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Stages of Organisational Commitment among Librarians in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

The modern day university library environment is characterised by unprecedented rates of talent mobility, transfers and turnover, as employees constantly seek to satisfy their diverse individual needs, leading to the growing concern among organisations about retention of talented and experienced employees. Ebru (1995) maintains that high job mobility and transfers often occur in harsh economic conditions when people experience poor working conditions and receive inadequate monetary compensation. According to Ebru, a situation where a librarian does not receive adequate monetary compensation to provide the basic needs of his family, he or she is likely to be frustrated and dissatisfied. Lack of job satisfaction may culminate in reduced commitment and a precursor to librarians quitting their jobs in search of better alternatives. Library employees sometimes move from public to private sector, and vice versa. In some cases, they move from one job to another, all in a bid to improve their working conditions. To overcome the uncertainty in the labour market occasioned by increasing rates of employee turnover and absenteeism, organisations are devising strategies to retain their valued employees by igniting commitment to job and organisation. Labour market trends in library and information science field have continued to present increased career opportunities for professional librarians in Nigerian university libraries, as well as recruitment and retention challenges for the employing organisations as the age of knowledge worker unfolds. Pors and Johannsen (2002) succinctly posited that social and psychological factors in the environment would play a pivotal role in recruiting and retaining professionals in workplaces like libraries.

As a result, researches focusing on employee commitment in university libraries have received considerable attention over the years.(source)

A university library is defined within the context of this study as a library attached to a university, which serves two complementary purposes: to support the institution's curriculum, as well as the research effort of the university faculty and students (Curson, 2009; Yusuf and Iwu, 2010; Eze and Uzoigwe, 2013).

The main purpose of a university library, as stated in Aina (2004), is to support the four cardinal objectives of the university, namely teaching, learning, research and community/public service. To achieve this laudable aim, university libraries would require an efficient, vibrant, competent and highly motivated workforces, particularly in the professional cadre to cater to the diverse information needs of their various patron communities, and this simply underscores the important role of librarians. A librarian is defined within the context of this study as someone who has received from a recognised institution both academic and professional training designed to equip him or her with requisite knowledge and skills for organising and administering a library. He or she is required to possess a minimum qualification of a Bachelor's degree in library and information science. Since the human resource is a library organisation's greatest asset for optimal utilisation, a committed workforce should be regarded as an organisation's competitive advantage for greater performance and enhanced service delivery.

Accentuating the importance of commitment, Drucker (2006) opined that unless commitment is made, there is only promises and hopes, no plans. The concept of commitment is defined as a person's belief in a cause and pursuing the cause willingly,

intentionally, voluntarily, actively, passionately and relentlessly (Akinyemi, 2014). It is, however, possible for a commitment to wane, especially if the initial basis for commitment is not sustained or improved upon according to a person's perception and understanding (Akinyemi, 2014).

The concept of work commitment encompasses a broad range of job-related attitudes that consist of work ethic, job involvement, organisational commitment and commitment to one's career or profession. All these attitudes, however, interact to shape the conceptual framework for each individual work commitment (The Pennsylvania State University, 2011). The concept of organisational commitment has attracted considerable research interests in an attempt to understand and clarify the intensity and stability of employees' commitment or loyalty to the organisation (Lumley *et al.* 2011). *Organisational commitment*, a multi-faceted work variable, has been conceptually defined in several ways in the scholarly literature and there are numerous scales to measure them. However, the definitions and measures share a common theme in that organisational commitment is recognised as a bond or linkage of individual to the organisation; the definitions differ only in terms of how this bond is considered to have developed (Meyer *et al.*, 2007). According to Meyer *et al.*, (2007) and Bwowe, Marongwe (2018), to fully understand the concept of organisational commitment, it is necessary to understand the motives of employees who are committed to the organisation.

The Pennsylvania State University (2011) described organisational commitment as the extent to which an employee develops an attachment and feels a sense of allegiance to his or her employer. It is an employee's identification with and loyalty to

the organisation. It can be inferred from the definitions that organisational commitment is an emotional attachment employees have or loyalty they feel towards the organisation in which they work. Given that the nature of organisational commitment is layered in terms of one's commitment levels, Meyer and Allen (1997) developed a three-component model of commitment: affective, normative and continuance, to correspond with the three different psychological states.

Affective Commitment

This is, arguably, the most studied type and it refers to the individual's psychological or emotional attachment to, identification with and participation in an organisation (Meyer et al., 2007). Beck and Wilson (2000) described the concept as the adoption and internalisation of the organisational principles and standards. Similarly, Allen and Meyer (1997) described affective commitment as a psychological link between the employee and his or her organisation that makes it less likely that the employee will voluntarily leave the organisation. Individuals who are dedicated on an emotional level remain with the organisation because they perceive their personal employment relationship as congruent with the goals and values of the organisation (Beck and Wilson, 2000; Lumley et al., 2011). Studies on organisational commitment have provided ample empirical evidence that affectively committed members who possess a sense of emotional attachment are more committed to upholding the goals of the organisation, and are bound to work harder and perform better than those with weaker commitment.

Normative Commitment

This work behaviour refers to the employee who feels he or she owes it to the employer to retain membership of the organisation out of perceived obligation. For example, the organisation may have invested huge resources in training an employee who, in turn, considers it morally expedient to stay as a token of indebtedness to the organisation. Thus, the strength of normative commitment is influenced by the principle of reciprocal obligation between the organisation and its members (Sulliman and Illles, 2000). The reciprocal obligation is based on the social exchange theory, which suggests that a person receiving a benefit is under strong normative obligation to repay the benefit in some way (McDonald and Makin, 2001). Another antecedent of normative commitment is organisational tenure. For instance, it is not difficult to imagine an individual developing a sense of obligation to an organisation over a long-term employment. Studies on organisational commitment have found significant and positive relationships between normative commitment and overall satisfaction, job involvement, and also reported that normative commitment results in low withdrawal cognitions among employees (Meyer et al., 2007).

Continuance Commitment

This form of commitment is calculative in nature, and simply refers to an employee's feeling that he or she has to stay with the organisation because he or she perceives the costs of leaving are too enormous and not worthwhile. Thus, continuance commitment can be regarded as an instrumental attachment to the organisation, where the individual's association with the organisation is based on the assessment of the economic and social benefits gained (Beck and Wilson, 2000). Continuance commitment is manifested in an individual employee who maintains commitment to the

organisation because he or she is unable to match salary and / or benefits at another organisation. For many, the invested time and effort put into their work has developed what could be considered nontransferable investments. These investments include seniority, pensions accruals, friendship ties with co-workers, organisation-specific skills, and other special interests that may have accumulated over time.

Studies reveal that continuance commitment is the weakest form of commitment, whereby organisational members develop commitment because of the positive extrinsic rewards and benefits obtained through the effort-bargain without genuinely identifying with the goals and values of the organisation (Allen and Meyer, 1997).

Research has attempted to correlate organisational commitment with efficiency, absenteeism, turnover and various other aspects of performance with decidedly mixed outcomes (Bruce and Blackburn, 1992). Meyer et al. (2007) reported that employees who have longer tenure with organisations exhibit higher levels of commitment than those with short tenure. The reason is, however, not far-fetched; it is an established fact that the longer one serves in an organisation, the more likely that such a person have invested in it. On the contrary, Wright and Brunnette (2002) found that the more tenure the employee had on the job and with the organisation, the less impact their commitment had on performances. Also, Becker et al. (1996) reported that commitment to supervisor was more strongly related to performance than was commitment to organisation. However, most researches have indicated strong positive relationships between organizational commitment desirable employee organisational behaviour , such as high performance, better work attendance, higher employee retention, and increased organisational citizenship behavior, that is, a willingness to go over and

beyond their normal job requirements. It has been argued that having a committed workforce is a key factor in achieving competitive advantage.

According to Cohen (2003), committed organisational members contribute positively to the organisation, which is not the case with less committed members. Robbins (1998) submitted that the absence of commitment or low level commitment incur negative consequences for both organisations and individual employees. Lack of commitment or disloyalty is cited as an explanation of employee absenteeism, turnover, reduced effort expenditure and job dissatisfaction (Cohen, 2003).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Employee retention poses a critical challenge for most university libraries in Nigeria owing to the high rates of staff mobility, turnover and transfers among their employees, particularly in the professional cadre. Librarians in Nigeria's public service, including those serving in the university libraries, have been perceived as lacking in commitment to job and organisation, and management experts have long held that organisational goal of high productivity and quality service delivery is unattainable without enduring commitment of professional librarians who constitute the personnel bedrock of university libraries. Visits to some university libraries, backed by evidence from previous research, reveal that librarians experience low levels commitment as reflected in the high rates of turnover and absenteeism. This reduced commitment to job and organisation seems prevalent at a time Nigeria as a country is grappling with harsh economic realities, when increased commitment and extra effort are being expected of library employees to boost performance and improve service delivery. One way of tackling the problem of dwindling performance is to understand the commitment levels

of librarians serving in the nation's public universities. Since important extra-work behaviour, such as organisational citizenship are believed to be associated with organisational commitment, it seems logical that a university library with a committed workforce may be better positioned than its counterparts to meeting the challenges posed by a dynamic labour marketplace. Thus, the pursuit of a deeper understanding of the means by which commitment develops is critical and warrants empirical investigation. The purpose of the study, therefore, was to determine the levels of organisational commitment among librarians in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the level of affective commitment of librarians to their organisations.
2. Ascertain the level of normative commitment of librarians to their organisations.
3. Find out the level of continuance commitment of librarians to their organisations.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What is the level of affective commitment of librarians to their organisations?
2. What is the level of normative commitment of librarians to their organisations?
3. What is the level of continuance commitment of librarians to their organisations?

METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

The study adopted descriptive survey design. Nworgu (2006) describes descriptive survey as one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analysing data from a few persons or items considered to be representative of the entire group. This method was considered appropriate for the present study because it allowed the researchers to obtain relevant data to answer the research questions through the use of questionnaire. According to Nworgu, survey design enables a researcher to obtain vital information and facts about people, their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, preferences, perceptions and behaviour.

Sample

The entire population of professional librarians in the twelve federal and state-owned university libraries located in the six states that make up the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria (Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers) were surveyed, as the sample size was considered quite manageable. They, were 271 in number.

Instrument for Data Collection

“Librarians’ Organisational Commitment Questionnaire”, developed by the researcher based on available literature, was used to generate data related to the specific objectives of the study. The questionnaire contained 16 items on a four-point scale response mode of: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Validation and Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was face-validated by three experts –two in library and information science, and one in measurement and evaluation. The instrument was trial-tested for reliability on 20 librarians drawn from the University of Education, Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, who did not constitute part of the present study, so as to determine the internal consistency of the items in the questionnaire. The scores obtained from the trial-testing were analysed using Cronbach Alpha method, and an overall reliability coefficient value of 0.85 was obtained.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the data collected for the study.

RESULTS

The results of the data collected and analysed were presented in line with the research questions formulated for the study. In all, 226 usable copies of the questionnaire were returned out of a total of 271 copies distributed, yielding a response rate of 83.4 percent.

Research Question 1: What is the level of affective commitment of librarians to their organisations?

Table 1: Librarians' Mean Level of Affective Commitment to their Organisations

Items	Mean	Std.Dev.	Decision
Affective Commitment			
This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	3.14	.69	High

I would be happy to spend the rest of my career in this organisation.	3.15	.62	High
I really feel that this organisation's problems are my own.	3.39	.69	High
I do feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation.	3.51	.59	High
I do feel emotionally 'attached' to this organisation.	3.12	.60	High
Cluster Mean	3.55	.39	Very high

No. of respondents = 226

The results of data analysis in Table 1 show that librarians in the study area had a cluster means of 3.55 with a standard deviation of 0.39 on their level of affective commitment, which indicate very high affective commitment.

Research Question 2: What is the level of normative commitment of librarians to their organisations?

Table 2: Mean Responses of Librarians on the Level of Normative Commitment to their Organisations

Items	Mean	Std.Dev.	Decision
Normative Commitment			
I would feel guilty if I left my present organization	3.35	.56	High
This organisation deserves my loyalty	3.19	.60	High
I owe a great deal of my personal achievement to my organisations.	3.31	.69	High
I do feel an obligation to remain with my current employer.	3.39	.69	High
Cluster Mean	3.29	.34	High

No. of respondents = 226

The results in Table 2 show that librarians had a cluster mean of 3.29 with a standard deviation of 0.34 on their level of normative commitment, which indicate high normative commitment.

Research Question 3: What is the level of continuance commitment of librarians to their organisations?

Table 3: Librarians' Mean Responses to the Level of Continuance Commitment to Organisations

Items	Mean	Std.Dev.	Decision
Continuance Commitment			
It would be difficult for me to leave this organisation even when opportunity exists elsewhere.	2.31	.75	Low
I believe that I have too few opinions to consider leaving this organisation.	2.41	.59	Low
My commitment to this organisation makes it difficult working elsewhere	3.13	.60	High
Scarcity of alternative jobs makes it difficult to leave my present job.	3.39	.52	High
Leaving this organisation right now will disrupt the plans I have for myself.	2.35	.52	Low
Staying with my present organisation is a matter of necessity.	3.28	.74	High
Cluster Mean	2.43	.31	Low
Overall Mean	3.29	.31	High

No. of respondents = 226

What is the level of continuance commitment of librarians to their organisations?

The results in Table 3 showed that librarians had a cluster mean of 2.43 with a standard deviation of 0.31 on their level of continuance commitment, which indicate low continuance commitment. The overall mean of 3.29 with a standard deviation of 0.31 obtained from the data analysis that answered the research questions 1, 2 and 3 is an indication that the librarians in the study area exhibit high levels of organisational commitment to their institutions.

DISCUSSION of FINDINGS

The results of the study revealed that librarians in the study area have very high affective commitment, high normative commitment and low continuance commitment towards the organisations they work for. As observed in the literature, being affectively committed means developing a sense of attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organisation (Meyer and Allen, 1997); normative commitment is a commitment borne out of obligation (Hawkins, 1998); while continuance commitment is commitment borne out of necessity (Meyer et al., 2007).

The findings of the study are consistent with the findings of Hawkins (1998), which reported that library employees expressed affective commitment to their organisations by identifying with the goals of the organisation, internalising the goals and values of the organisation, and strongly desiring to remain part of the organisation. The findings are also in agreement with the findings of Iverson and Buttigieg (1999), which reported that affectively and normatively committed members maintain organisational membership and contribute more to the success of the organisation than continuance-committed members. The findings tally with Abdulkarim's (2010), as well as Lumley et al.'s, (2011) findings, which reported a high affective commitment and weak continuance commitment among a large percentage of organisational members.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The findings that librarians in the study area exhibit high levels of affective commitment implies that they genuinely identify with the goals and objectives of their organisations and simply adopt them as their own. It also implies that they are willing to exert considerable effort to advance organisational goals and strongly desire to maintain

membership of their organisations. This is expectedly so because they perceived the goals and values of their organisations to be compatible with or congruent to their own goals and values. This has translated to greater efforts and personal sacrifices expended by librarians towards the continuous success and well-being of their respective organisations.

The high normative commitment of librarians implied that their organisations have greatly invested in them in terms of training and capacity-building, and the employees feel a moral obligation to reciprocate by retaining membership of the institutions. The low level of continuance commitment, which is a weaker form of organisation commitment suggests that the librarians' decision to stay with their establishments may be a consequence of their genuine affiliation and adoption of the values and objectives of the organisations, rather than affiliation based on purely instrumental value, such as perceived costs of leaving the organisation or extrinsic rewards, such as salary and fringe benefits.

The findings indicate that librarians' levels of organisational commitment may not be continuous or consistent and may possibly wane if the present work situation is not sustained or improved upon. As observed in the literature, it is possible for a commitment to wane, especially if the initial basis for commitment is not sustained or improved upon. Research also indicates that lengthy tenure in an organisation based on continuance commitment without genuine affiliation and involvement in the organisation by members seems detrimental to organisational goal of high productivity and quality service delivery. The implication for management of university libraries is that, although the library employees' lengthy association with the organisation may, in fact, increase

the number and importance of benefits that are dependent on continued membership, such as pensions plan, medical benefits and friendship network, this particular strategy may not necessarily translate to higher commitment to job and organisation.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study are significant contribution to library employee retention and utilisation literature, and a further contribution to the extant research in library management and organisational behaviour. In view of the fact that organisational commitment is allied with whether and for what reasons employees stay with their organisation, it is important that greater attention be paid to both human and organisational factors in the Nigerian university library environment which may affect the commitment of librarians. Also, since the high rates of job mobility, turnover, transfers and reduced effort expenditure are associated with low commitment, concerted efforts should be made to foster higher levels of commitment amongst library employees in order to enhance staff loyalty, retention and utilisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. It is important for university library administrators and supervisors to identify librarians' commitment patterns, and devise strategies for enhancing those that are relevant to organisational goals.
2. Management of university libraries should ensure that they forge closer ties between library employees and their employing organisations based on genuine affiliation and internalisation of the goals and values of the organisation. When a

library employee perceives that the goals and values of the organisation are compatible with his or her own, such employee tends to work with exceptional enthusiasm, and is often willing to make great personal sacrifices towards the success of the organisation.

3. Since employees usually feel obligated and committed to the source that offers them satisfaction, management of university libraries should endeavour to fulfill the physiological, psychological and social needs of their employees. If the values and objectives are evident, and congruent with individual employees' needs and expectations, they will be more satisfied and committed, and less likely to leave their organisation in search of better alternatives.

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