

The Association between Socio-Demographic Variables and Organisational Commitment of Academic Staff

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Abstract: This study investigated the relationship between socio-demographic variables and organisational commitment among academic staff of southwestern Nigerian universities. A descriptive research design was used in this study. The sample consisted of 766 (comprising 383 from federal, 153 from state and 230 from private) academic staff, selected from the sampling frame through proportionate stratified sampling technique. Data collected were analysed using the Crosstab Chi-Square. Results revealed that there is a statistical significant association between university type and organisational commitment; years in present university and organisational commitment; age and organisational commitment. On the other hand, there is no statistical significant association between job status and organisational commitment; gender and organisational commitment; marital status and organisational commitment.

Keywords: socio-demographic variable, organisational commitment, academic staff

Introduction

The commitment of academic staff is important to fostering and building up a nation's future and the ability of academics to inject into work may build up individuals who can think and come up with solutions to the numerous national issues. The commitment of academics can be said to be represented at the centre of a cycle with arrows pointed to different angles of a nation; that is these behaviours may directly or indirectly impinge on a number of institutions; economic, social, political among others. A problem with commitment of academics may invariably be a problem with the quality, reputation and international recognition of the academic institutions which may also translate to the political and economic institution among others, all of which has bearing on national image. It is therefore no news that it is the aspiration of many countries across the world to ensure that quality is synonymous with its educational sector.

The theory of planned behaviour of Ajzen (1991) has intuitive value in that it explains organisational commitment, in that behaviour can be deliberate and planned. Behavioural intention to be committed is a function of attitudes toward that behaviour and subjective norms concerning that behaviour. Specifically, socio-demographic variables can influence either the belief components associated with attitude toward commitment (that is, beliefs about the consequences of the behaviour or beliefs about the desirability of those consequences), or either of the subjective norm components related to that behaviour (beliefs about what relevant others believe one should do and motivation to comply with that norm).

Literature review

Organisational commitment has attracted considerable interest in an attempt to understand and clarify the intensity and stability of an employee's dedication to the organisation (Lumley, 2010, cited in Lumley, Coetzee, Tladinyane, & Ferreira, 2011), which is evident in the numerous studies in the area. Socio-demographic variables of the individual have been quite researched on, although mixed findings exist. Ahmad and Abubakar, (2003) submits that gender have no significant relationship with organisational commitment among white workers in Malaysia. Other researchers have also found that socio-demographic variables such as salary, age, gender, marital status, job tenure, job status, education among others is significantly related to the organisational commitment of industrial organisation employees (Becker & Billings, 1993; Dodd-McCue & Wright, 1996; Ellemers, Gilder, & Hevvel, 1998; Hunt & Morgan, 1994; Mannheim, Baruch, & Tal, 1997).

Similarly, Angle and Perry (1981) and the later study of Opayemi (2004) indicates that the organisational commitment of women were higher than their male counterparts. In essence, their study found a significant gender difference on organisational commitment among their study sample. In the same vein, Popoola (2006) in his study of records management personnel found that socio-demographic factors of gender, age, marital status, religion, level of education, length of service, among others has bearing on the organisational commitment.

Research shows that organisational commitment is positively related to socio-demographic factors like age (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), tenure in organisation (Luthans, McCaul, & Dodd, 1985; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997). Meyer and Allen (1997) similarly surmise that overtime, the longer employees work in an organisation, the quicker it is that they become emotionally attached to that organisation which invariably impacts on their turnover intention. They further opined that the positive association indicates the logical notion that in any given organisation, uncommitted employees will always leave while the committed one will keep working for the organisation. From the foregoing, it is evident that a positive association exists between tenure and organisational commitment.

Similarly, marital status is said to be positively related to commitment (John & Taylor, 1999). This means that married people are more committed to their organisation than unmarried people, and could be explained from the light that married people have more

family responsibilities which makes them susceptible to requiring stability and/or security in their jobs; this may make them to likely be more committed to their organisation than their unmarried counterparts. Moreover, negatively related to the employee's level of education (Glisson & Durick, 1988; Steers, 1977), this means that people with low levels of education generally have more difficulty changing jobs because they view themselves as having low selling power and therefore show a greater commitment to their organisations as they have nowhere else to go.

Studies that investigated different types of work sectors have found that employees in public sector are higher on continuance commitment in comparison to other sectors employees (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Perry, 1997). This is not unrelated to the support and job security that public sector employees enjoy which ultimately bears on their motivation. Public sector employees in the past have been shown to be different from other type of employees thus they exhibit higher levels of organisational commitment (Perry, 1997). Lio (1995) likewise opines that many public employees today, are more appreciative of the job security characteristic of the public sector employment, hence their loyalty and commitment to the organisation.

Meyer and Allen (1997) notes that three sets of beliefs have been shown to have a strong association with organisational commitment. The first which is supported by Eisenberger, Fasolo, and Davis-LaMastro, (1990) is the belief that the organisation is supportive. The second which is supported by McFarlin and Sweeny, (1992) is the belief that the organisation treats its employees fairly, and third is the belief that the organisation impacts on the self-worth of employees and their feeling of personal competence (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Steers, 1977). Moreover, Meyer and Allen (1997) argue that many of work and individual characteristics found to be related to organisational commitment might influence one or more of these perceptions.

Organisational commitment is most probably affected by factors such as type and variety of work, the autonomy involved in the job, the level of responsibility associated with the job, the quality of the social relationship at work, rewards and remuneration, and the opportunities for promotion and career advancement in the company (Riggio 2009, cited in Lumley, Coetzee, Tladinyane, & Ferreira, 2011). Millward-Brown (1996) established that in comparison to 20 other occupational groups, academics in his study were less committed to their organisations. This could be a result of the level of autonomy and support evident in the climate in the universities and colleges as opposed to those of other organisations.

In addition, Meyer and Allen (1997) found evidence that academics' emotional commitment to their universities is as a result of the support they receive from the institutions. McInnis, (1999) and Winefield, Gillespie, Stough, Dua, and Hapuararchchi (2002) found evidence that, on average, academic staff are committed to their organisations while experiencing stressors and strains, that the strongest predictor of staff commitment to the University was trust in senior management. Furthermore, Tytherleigh, Webb, Cooper, and Ricketts, (2005) established that staff of higher education had lower levels of commitment both from and to their organisation.

Olorunsola and Arogundade (2012) investigated organisational climate and academic staff job performance in the federal and state universities in South-West Nigerian universities. The result of the analysis shows that 38(62%) of the respondents felt that their climate in the federal university is open as against 22(37%) that shows negative responses. Only 19(32%) shows positive responses at the state universities against the 41(68%) that shows negative responses. It is thus evident that federal universities in the study area were predominantly open while the state was predominantly close. The result of their study implies that the federal universities climate is better than that of state in areas of communication, innovation and resources. It was also established that the job performance of lecturers in federal and state universities was at a moderate level.

Following from previous studies, Obadara's (2012) study made a comparative analysis of public and private Universities Administration in Nigeria. The researcher sampled 20 public and 20 private universities. The public universities comprised 10 state and 10 federal universities. One hundred (100) respondents which included both teaching and non-teaching staff were selected from each university, which amounted to 4000 staff. The results showed that governance and the availability of resources and its utilization in public and private universities is significantly different which also impacts on the difference in students' academic performance.

Ajayi, (2017) examined the influence of demographic variables of gender and age on the commitment of employees in the Nigerian civil service. Participants were purposively selected from six states in the South-West, Nigeria. The study utilised data obtained through 567 valid questionnaire which contained information on socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, and work related issues. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for the data. The result showed that age groups of the civil servants are critical to their commitment in the organisation. The findings indicated that younger and older civil servants reported higher commitments than those within the middle age groups.

Onuoha, and Idemudia, (2018) investigated the role of personal attributes (age, education, job position, organisational tenure) and the perceived glass ceiling on organisational commitment of senior level female employees in public sector organisations. One hundred and fifty-two female workers were conveniently sampled from eight public sector organisations in southwest Nigeria. Results showed significant joint influence of age, education, job position, organisational tenure and perceived glass ceiling on organisational commitment. Perceived glass ceiling and age contributed most to organisational commitment.

Methodology

Design

This study employed a descriptive survey design. This is a multi-site study spread across six states in South-west Nigeria. These states include Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Lagos, Ekiti and Ondo. The selected study sites are functional universities with qualified academics; that is universities that are accredited by the National Universities Commission (NUC) to carry out academic activities.

The universities were then grouped into Federal, State and Private Stratum, after which the proportional stratified sampling was used to identify a proportion of eighteen (18) universities (three federal, four state and eleven private) from a population of thirty-five (35) for selection. The systematic random sampling was thus employed; universities were arranged alphabetically in the federal, state and private category, which then formed the sampling frame. A pre-study visit to the sites indicated that one private university was no longer functional although was still listed on the NUC’s website. Hence, it was removed from the list.

Instruments

The research questionnaire was divided into two sections; Section A is the personal information questionnaire (PIQ) which was used to elicit information on the socio-demographic background of the respondents. The information collected includes participants’ gender, age, marital status, job status (level), job tenure (number of years in present University), number of years in academia, University type and name of University. Section B is a 15-item Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) by Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979). Salami (2008) utilised the instrument to examine demographic and psychological factors predicting organisational commitment among industrial workers and found a Cronbach’s alpha 0.86. Similarly, Majekodunmi (2013) utilised the instrument to examine the organisational commitment of the Nigerian Port Authority Workers and found it reliable for use.

Results

(i) Respondents’ Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents’ Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Levels	Frequency	Percentage
University Type	Federal	236	44.9
	State	123	23.4
	Private	167	31.7
Total		526	100.0
Job Status	Graduate assist/ Assist lecturer	177	33.7
	Lecturer I/ Lecturer II	232	44.1
	Senior lecturers/Readers/Professors	117	22.2
Total		526	100.0
Length in Service	< 5 years	360	68.4
	5-9 years	123	23.4
	10 years above	43	8.2
Total		526	100
Years in present university	< a year	13	2.5
	1-2 years	86	16.3
	3-4 years	152	28.9
	5 years above	275	52.3
Total		526	100
Gender	Male	321	61.0
	Female	205	39.0
Total		526	100
Marital Status	Single	94	17.9

	Married	421	80.0
	Widowed	11	2.1
Total		526	100
Age Group	25-34yrs	175	33.3
	35-44yrs	273	51.9
	45-54yrs	69	13.1
	55-64yrs	9	1.7
Total		526	100

The results of the demographic characteristics of respondents presented in table 1 showed that on university type, out of the five hundred and twenty-six respondents, two hundred and thirty-six (44.9%) work in federal universities, while one hundred and twenty-three (23.4%) work in state universities and one hundred and sixty-seven (31.7%) work in private universities. The job status section showed that one hundred and seventy-seven (33.7%) are Graduate assistants/Assistant lecturers, two hundred and thirty-two (44.1%) are Lecturers I and II and one hundred and seventeen of the respondents are Senior lecturers/Readers/Professors.

On Length of Service, more than two third (68.4%) of the respondents have spent less than five years in service. Also, one hundred and twenty-three (23.4%) have spent between 5-9 years in service while forty-three respondents (8.2%) have been in service for 10 years and above. Years in present University showed that more than half of the respondents (52.3%) have been at their present universities for 5 years and above, while one hundred and fifty-two (28.9%) have worked at the present universities for 3-4years. Thirteen respondents (2.5%) have been in their present universities for less than a year while eighty-six (16.3%) of the respondents fall in between 1-2 years at the present university.

As presented in table 1, majority of the respondents were females. A high percentage of respondents are males (61.0%) as against females (39.0%). Considering the total sample, there were three hundred and twenty-one (61.0%) males and two hundred and five (39.0%) females. This gender distribution shows a predominance of males over females. The marital status also presented in table 1 showed that there are more married respondents. Out of the five hundred and twenty-six respondents, four hundred and twenty-one (80.0%) were married, while ninety-four (17.9%) were single and never married. No respondent indicated that they were divorced while eleven respondents (2.1%) were widowed.

The age distribution showed that more than half, that is two hundred and seventy-three (51.9%) of respondents falls between 35-44 years. One hundred and seventy-five (33.3%) are 25-34 years, sixty-nine (13.1%) are within 45-54 age bracket while nine (1.7%) are within 55-64 years.

Table 2: Relationship between Socio-demographic variables and Organisational Commitment

Variables	Organisational Commitment		Total	χ^2	Df	Sig.
	High	Low				

University Type	Federal	167 (70.8%)	69 (29.2%)	236 (100.0%)	94.934 ^a	2	.001
	State	59 (48.0%)	64 (52.0%)	123 (100.0%)			
	Private	36 (21.6%)	131 (78.4%)	167 (100.0%)			
	Total	262 (49.8%)	264 (50.2%)	526 (100.0%)			
Job Status	Graduate Assistants/ Assistant Lecturers	79 (44.6%)	98 (55.4%)	177 (100.0%)	2.882 ^a	2	.237
	Lecturers I & II	121 (52.2%)	111 (47.8%)	232 (100.0%)			
	Senior Lecturers/ Readers/Professors	62 (53.0%)	55 (47.0%)	117 (100.0%)			
	Total	262 (49.8%)	264 (50.2%)	526 (100.0%)			
Years in Present University	less than a year	9 (69.2%)	4 (30.8%)	13 (100.0%)	17.198 ^a	3	.001
	1-2 years	26 (30.2%)	60 (69.8%)	86 (100.0%)			
	3-4 years	79 (52.0%)	73 (48.0%)	152 (100.0%)			
	5 years above	148 (53.8%)	127 (46.2%)	275 (100.0%)			
	Total	262 (49.8%)	264 (50.2%)	526 (100.0%)			
Gender	Male	158 (49.2%)	163 (50.8%)	321 (100.0%)	.114 ^a	1	.735
	Female	104 (50.7%)	101 (49.3%)	205 (100.0%)			
	Total	262 (49.2%)	264 (50.8%)	526 (100.0%)			
Marital Status	Single	40 (42.6%)	54 (57.4%)	94 (100.0%)	2.456 ^a	2	.293
	Married	216 (51.3%)	205 (48.7%)	421 (100.0%)			
	Widowed	6 (54.5%)	5 (45.5%)	11 (100.0%)			
	Total	262 (49.8%)	264 (50.2%)	526 (100.0%)			
Age	25-34yrs	71 (40.6%)	104 (59.4%)	175 (100.0%)	9.515 ^a	3	.023
	35-44yrs	148 (54.2%)	125 (45.8%)	273 (100.0%)			
	45-54yrs	37 (53.6%)	32 (46.4%)	69 (100.0%)			
	55-64yrs	6 (66.7%)	3 (33.3%)	9 (100.0%)			
	Total	262 (49.8%)	264 (50.2%)	526 (100.0%)			

The Crosstab Chi-Square Output presented in table 2 shows the relationship between Socio-demographic variables and organisational commitment with the corresponding percentages. Organisational commitment was split into high and low with the mean score. Participants who scored below the mean are adjudged to have low commitment while those above the mean have high commitment.

Table 2 shows that there is a statistical significant association between university type and organisational commitment at $\chi^2 (2) = 94.934, p < 0.05$. Similarly, the result of the association between years in present university and organisational commitment shows that there is a statistical significant association between them at $\chi^2 (3) = 17.198, p < 0.05$. Also, age and organisational commitment are significantly associated at $\chi^2 (3) = 9.515, p < 0.05$.

On the other hand, there is no statistical significant association between job status and organisational commitment at, $\chi^2 (2) = 2.882, p > 0.05$. This means that academic staff are equally committed irrespective of job status. Also, there is no statistical

significant association between gender and organisational commitment at, $\chi^2(1) = 0.114, p > 0.05$. Similarly, the result shows that there is no statistical significant association between marital status and organisational commitment as $\chi^2(2) = 2.456, p > 0.05$.

Discussion and Recommendation

The result reveals that the level of organisational commitment is significantly different based on university type, years in present university and age. The result is in consonant with Popoola (2006) who in his study of records management personnel found that socio-demographic factors of gender, age, marital status, religion, level of education, length of service, among others has bearing on the organisational commitment. Similarly, Onuoha, and Idemudia, (2018) found a significant joint influence of age, education, job position, organisational tenure and perceived glass ceiling on organisational commitment.

Obadara's (2012) finding that governance and the availability of resources and its utilization in public and private universities is significantly different gives credence to the significant university type difference in the present study. Disparity in pay with the private universities paying better than the public universities, availability of resources and governance could be a reason for the present result. Also, the longer people stay in an organisation, the more the strength of their emotional attachment, hence their commitment to the organisation. Similarly, the sense of responsibility increases with age which may then invariably inform their commitment.

The result also suggests that lecturers in different job status, irrespective of their gender and marital status display similar level of organisational commitment. The result is in dissonance with studies that found that socio-demographic variables such as salary, age, gender, marital status, job tenure, job status, education among others to be significantly related to organisational commitment of workers in industrial organisations (Ellemers, Gilder, & Hevvel, 1998; Mannheim, Baruch, & Tal, 1997).

The opportunity to move freely could explain a reason why the result of the study diverges away from previous findings. Academic work is different from what obtains in industrial organisations, in that academic job placement is usually in relation to the academic qualification and publications of the job holder and usually the individual can always move away from one university to the other with little or no restriction. Also, being an academic staff in the society of today commands respect and the prestige it carries is similar to those of doctors and lawyers. In this regard, the prestige associated with the nature of the job is of utmost value and it transcends beyond the status, gender and marital status of the individual job holder, hence the similarities in the organisational commitment across cadre. It can also be explained that the sample the study utilised is different from those of previous studies so a divergence is expected.

The study established that university type, years in present university and age are determinants of the organisational commitment of academic staff, Therefore, it becomes imperative for university management to conduct researches into the nature of the work environment in these university strata in order to understand whether or not employees are encouraged to update their skills in

order to give their best, also whether or not there are opportunities to update knowledge through training, induction, and orientation procedure. As failure to provide facilities that stimulates the work environment makes it impossible for academics to perform their jobs in a non-obstructive way. Emphasis should also be on how to harness employee expectations irrespective of age and what is obtainable in order to sustain employees' commitment to their jobs.

Management should ensure that policies are consistently applied because inconsistency leads to uncertainty, feelings of bias and unfairness. This may automatically lead to dissatisfaction which may then have impact on the sense of belonging to the institution. It is also recommended that Education planners should as part of the moving forward contingency plan embark on researches into the nature of work in academia in order to look for ways of appropriately managing it. The representation of those in the private institutions should also be foremost in their contingency plans. At the heart of that is the representation of each and every one, because together the life of the nation is dependent on what goes on in all the institutions of learning. It is important to maintain equity so that each individual is treated in relation to every other, and not in relation to the power the significant other wields.

Although the study found no job status, gender and marital status difference in the organisational commitment of academics, it is nonetheless important that higher level academics make the workplace conducive for the lower level employees. This may go on to strengthen the relationship and bridge the gap between them by harnessing their overall experiences with the expectations, and this may further impact on other aspects of work behaviour like job satisfaction. Academic planning and management committees can create clear and specific rules as relating to work relationship and sustaining the maximum workload of lower level staff.

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