

Job Context-Related Variables and Academic Staff Commitment in Nigerian Federal Universities

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ABSTRACT

The study observed the influence of job context-related variables (supervision, job security, organisational policy, working condition, and interpersonal relations) on academic staff commitment in Nigerian federal universities. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study population comprised all academic staff from the six federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria. Two out of the six federal universities were randomly selected. Using simple random sampling technique, sample for the study comprised 400 lecturers. A self-designed and validated instrument titled "Job Context and Academic Staff Commitment Questionnaire" (JOCASCQ) was used for data collection. Data were analysed using multiple regression analysis. The results showed a significant positive influence of job-context related variables on academic staff commitment in Nigerian federal universities. The results showed supervision to have a more positive influence on academic staff commitment with ($\beta=0.335$, $p<0.05$). Likewise, job security exhibited positive influence on academic staff commitment ($\beta=0.255$, $p<0.05$). Furthermore, interpersonal relations ($\beta=0.237$, $p<0.05$); working conditions ($\beta=0.183$, $p<0.05$); and organisational policy and administration ($\beta=0.172$, $p<0.05$) significantly have positive influence on academic staff commitment. Finally, the results indicated $R^2 = .412$, this revealed that 41.2% of the academic staff commitment in the selected Nigerian federal universities could be explained by the job context-related variables. The study therefore concluded that commitment exhibited by academic staff in Nigerian federal universities depend largely on the job context-related variables.

Keywords: Job context, Variables, Academic staff, Commitment, Nigerian, Universities.

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Highlights of this paper

- The study observed the influence of job context-related variables (supervision, job security, organisational policy, working condition, and interpersonal relations) on academic staff commitment in Nigerian federal universities.
- This study concludes that commitment exhibited by academic staff in Nigerian federal universities depend largely on the job context-related variables.

1. INTRODUCTION

In any organisation, a committed workforce is considered as a necessary resource for its performance and development. No doubt that committed employees go extra mile to contribute immensely to the achievement of organisational goals and objectives. However, the degree of employees' commitment to their jobs can be affected by circumstances within and outside the workplace. Universally, universities reserved the mission to produce a high quality of manpower by harnessing effective teaching and research that benefits cultures, societies and the economies. Universities are therefore under immense duties to meet the expectations of their work so as to contribute to the national growth and development. To fulfilling these, academic staff of universities can be regarded as the wheel on which the pivot of university education revolves.

Based on literatures, human capital is one of the key resources of any organisation. This study therefore makes a supposition that the universities in Nigeria are human organisations whose success or failure is contingent on the attitude of employees to work. Worthy of note is that, issues on academic staff commitment in universities have attracted the attention of the public educators and other stakeholders in education system. This is so because the extent to which an employee is committed to discharging their duties in an organisation determines the success of such organisation. In this manner, commitment is described as the measure of productive strength that an employee exerts towards achieving organisational goals. Thus, academic staff commitment is the productive strength of the academic staff identification with and involvement in their given duties towards achieving institutional objectives. Therefore, as used in this study, academic staff can be referred to as the lecturers.

Lecturing work is complex and multifaceted and by implication occurs in contexts that are demanding; physically, mentally, socially, emotionally and intellectually. As such, to lecture among other academic engagements of lecturers requires personal commitment to maintain enthusiasm and to be actively involved in the work. It is therefore not unfair to say that not only social and economic opportunities provided by institutions to their academic staff, but also, relationship within the system, rate of response to academic staff welfare, favourable work conditions, commensurate salary, benefits, and allowances, security on the job, supportive supervision, and fairness in policy administration plays an important role to influencing academic staff commitment.

In Nigeria universities, several factors have potential influence on academic staff commitment one of such factors is considered to be 'job context'. Job context as identified by Herzberg (1967) is a term used in referring to various hygiene or maintenance factors including; organisational policy and administration, interpersonal relations (with superiors, peers, and subordinates), supervision salary, working conditions, and job security. Herzberg referred to these as hygiene factors since they are necessary to maintain a reasonable level of satisfaction at work and can also be a cause of dissatisfaction if not well harnessed. Herzberg argued that these factors ordinarily did not serve as satisfiers, but when lacking could as well be a source of dissatisfaction. Moreover, the extent to which the individual need dispositions of employees are gratified and integrated in the process of achieving organisational objectives goes a long way to determining the amount of strength and effort an employee will put forth for the success of the establishment.

With regard to the aforementioned, for any organisation such as university to function effectively, the mode of management is considered as the life-blood. This suggest that, the success of any academic institution could hinge on

the commitment and attitude shown by the academic staff who performs its task leading to the accomplishment of the set objectives as well as the job context guiding their work roles within the institution. It is against this backdrop that the study aimed at investigating the influence of job context-related variables on academic staff commitment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term 'commitment' has been studied in different forms in the psychological literature. [Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran \(2005\)](#) described commitment as the willingness to persevere in a course of action. In this manner, [Meyer \(2006\)](#) explained commitment as a force that glues an individual to a course of action. In this regard, it will not be out of place to view commitment as the willingness of employees to exert productive energy and sincere loyalty to their organisations. This involves a strong desire of the academic staff to stay on the job, willingness to perform their given duties and to accept institutional goals and values. Corroborating this, [Abdullah and Ramay \(2011\)](#) refers to commitment as a focus and desire of attachment of an employee to a given task and to the organisation with which he works. In the same vein, [Akpan \(2013\)](#) described employee commitment as the extent to which an employee identifies with his/her organisation and its goals and the willingness to stay in the organisation.

From the forgoing, it can be inferred that commitment is not a gain saying phenomenon or an imaginable cause of action but rather an expression of productive strength, energy and efforts geared towards actualising the set organisational goals. Commitment therefore implies consistency and persistency in a given course of action. This is so because, an employee cannot be said to be committed until relevant efforts have been incurred to benefit the working organisation. At appointment, each employee is saddled with certain responsibility or responsibilities to be carried out with line of actions. Hence, the amount of effort a worker energises in the process of carrying out his/her duties is embedded in his/her degree of commitment. In other words, one can say that the extent of a worker's effort exerted to given duties is the function of his/her commitment. Therefore, commitment brings decline in absenteeism, reduce turnover, and consequently development in performance and productivity.

[Meyer \(2006\)](#) postulated the model of employee commitment to include affective, continuance and normative commitment. Affective commitment connotes a desire that has to do with an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organisation. The continuance commitment connotes a need that has to do with an employee's decision to remain or discontinue his/her membership in the organisation. It relates to gain versus loss (cost of leaving the organisation). The normative commitment reflects an obligation that has to do with an employee's feeling of compulsion or obligation to remain in the organisation. However, the degree of any employee's commitment can be induced by internal and external factors within the workplace. This brings to fore the predictive ability of job context-related variables to inducing employees' commitment.

Job context is a term used in referring to the hygiene or maintenance factors which comprise the physiological, safety and love needs. Job context connotes those extrinsic factors that an employee as a person does not have much control over; they relate more to the work environment where people works than to the nature of the work itself ([Schermerhorn, 2003](#)). Job context-related variables operate primarily to dissatisfy employees when they are not present or not well articulated to meet staff needs expectations and aspiration. The job context/hygiene factors are concerned with job characteristics or the organisational setting, such as reward system ([Adair, 2009](#)) organisational policy and administration, supervision, interpersonal relations, working conditions, and security on the job ([Ukaegbu, 2000; Adair, 2009](#)).

Concurrently, when the job context-related variables are poor or not well integrated, employees tend to get dissatisfied on the job. However, when the factors are well integrated to meet employees' needs on the job, dissatisfaction is removed and commitment to work is enhanced. In this regard, it can therefore be said that

favourable job context within a workplace serves as a removal of dissatisfaction in the work place, leading to commitment of employees on the job. Favourable job context are needed to evade distastefulness at work and to refute biased treatment, thereby, igniting workers behavior toward commitment to their duties. Affirming this, [Adeniji \(2011\)](#) remarked that employees often show their dissatisfaction if there is no adequate provision for job security, promotion and when unfairness is exhibited.

Empirical review of literature in the study conducted by [Kwasi \(2011\)](#) on the application of Fredrick Herzberg's two-Factor theory in assessing and understanding employee motivation at work revealed that, to motivate employees, managers need to effectively articulate the factors in order to meet diverse needs of their employees. Consequently, the researcher concluded that it would be more prudent for managers to harmonise the motivator factors and hygiene factors but with more prominence on the hygiene factors since they appears to have more influence in motivating employees to be committed at work.

Empirical studies have linked the job context-related variable to the commitment of employees. For example, to [Mor-Barak \(2006\)](#) in his research concluded that effective supervision at workplace is a usable tool to providing protection from unreasonable job demands, to offer emotional and social support on the job, and to guide workers in discussing their challenges on the job so as to help foster better work conditions for the achievement of the set organisational goals. In this manner, [Gentry \(2006\)](#) admitted that employees who are given a voice, open communication, recognition, support by their respective supervisors, and cared for, tend to remain in the organisation for a long period of time and also exert productive commitment. More so, [Mor-Barak \(2006\)](#) in his study acknowledged that effective supervision at the worker's level can contribute immensely to job satisfaction, employees' commitment and retention. A study by [Ajayi et al. \(2011\)](#) on work environment as correlate of academic staff job performance in south west Nigerian universities showed a significant correlation between work environment conditions and job performance of academic staff. A study conducted by [Cecunc \(2004\)](#) also reported that for an organisation to improve employee commitment, the organisation must provide favorable work conditions of attractive rewards and recognition, cordial and friendly relations at work place.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The university system of any nation is seen as a pillar by which national uniqueness and civil society are built through shared effort and commitment to a common goal. The society solemnly expects such to produce high level of manpower for human and national development. Central to the actualization of the aforementioned are the academic staff whose roles and commitment are essential in education production function. Thus, studies have shown that the three cardinal jobs of teaching, research and community service cannot be achieved without the commitment of academic staff. Inadequate commitment can be traced to some academic staff rushing their lectures when examination has drawn nearer, some using graduate students to lecture, record scores and compute results. While previous studies have focused on job content-related contributory factors such as recognition, responsibility, achievement, and job itself; little attention has been given to those non-job related factors called job context which include supervision, job security, organisational policy, working condition, salary, and interpersonal relations. The present study is therefore an effort to fill this gap in literature by providing prospect to the potential influence of job context-related variables on academic staff commitment in Nigerian federal universities, hence; this study.

4. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The present study aims at determining whether job context-related variables (supervision, job security, organisational policy, working condition, salary, and interpersonal relations) influences academic staff commitment in Nigerian federal universities.

5. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The following hypothesis was formulated to guide the study:

H₀₁: Job context-related variables do not significantly influence academic staff commitment in Nigerian federal universities.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. Population for the study comprised all academic staff from the six federal universities in Southwestern, Nigeria. Two out of the six federal universities were randomly selected. Using simple random sampling technique, sample for the study comprised 400 lecturers. Data were collected from the respondents using a self-designed close-ended questionnaire titled “Job Context and Academic Staff Commitment Questionnaire” (JOCASCQ). This was used to elicit information on influence of job context-related variables on academic staff commitment. The instrument was validated using both face and construct validity procedures. To ascertain reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was carried out; the analysis was done using Cronbach alpha from which a reliability index of 0.83 was obtained. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

7. RESULTS

Hypothesis: Job context-related variables do not significantly influence academic staff commitment in Nigeria universities.

To test the hypothesis, analysis was carried out using multiple regression analysis to predict the influence of each of the job context-related variables on academic staff commitment in Nigeria federal universities. The results are presented in Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 as respectively shown.

Table-1. Model summary (job context-related variables).

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.642 ^a	.412	.381	2.599

a. Predictors: (Constant), interpersonal relation, supervision, organisational policy, working conditions, job security.

b. Dependent variable: Academic staff commitment.

Table 1 describes the model summary of the tested hypothesis, showing multiple correlation ($R = .642^a$) between the group of independent variable (job context-related variables) and dependent variable (academic staff commitment). Furthermore, the R Square (R^2) value of .412, explained that 41.2% of the variance (academic staff commitment) can be predicted by the identified job context-related variables.

Table-2. ANOVA^a (job context-related variables).

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	444.483	5	88.897	13.161	.000 ^b
Residual	634.907	94	6.754		
Total	1079.390	99			

Source: Field survey, 2019.

Details from Table 2 revealed that overall model is significant at F statistics value of 13.161 at $p < 0.05$. This supports the rejection of null hypothesis and thus accepts the alternate hypothesis. Therefore, the combinations of

job context-related variables significantly have positive influence on academic staff commitment in Nigerian federal universities.

Table-3. Coefficients (job context-related variables).

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	B	Std. error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	13.463	4.815		2.796	.006
Supervision	1.194	.290	.335	4.113	.000
Working Condition	.517	.231	.183	2.240	.027
Organisational Policy and Administration	.504	.233	.172	2.164	.033
Job Security	.793	.263	.255	3.013	.003
Interpersonal Relations	.759	.263	.237	2.893	.005

a. Dependent variable: Academic staff commitment.

Table 3 describes the magnitude of contribution of the variables influencing academic staff commitment in Nigerian federal universities. The results revealed supervision to have more significant positive influence on academic staff commitment with β (.335) at $p < 0.05$. Second predictor of academic staff commitment among job context-related variable is job security, which exhibited β score of (0.255) at $p < 0.05$. Furthermore, interpersonal relations ($\beta = 0.237$, $p < 0.05$); working conditions ($\beta = 0.183$, $p < 0.05$); and organisational policy and administration ($\beta = 0.172$, $p < 0.05$) have positive and significant influence on academic staff commitment. Accordingly, the entire independent variables were statistically significant at the 95% confidence level in the regression model. From the forgoing, the hypothesis which stated that job context-related variables do not significantly influence academic staff commitment in Nigerian federal universities is therefore rejected. This implies that job context-related variables significantly influence academic staff commitment in Nigerian federal universities.

8. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As it were, the study is aimed at ascertaining the predictive ability of job context-related variable on academic staff commitment in Nigerian federal universities. From the results Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3, supervision in universities was found to be the highest predictor of academic staff commitment in the study areas. The results may be linked with the position of Mor-Barak (2006) who opined that, employees who are supervised are more responsive to the organisation. Similarly, study conducted by Kwasi (2011) affirmed that employees that experienced functional support at workplace tend to remain and be committed to the organisation. Findings from this study also revealed a significant positive influence of job security on academic staff commitment. The finding of this study agrees with that of Iverson (1996) who remarked that job security has a significant impact on employees' commitment. Other researchers have argued that the fear of job loss may motivate employees to engage in individual action capable of enhancing their capabilities, thus causing them to cope actively with the threat (Sverke and Hellgren, 2002).

The significant positive influence of interpersonal relations on academic staff commitment was also substantiated by Cecunc (2004) who affirmed the tendency of employees to be more productive at work when they have good interpersonal relationships. More so, the positive and significant influence of working condition on academic staff commitment is equally supported by Cecunc (2004) who reported that for an organisation to improve employee commitment, such organisation must provide favourable physical working conditions. Furthermore, organisational policy was also found to be positively connected with commitment profile of academic staff. This is supported by Akpan (2013) who noted that policies, procedures, and practices that reflect a genuine interest in employee gratification and thereby encouraging organisational commitment.

9. CONCLUSION

The present study admitted the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternate hypothesis. By implication, the study concluded that there is significant positive influence of job context-related variables on academic staff commitment in Nigerian federal universities. The study further revealed supervision to be the supreme predictor of academic staff commitment, followed by job security and interpersonal relations, working conditions and organisational policy respectively. As shown by R^2 in Table 3, one can say that 41.2% of the academic staff commitment in Nigerian universities can be explained by the job context-related variables. It was therefore concluded that commitment exhibited by academic staff depend largely on the job context-related variables.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are substantially made:

1. For Nigeria universities to elicit and maintain high level of commitment from the academic staff, it is important that the university managers and policy makers, government, and other stakeholders take into cognisance all decisions on job context as it affects academic staff commitment.
2. Effective supervision within universities must be adequacy considered and if universities management want a committed workforce; adequate supervision should be made where necessary in order to avoid laxity.
3. Also, job security of academic staff should be ensured. Thus, academic staff should not when on job begin to develop fear of being laid off. More importantly, academic staff should not take advantage of their job security to exhibit laxity and ineptitude at work but rather reciprocate the good gesture with a reasonable degree of commitment expected.
4. A friendly working environment is also as good as food for the soul in eliciting commitment from academic staff. There should be good working relationship among members of staff in the universities so as to encourage organisational citizenship behavior.
5. It is also recommended that government and the universities management should provide improved working conditions for the academic staff by providing for more standardized safe and secure environment, prompt promotion and by all means encourage career development.

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