intentions. Much of the prior studies focused on the direct relationship. For instance, Kozhina and Vinokurov (2020) supported in their study that job estrangement significantly increased during the pandemic. Significantly predicted by workplace distancing, temporary flexibility of work, information and communication technologies (ICTs), and job insecurity. However, this study suggested that owing to the fear linked with Covid-19 in terms of infections and transmission to loved ones, many medical practitioners first alienate themselves from the work, which culminates in their quitting. Based on the recommendation of Baron and Kenny (1986) we believed that fear of Covid-19 with intervening variable (Job estrangement) could possibly explain why many health practitioners are leaving the country for better employment abroad. H₀₃: Job estrangement does not significantly mediate the relationship between fear of Covid-19 and employees' turnover intentions among employees of state-owned hospitals in Gusau metropolis.

Conceptual Framework

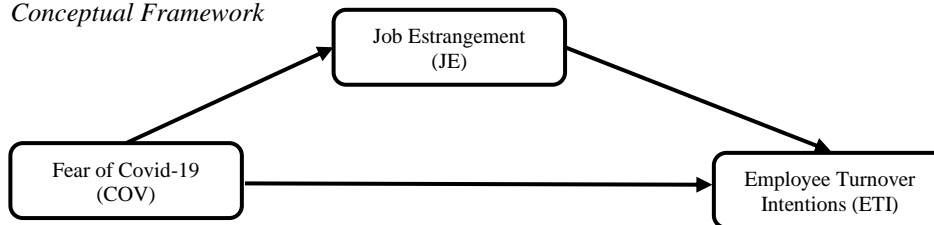


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 above depicts the conceptual framework. The independent variable is fear of Covid-19 predicting the dependent variable employees' turnover intentions through the mediating variable job estrangement.

3. Methodology

The study used a quantitative research technique to investigate the role of job estrangement in mediating the role between fear of Covid-19 and employee turnover intentions. Quantitative research includes the use of numerical values to represent a certain concept (Afifi, May, Donatello, & Clark, 2020). As a result, the study made use of a cross-sectional and survey research methodology. In cross-section research, also known as one-shot research, data is collected only once, maybe over a period of days, weeks, or months, to answer a study topic (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In contrast to longitudinal research, data is



gathered twice or more times to address research questions (Bryman & Bell, 2019). Furthermore, the study used a survey research design, which entails processes for gathering vast volumes of data via interviews or questionnaires to make accurate and sensible generalisations, exploration of relationships between constructs, and facilitation of sophisticated statistical analysis (Hair, Wolfinbarger, Ortinau & Bush, 2010). According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), survey questions are often arranged interviews and structured observation or self-administered questionnaires that a respondent completes on his or her own, either on paper or through a computer.

The population of the study (1,372) comprised of the entire staff (Doctors, Nurses, Midwives and Laboratory Scientists) of the Zamfara state-owned hospital situated in Gusau metropolis namely; King Fahad Children Hospital (136), Yarima Bakura Specialist Hospital (685), Farida Hospital (172) and General Hospital Gusau (379) according to the administrative department of each hospital. The sample size of 301 for the study was derived using below Dillman, Smyth and Christian (2014) formula for finite population computed mathematically:

$$n = \frac{[(N)(P)(1-P)]}{[(N-1)\left(\frac{B}{C}\right)^2 + (P)(1-P)]} \dots\dots\dots 1$$

Where: n denotes the computed sample size required for the desired degree of precision; N denotes the study population size; and P denotes the proportion of the population expected to be selected, which, according to Dillman et al. (2014), is commonly set as a 50% conservative estimate. As a result, N = 1372, P = 50% (0.5), B = 0.05, C = 1.96, and n = Sample size.:

Furthermore, to reduce non-response error, which can occur as a result of failure to obtain information from several subjects included in the sample (Sekaran & Bourgie, 2016) and can introduce bias into the study, Israel (2013) recommended increasing the sample size by 30% to compensate for non-response errors. As a result, the present research sample size of 301 was expanded by 30% (1.30 * 301 = 391) to 391. To guarantee that every employee has an equal chance of being chosen, a self-administered questionnaire was sent to respondents through stratified random sampling and proportional sampling. Each hospital functioned as a stratum, with each stratum equal to the sample size stated in Table 1.

After distributing 391 questionnaires to the domain of the research, 219 were completed and returned, reflecting a 56% success rate. According to Ali, Ciftci, Nanu, Cobanoglu and Ryu (2020), there is no "golden rule" for determining an appropriate response rate. According to Mellahi and Harris (2016), what constitutes a minimal response rate differs among academic areas. According to Ali et al. (2020), the average response rate for credible generalisation in academics is 55%. As a result, the study's response rate is 56%, which may be considered successful and acceptable for pertinent generalisation and suggestions. The study is quantitative in nature and primary data were utilised. Instruments from past studies were adapted to measure the constructs of the study. Fear of Covid-19



was measured using the 7-item Fear of Covid-19 scale of Ahorsu et al. (2020) with a reported Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.86 suggesting high internal consistency of the scale. A unidimensional 5-point Likert scale scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample of the item is; “It makes me uncomfortable to think about Corona”

Table 1: Stratified Sampling Technique

Name of Hospitals	Number of Staff	Proportional Sampling	Returned & Valid Questionnaire	% of Returned Questionnaire
King Fahad Children Hospital	136	39	23	59
Yarima Bakura Specialist Hospital	685	195	104	53
Farida Hospital	172	49	23	47
General Hospital Gusau	379	108	69	64
Total	1372	391	219	223

Source: Author's Computation

Turnover decisions are mostly influenced by the intention to resign. In measuring the turnover intention of workers, it is possible to predict the actual turnover; this is because turnover intention is a variable that is consistently and always preceding voluntary turnover. The instrument used for this construct was adapted from Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins and Klesh (1975). The instrument consists of 3-item measured in 5-point Likert scale with a reported Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.85 suggesting high internal consistency of the scale. A sample of the item is; “I often think about quitting”. Job estrangement was assessed using 10-item work alienation measures of Hirschfeld and Feild, (2000). The measurement was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale with a reported Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.80 suggesting high internal consistency of the scale. A sample of the item is; “I don't enjoy work; I just put in my time to get paid”.

The study used SmartPLS 3.3 in other to compute the two-basic model of PLS path modelling which are the measurement model and structural model. As noted by Haenlein and Kaplan (2004), some of the reasons for the use of PLS were its superiority over others in terms of flexible restriction in respect to distribution and study population and it has the possibility of providing a more reliable and accurate computation of mediating and moderating effects because its accounts for error that is capable of reducing the possible relationship as well as the improvement of the validation of the theory (Henseler & Fassott, 2010 & Tarka, 2018). Data was analysed using Statistical Software for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 to perform preliminary analyses such as the test of normality, non-response bias, and common method bias; Harman's one-factor test equalled 33% variance, showing that no common method bias existed. The data was verified clean and fit for further analysis. SmartPLS 3.3 was used to analyse and compute the two fundamental models of PLS path modelling, which are the measurement model and the structural model. One of the advantages of utilising PLS, as emphasised by Tarka (2018), is that it has an advantage over others in terms of flexible limits, study distribution and population, and it can produce more trustworthy and precise computations.



4. Results

The research findings were discussed under the two basic models of structural equation modelling (SEM); the measurement and structural models using Smart-PLS 3.3. The study investigated the item loadings, internal consistency, and average variance extracted in the

Table 2 Item Loadings, Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Items	Loadings	CA	CR	AVE
<i>Employee Turnover Intention (ETI)</i>	ETI1	0.900	0.801	0.884	0.719
	ETI2	0.890			
	ETI3	0.744			
<i>Fear of COVID-19 (COV)</i>	COV1	0.869	0.783	0.845	0.537
	COV2	0.647			
	COV3	0.906			
	COV6	0.452			
	COV7	0.725			
<i>Job Estrangement (JE)</i>	JE1	0.769	0.776	0.842	0.502
	JE2	0.778			
	JE4	0.885			
	JE6	0.537			
	JE8	0.776			
	JE9	0.467			
JE10	0.466				

Note: CA= Cronbach Aloha, CR= Composite Reliability and AVE= Average Variance Extracted
Source: Author's Computation

measurement model. This study performed a collinearity test and discovered no correlation between the independent variables, as suggested by (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2019). Only items with a loading of 0.40 or higher were kept after the item loadings were analysed to determine the effect of their removal on content validity, and it was discovered that keeping items with a loading of 0.40 or higher increased the internal consistency reliability of the construct, as recommended by (Hair et al., 2021). Items COV4, COV5, JE3, JE5, and JE7 were eliminated because their loading values were less than 0.40. Internal consistency was tested using composite reliability and Cronbach alpha, and it met the threshold condition of 0.70, as the lowest is 0.776 and the maximum is 0.801. Cronbach's alpha (CA) is 0.842 and the highest value is 0.884. Furthermore, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was analysed to confirm convergent validity, and all met the 0.50 level established by Fornell and Larcker (1981). In other words, the AVE values were more than 0.5, ranging from 0.502 to 0.719.

To verify the discriminant validity of the construct, the study adopted firstly the Fornell and Larker (1981) criteria. The square root of the AVE of every construct should exceed



the correlations among constructs. The values of the square root of AVEs are greater than that of the inter-correlation among the constructs in the model. The square roots of AVEs are represented with the bolded value on the diagonal in Table 3 below

Table 3: Fornell and Larcker Criterion Discriminant Validity

Construct	COV	ETI	JE
COV	0.733		
ETI	0.342	0.849	
JE	0.103	-0.294	0.708

Source: Author's Computation

To further establish discriminant validity, the study used the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) correlation ratio recently introduced by Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2015) owing to the lack of the Fornell and Larcker Criterion and Partial Cross-loading to discover a lack of discriminant validity. The constructs intercorrelations must be less than the 0.9 as specified by Henseler et al. (2015) and Hair et al. (2021) when the constructs are conceptually similar to confirm discriminant validity. Whereas, the value of the constructs intercorrelations must be smaller than 0.85 when the constructs are conceptually different to confirm discriminant validity. Consequently, constructs of employees' turnover intentions (ETI), fear of Covid-19 (COV) and job estrangement (JE) are conceptually different, the value of the construct intercorrelations must thus be less than 0.85 to confirm discriminant validity. The construct intercorrelations displayed in table 4 and figure 2 below are all less than 0.85, with the highest being 0.722 as such discriminant validity is confirmed.

Table 4: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio of Correlations Discriminant Validity

Construct	COV	ETI	JE
COV			
ETI	0.540		
JE	0.616	0.722	

Source: Author's Computation

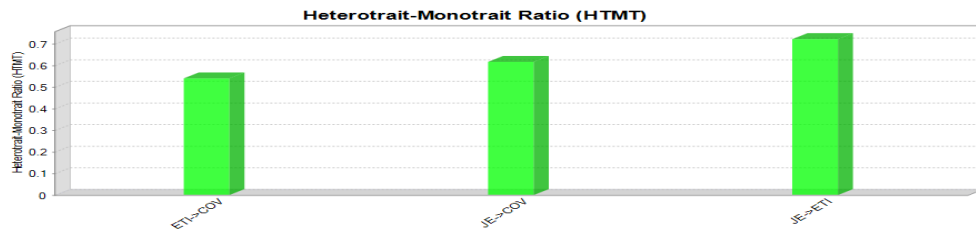


Figure 2: Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio



Structural Model

The structural model was used to test the study's hypotheses. The hypothesis was tested using 5000 bootstrapping for both the direct and indirect (mediated) relationships. To test predictive relevance, the effect size and blindfolding were also evaluated.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 5: Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	Standard Error	T-value	P-value	Decision
H ₀₁	COV-> ETI	0.152	0.079	1.908	0.057	Not supported
H ₀₂	JE->ETI	0.789	0.063	12.559	0.000	Not supported

$R^2 = 0.695$

Source: Author's Computation

The first hypothesis (H₀₁) which states fear of Covid-19 does not have a significant effect on employee turnover intentions among employees of state-owned hospitals in Gusau metropolis is not supported because the T-value of 1.908 is greater than 1.645 threshold for 10% significance. This is in tandem with the work of Nashwan *et al.* (2021) and Labragu and De Los Santos (2020) which found that fear of Covid-19 significantly predicts employee turnover intentions. Based on the notion that fear is an effective state protecting one against danger (Covid-19) (Ledoux, 2014). Hence, to avoid the risk of contracting the virus as first respondents, these employees contemplate quitting. The second hypothesis (H₀₂) which states that job estrangement does not have a significant effect on employee turnover intentions among employees of state-owned hospitals in Gusau metropolis is not supported because the T-value of 12.559 is greater than 2.576 threshold and P-value is significant at 1%. This is in agreement with the work of Nawafleh, Alkhalayleh and Qerba (2021) and Gözükarar *et al.* (2017) who asserted that when an employee feels alienated from work he may physically be present but psychologically the employee is disengaged. Finally, the R-squared stood at 0.695 which inferred that 70% of variations in the endogenous variable is jointly explained by the exogenous variable and the mediator while the remaining 30% is explained by variables not included in the study.

To ascertain the mediation effect, direct effect, indirect effect and total effect are required (Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010). The total effect is the effect of the predictor variable on the outcome variable without the inclusion of the intervening variable (Agler & De-Boeck, 2017). The direct effect is the effect of the predictor variable on the outcome variable when the mediating variable is incorporated. While the indirect effect is the effect of the predictor variable on the outcome variable via the mediating variable (Cheah, Memon, Chuah, Ting, & Ramayah, 2018).

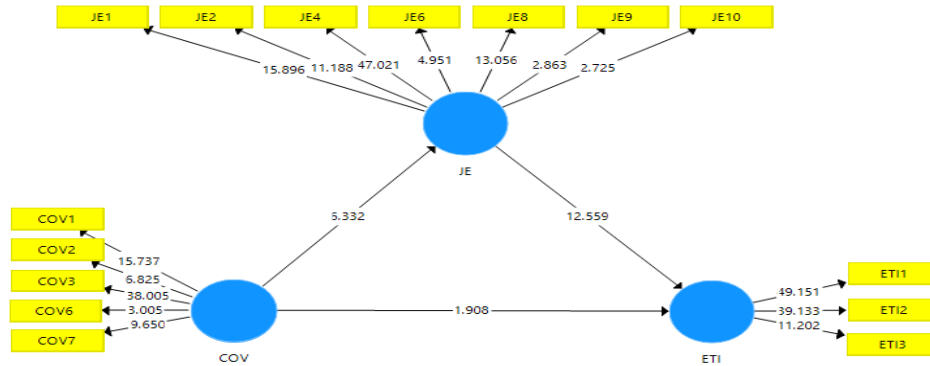


Figure 3: Structural Model for Mediation

Table 6: Result of the Direct, Indirect and Total Effect

Total Effect		Direct Effect		Indirect Effect	
Coefficient (β)	P-value	Coefficient (β)	P-value	Coefficient (β)	P-value
0.437	(15.434)0.000	0.152	(1.908)0.057	0.430	(5.990)0.000

Source: Author's Computation

From the output result presented in Table 6 above, clearly show that, all the effects are significant at 1% with the exception of direct effect which is more significant at 10%. Total effect is significant with ($\beta=0.437$, $p=0.000$), the direct effect is significant at 10% with ($\beta=0.152$, $p=0.057$) and the indirect effect is significant with ($\beta= 0.430$, $p=0.000$) at 1%. According to Zhao et al. (2010), there is full mediation when the direct effect is not significant but the indirect effect is significant. However, when both the direct effect and the indirect effect are significant, then partial mediation exist. Consequently, from table 7 above, it can be seen that both direct and indirect effects are significant as such partial mediation exists.

Furthermore, Zhao et al. (2010) noted that it is crucial to determine the upper and lower level confidence interval. They asserted that notwithstanding the statistical significance of the indirect effect, both confidence interval levels should be on the same side. In other words, if the lower confidence interval is positive, the upper confidence interval level should be positive vice-versa. The 2.5% and 97.5% are recommended for the lower confidence interval level and the upper confidence interval level respectively. As such, from Table 8 below both the lower confidence interval level and the upper confidence interval level are positive and there is no zero (0) between them. Consequently, it can be concluded that mediation exists; the third hypothesis which states that job estrangement (JE) does not significantly mediate the relationship between Fear of Covid-19 (COV) and employee turnover intentions (ETI) within the employees of state-owned hospitals in Gusau metropolis is hereby not supported.



Table 7: Result of Indirect Effect and Confidence Interval

Relationship	Indirect Effect			Mediation
	Coefficient (β)	S.E	T-value	P-value
COV->JE->ET	0.430	0.072	5.990	0.000
				BI (2.5%; 97.5%) (0.217;0.593)

Source: Author's Computation

Effect Size and Predictive Relevance

The study assessed the effect size of the exogenous variable on endogenous variable using the f^2 . Cohen (1988) recommended that f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, represents small, medium, and large effects respectively. Q^2 was used to determine the predictive relevance of the exogenous variable. According to Garson (2016), the Q^2 value of 0 or negative showed that the model is irrelevant in predictive endogenous variable. The results are presented in Table 8 below Q^2 is 0.412 revealing that the model has predictive relevance.

Table 8: Effect Size and Predictive Relevance

Construct	F^2	Effect size
COV	0.154	Medium
JE	0.643	Large

Q^2 0.412

Source: Author's Computation

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The health sector serves as a critical sector for easing the family burden and a significant contributor to the economy as such understanding the reason why many health practitioners are quitting their jobs in Nigeria is an important contribution of this study. Employee turnover intentions often predict the actual turnover which constitutes cost of the organisation in terms of training new entrants into the organisation based on the assumptions of the theory of planned behaviour. The study concluded that fear of Covid-19 significantly predicts employee turnover intentions via the mediating variable job estrangement which is perceived as a psychological detachment from one's work. Based on the findings the following recommendations are advanced government must address the fear surrounding Covid-19 through proper orientation to alleviate unnecessary fear surrounding the pandemic. Management must be vigilant to sense any sign of job estrangement; a psychological state capable of leading to employee turnover. Fear of Covid can result in job estrangement since both are psychological states requiring diligent examination and reorientations.

Despite the significant contribution of the study, it is not without her limitations. As such these limitations are identified and suggestions for further studies made, the constructed self-report questionnaires are based on personal beliefs, linear and social desirability bias. Respondents may or may not be truthful in their responses. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies should be employed in future studies. The study was done in the public health sector, specifically in Zamfara State. As such, the



generalisation of the study findings may be problematic. If the study is conducted in a different setting or sector of the economy, the results may alter. Future research can be conducted in both private and public health institutions around the country to ensure accurate generalisation. The investigation was cross-sectional in design. In future research on the mediating effects of job estrangement in the relationship between fear of Covid-19 and employee turnover intentions can be explored within a certain period of time to determine the fluctuations that may or may not occur in daily, weekly, and monthly behavioural outcomes. The study only considered a mediating relationship. Future studies can explore a moderating relationship using constructs such as coping strategy, self-efficacy, hope, self-esteem and trust as moderators.

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