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QUALITY OF WORK-LIFE AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG ACADEMICS IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between quality of work-life and organizational commitment in the academic environment. Dimensions of quality worklife examined include career advancement, job security, pay benefit and employee participation in decision-making. The study adopted the survey method with data collected from a sample of two hundred and ninety-three (293) randomly selected respondents in a private-mission owned university in Nigeria. Results of data analysis indicate a negative relationship between career advancement, job security and organizational commitment. However, positive relationship was found to exist between employee participation, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The study suggests the imperative for tertiary education institutional managers to prioritize specific dimensions of employee quality of work-life as an integral antecedent to the achievement of organizational objectives. This holds promise to attaining global standards

Keywords: quality of work-life; organizational commitment; job satisfaction; Nigeria; higher education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The centrality of human resource to the functionality and sustainability of workplaces has been firmly established. However, the constant changing dynamics in internal and external business environments has potential implications on the functioning of human elements within the organizational settings and the achievement of objectives. The concept of quality of work-life (QWL) was introduced in the United States of America in the 1960s (Davis, 1977). The main purpose was to alleviate the challenges militating against quality of employees' life at the workplace. There is a lack of consensus is the conceptualizations of quality of life. This is partly because what is termed quality of work life may vary across contexts and individuals. Robbins (1989) described quality of work life as 'a process by which an organization responds to employee needs by developing mechanisms to allow them to share fully in making the decisions that design their lives at work' (p. 207). Lau and May (1998) define the concept as 'the favourable conditions and environments of a workplace that support and promote employee satisfaction by providing employees with rewards, job security, and growth opportunity' (p. 213). Rathamani and Ramchandra (2013) defined quality of work life as "the favourableness or un-favourableness of a job environment for people". It also refers to the extent to which employees enjoy satisfaction in their personal lives whilst in the employment of organizations. According to Daubermann and Tonete (2012), the concept incorporates the physical, technological, psychological and social facets of work corresponding to the principles of healthy organisations. It is an organization's outlook with respect to the ensuring the holistic wellbeing of employees towards achieving sustainable organizational performance (Cummings & Worley, 2014). The sustainable achievement of organizational objectives largely depends wellbeing and general life satisfaction of their employees. QWL has emerged as managerial strategy directed towards creating enabling environment for employees to maximize their potentials. Essentially, quality of work life is synonymous with organizations encouraging autonomy, flexibility and justice within the work environment. The components of quality of work life typically center on; inclusive and equitable compensation arrangements as well as sustainable parameters for safeguarding employee rights and benefits (Walton, 1975). The concept has been measured by job satisfaction (White, 1981; Davis & Cherns, 1975); growth and development (Hackman & Lawler, 1971); participation (Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Eisenberger, 1986; Vroom, 1960; Warr, Cook, & Wall, 1979); physical environment (Stanley, 1986; Chelte, 1983); supervision (Taylor & Bowers, 1972; Chelte, 1983); pay and benefits (Chelte, 1983; Stanley, 1986; Quinn & Staines, 1979); work integration (Hackman & Lawler, 1971).

Organizational commitment suggests that employees concentrate and contribute inwardly, rationally, and physically to the objectives of the organization. It is voluntary and personal, therefore it cannot be forced or imitated and can be voluntarily withdrawn by those offering it, Organizational commitment indicates three forms of behaviour: employees believe in and accept the goals and values of the organization; employees are willing to work beyond expectation under their contract of employment, and desire to remain members of the employing organization with no intentions to leave. In the absence of commitment, positive organizational outcomes may be jeopardized. Studies have examined the relationship between quality of work-life and organizational commitment. However, as far as we can determine empirical research which focuses on quality of work-life dimensions and their relationships with organizational commitment among academics in Nigeria is scanty. Therefore, this study is primarily preoccupied with investigating the contributions of quality of work-life dimensions to organizational commitment among academics in Nigerian's higher education sector.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptually, the following concepts were utilized as building blocks for this study: career advancement; participation (Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson & Sowa, 1986; Vroom, 1960; Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979); job security; pay benefit (Chelte, 1983; Stanley, 1986; Quinn & Staines, 1979); and work relation; and their effects on organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1990). The conceptual model for the study is depicted in figure 1.

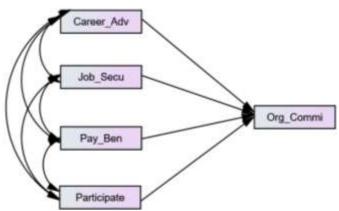


Figure 1 Conceptual Model

Leach and Chakiris (1988) describe career as a continuous and progressive work, which allows individuals to move through a defined path that leads to known end. Career advancement can be explained as progression and recognition in one's choice of profession (Caven, 2006). It connotes upward movement from low to middle and high level positions in one's career over a course of time. The path to advancement may vary in general and specific respects across organizational contexts. Employees are expected to have developed or acquired some additional skills to qualify for advancement in their selected careers. Career development is not just moving further on the organizational ladder, but about being the meeting expectations as an employee and actively contributing to the strategic goals of the organization. Generally, continuous skill acquisition and capacity building on the part on employees is believed to translate to career advancement usually through promotion to high levels of responsibility accompanied by the requisite rewards. Career development has evolved from a tool for individual growth to a strategic asset for many organizations as these organizations have become more invested in their employees' careers through career development initiatives.

Organizational commitment is defined as the psychological bond that employees have to their employing organization (Malone, Raja & Issa, 2013). This attachment can be likened to the three-component model of commitment as proposed by Allen and Meyer (1990). Affective commitment is a type of commitment which is perceived to be instrumental in facilitating organizational performance. It has been found to be a significant indicator of positive organizational outcomes, decreased turnover intentions, higher levels of performance and organizational effectiveness (Deery & Iverson, 1996). It defines how employees identify with organizational goals and associated job satisfaction thresholds (Allen & Meyer 1990). In other words, employees who align or identify with the organizational values and beliefs tend to have affective commitment toward their organization. Affective attachment in the corporate sense is dependent on the integration of fundamental aspects of; recognition of a mutually rewarding relationship and engendering ethical accountability whilst considering the evolution of workplace interactions. Continuance commitment on the other hand refers to the employees' feelings to remain with their organizations (Heetderks, 1993). Employees may

have continuance commitment toward their organizations, though dissatisfied with their jobs and yet unwilling to disengage from the organizations. Hence, employees who see that the costs of leaving the organization are greater than the costs of staying will stay inside the organization because they must. Anything that increases the cost of leaving the organization results to the development of continuance commitment Allen and Meyer (1990) identified the idea of continuance commitment as a type of psychological connection to an employing organization that reflects how much an employee perceives a sense of being secure because of high cost of leaving. If there are high costs associated in leaving the organization then such an employee remains in the organization. Normative commitment refers to the sense of moral obligation that employees display towards their employing organization. This form of commitment could typically be based on the perception that exit from the organization could portend negative consequences for the organization. The perception or belief motivates employees to maintain membership with organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The substance of normative commitment is founded on inherent principle of reciprocity with the organization. For instance, employees who have enjoying benefits such as career development, training, career progression, and have a strong sense that the organization has invested in them will likely have significant normative commitment. This sense of duty that they possess motivates them to meet and exceed expectations in line with the goals of the organization. Therefore, we hypothesized that:

H1: Career development have effect on organizational commitment

Job security is described as the perception of employees about the stability or permanence of a job position (Probst, 2005). It is the probability that employees will retain their jobs for as long as they fulfil the mutual employment obligations. The social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) is relevant in this regard, as it emphasizes the exchange of activity or services between two parties. Instructively, the medium of exchange can be depicted in terms of alternative activities or opportunities foregone by the parties (Homans, 1961). Thus, job security represents an important organizational benefit or positive and may inspire employees to express reciprocal behaviour and display appreciable levels of loyalty to their organization (Hongchun, Bing, Xue, & Shanshi, 2014). In the same vein, the loyalty and reciprocity behaviour benchmarks may decrease in organizations when job security could not be ascertained (Cavanaugh and Noe, 1999; De Witte & Näswall, 2003; Kang, Gold, & Kim, 2013; (Podsakoff, LePine, & LePine, 2007). In recent years, many organizations have experienced diverse economic pressures that has led to mergers and acquisitions, restructuring, employee downsizing, job outsourcing and job insecurity. Job insecurity is related to negative workplace outcomes such as low job satisfaction, low psycho-social wellbeing, work-life conflict and organisational withdrawal (De Witte, 2005). Thus, we further hypothesized that:

H₂: Job security inspire employees' organizational commitment

Pay benefit is monetary reward which an employee receives from an organization in the course of employment. Vroom's Expectancy Theory states that when a task is performed well, specific rewards will follow and for such reward to be satisfactory, employees must value it. Hence, the behaviour of an employee is premised on the pre-conceived expectation that the action when performed would bring about a certain result and that result would be beneficial to the individual. The ideas of valence and expectancy is related to positive employee outcomes. According to Chang (2006), when employees do not value reward, it may negatively affect the performance and commitment of such employees. However, when the reward is perceived to be commensurate with the effort or performance, there is a foundation for sustained relationship between the employee and employing organization. As described by Stacey (1975), inequity is bound to exist when an employee perceives that the ratio of

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outcomes (i.e. pay benefit) to inputs (efforts, contributions, skills, experiences, qualifications and knowledge) and the ratio of others' outcomes to others' inputs are unequal. The absence of inequity in pay benefit has implications for employees' level of commitment, motivation as well as performance within the organization. Kee, Ahmad, and Abdullah (2016) found a significant relationship between financial compensation such as salaries, bonuses, and organizational commitment. Scott (2010) found a positive relationship between reward system and employee engagement, commitment, and organizational justice. However, Al-Zoubi (2012) reported that salaries and wages have a low influence towards employees' job satisfaction and commitment. Thus, given the socio-economic context of the study we raised the hypothesis:

H3: Pay benefit co-vary with employees' job satisfaction.

Employee participation suggests sharing information, involvement in processing, making decisions and problem-solving to produce new thoughts and potential alternatives. It allows employees to exercise some sense of autonomy over their tasks and be involved in decisionmaking processes within the context within which they work (Strauss, 1998). When employees participate in decision making it has the potential to influence retention, increase competitive advantage and performance at work. Participation can facilitate employees' QWL when they possess control over their workload, receive social support from colleagues and supervisors, receive requisite reward for their contributions and are treated with respect and fairness. Within the organization, this practice of involvement is important for effective integration and capacity optimization. When employees perceive that they are supported by their organizations, organizational commitment is engendered (Steers, 1977). Gyawali (2017) investigated the impact of employee participation on job satisfaction, employee fairness perception and organizational commitment. Findings show that amongst the three determinants, organizational commitment is most significantly impacted by employee participation as it has highest correlation coefficient. Bhatti, Nawab and Akbar (2011) found a correlation amongst employee participation, high employees' commitment, job satisfaction and organizational performance. Park (2015) reported that perceived organizational support mediated the relationship between employee participation and organization commitment. It is therefore hypothesized that:

H₄: Employee participation relate with organizational commitment.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data for this study was obtained from academic staff in a private university in Nigeria. Private university is relatively new in the education system in the country dating back to the early 2000. The emergency of the private system has broadened access to higher education in the country, though at much higher financial burden to parents and guidance. The institution chosen for this study ranked within the first three among the existing private universities in the country and within the best first ten in the nation's university. The students' population is well above 7,000 with both undergraduates and postgraduate programmes. The National Universities Commission (NUC), a regulatory agency with oversight of the university education in Nigeria had consistently ranked the university within the first five in research output, facilities and quality, there are one hundred and sixty universities in Nigeria. Therefore, a sample size of three hundred and sixty five (365) was used for the study population, and copies of questionnaire were randomly administered to the academic staff of the studied university. Two hundred and ninety three (293) copies of the administered questionnaire were retrieved, amounted to 80% response rate and valid for analysis.

The research instrument utilized for the study is a set of questionnaire. The questionnaire was sectionalized into two (2), i.e. respondents' demographic characteristics and key variable

utilized in the study, the instrument was scaled on a 5-point Likert scale for items measuring the key research variables. The key research variables were gleaned from literature with items measuring these key variables adapted and reworked from earlier works to fit the context of the study. QWL was adopted from Quality Work life scales (Warr, Cook & Wall (1979); Van Laar, Edwards, & Easton, (2007). The design of organizational commitment benefitted from the works of Allen and Meyer (1990), Hackett, Bycio, and Hausdorf (1994), Decotiis and Summers (1987). Data analysis was done on SPSS 17.0 and IBM SPSS AMOS 22 was used to test relationships among the variables.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

As depicted in Table 1, two hundred and ninety-three (293) copies of the administered questionnaire were duly filled and used analyzed for the study. 71.3% of the respondents are males while 28.7% of the respondents are females. This is not a unique weakness of the study because of the dominance of the male gender in academic positions in Nigeria's higher institutions. The age bracket showed reasonable numbers of youthful respondents: 26 - 40years (38.2%); and 41 - 60 years of age (38.6%). Economic interests and succession planning predisposed private universities who are relatively, at least, in part driven by need to secure acceptable margins to cover costs and secure the future of the institution to have more inclinations for crops of academics that are younger with likelihood of longer years in service. Respondents within the age bracket of 61 years and above are least represented constituting 8.5% of the respondents. Ranks of respondents also indicate that the junior cadre are well represented in the sample (cumulatively 70.6%), while the senior cadre accounted for 29.4% of the sample. Indeed, it is observable that the Nigerian academic stock is experiencing a shift from aged faculty to younger faculty. The demographic characteristics indicates that 70.1% of the respondents have active teaching experience of between 1 and 8 years; while 29.1% (cumulative) have taught at the university level between 9 years and above. The distribution of the teaching experience of respondents aligns with the age and rank distributions, which seem to suggest that younger faculty are well represented in the sample. Therefore, the data set may be adjudged as a rich data set subject to limitations associated with survey methodological approach.

| Item | Frequency | Percentage | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Gender: | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 209 | 71.3 | | | | | | | |
| Female | 84 | 28.7 | | | | | | | |
| Total: | 293 | 100% | | | | | | | |
| Age: | | | | | | | | | |
| 19 – 25 | 43 | 14.7 | | | | | | | |
| 26 - 40 | 112 | 38.2 | | | | | | | |
| 41 - 60 | 113 | 38.6 | | | | | | | |
| 61 and over | 25 | 8.5 | | | | | | | |
| Total: | 293 | 100% | | | | | | | |
| Rank: | | | | | | | | | |
| Professor | 28 | 9.6 | | | | | | | |
| Reader | 17 | 5.8 | | | | | | | |
| Senior Lecturer | 41 | 14.0 | | | | | | | |
| Lecturer I | 44 | 15.0 | | | | | | | |
| Lecturer II | 68 | 23.2 | | | | | | | |
| Assistant Lecturer | 56 | 19.1 | | | | | | | |
| Graduate Assistant | 39 | 13.3 | | | | | | | |
| Total: | 293 | 100% | | | | | | | |
| Years of Experience in the University system: | | | | | | | | | |
| 1-4 years | 64 | 21.8 | | | | | | | |
| 5-8 years | 144 | 49.1 | | | | | | | |
| 9 – 12 years | 45 | 15.4 | | | | | | | |
| 13 - 16 years | 3 | 1.0 | | | | | | | |
| 17 – 20 years | 14 | 4.8 | | | | | | | |
| 21 years and above | 23 | 7.8 | | | | | | | |
| Total: | 293 | 100% | | | | | | | |

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

3.2. Structural Equation Model Analysis

Structural equation modeling was used to analyse the structural relationships that exist between studied variables depicted in figure 1. There are four predictors (career advancement, job security, pay benefits, and employees' participation) and one dependent variable (organizational commitment). As shown in figure 2, close association exist among the tested exogenous variables, except the association between job_secu (job security) and participate (employee's participation), which is in positive. Career advancement significantly influence organizational commitment (.084, p = .132). Similarly, job security (.088, p = .159); pay (.067, p = .180); and employees participations (.314, p = .000) have positive or varying effect on commitment.

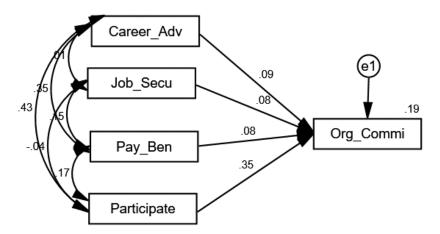


Figure 2 Graphic output of Regression analysis with Standardized Estimates

Generally, the model fit summary as illustrated in Table 2 suggests the misfit of the model. Comparing the obtained indices of the indicators with cutoff criteria (Bentler, 1990; Bollen, 1990, Hu & Bentler, 1999), it could be concluded that the goodness-of-fit does not fall within the acceptable range.

| Index | Obtained Scores | Cut-off Values | |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Normed Fit Index (NFI) | 1.000 | =>.90 | |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | 1.000 | =>.90 | |
| Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) | .186 | .05 or less = good | |
| Goodness of Fit (GFI) | Not reported | =>.90 | |
| Chi-square/Degree of Freedom (CMIN/DF) | 11.094 | = 2, 3, or 5 upper limit | |

Furthermore, the model above was modified with job satisfaction introduced as moderating variables between career, security and participation in decision making. The purpose was to examine more of the propositions raised in the study. Hence, the trimmed model as depicted in figure 3.

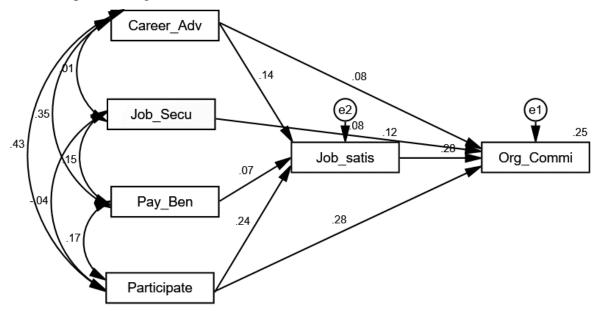


Figure 3 Graphic output of Regression Weights analysis (Trimmed Model)

The model above (figure 3) have relative fit indices in line with the Hu & Bentler, (1999). The fit indices such as NFI = .996; RFI = .958, CMIN/DF = .456, and RMSEA = .000.

With the introduction of a moderating variable (job_satis), two additional hypotheses were formulated as follow:

H5: career development will have effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

H6: Employee participation will have effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

As shown in Figure 3, employee participation (participate) variable significantly affect both job satisfaction (job_satis) and organizational commitment. This aligns with the outcome of the earlier studies (Oni-Ojo, Osibanjo, & Iyiola, 2014; Osibanjo, Abiodun, & Adeniji, 2014; Osibanjo, Salau, Falola, & Oyewunmi, 2016), which posited that employees' involvement in decision making and job environment serves as source of motivation. Further, it is plausible that employees' participation plays a significant role in predicting job satisfaction and subsequently their commitment in the organization. Essentially, other predictors (career advancement, job security, and pay benefit) in this survey also contribute in predicting organizational commitment.

| | | Predictors | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | Р | Hypotheses |
|-----------|---|-------------|----------|------|-------|------|---------------------------|
| Job_satis | < | Career_Adv | .120 | .057 | 2.118 | .034 | H ₅ - Accepted |
| Job_satis | < | Pay_Ben | .056 | .050 | 1.122 | .262 | H ₃ - Rejected |
| Job_satis | < | Participate | .211 | .053 | 3.961 | *** | H ₆ - Accepted |
| Org_Commi | < | Career_Adv | .072 | .051 | 1.398 | .162 | H ₁ - Rejected |
| Org_Commi | < | Participate | .250 | .052 | 4.853 | *** | H ₄ - Accepted |
| Org_Commi | < | Job_Secu | .097 | .059 | 1.632 | .103 | H ₂ - Rejected |

Table 3 Regression weights of the moderated model

As illustrated in Table 3, the results of the effect of career advancement on job satisfaction is statistically significant as hypothesizes in the study. However, the hypothesized relationship between pay benefit and job satisfaction was not supported, corresponding with the findings of Al-Zoubi (2012). Employees naturally expect to be paid or rewarded for job done, therefore, organizational fulfilment of expected roles does not often translate to job satisfaction. However, failure of the organization pertaining to this role may have dire consequences. Participation in organizational decision-making directly relates with job satisfaction. The hypothesized impact of career advancement (H_1) and job security (H_2) on organizational commitment was not supported as the hypothesized positive relationship is not statistically significant. This outcome varies from findings in earlier studies (Bhatti, Nawab & Akbar, 2011; Park, 2015). This result may be expected in organizational settings where career advancement is premised on seniority or is related to time without reference to merit. Hypothesized effect of participation in decision making on organizational commitment (H₄) was positive and statistically significant. Employees' participation enhances a sense of autonomy over tasks and involvement in decision making which may potentially engender commitment (Steers, 1977).

4. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

As explored in this study, the implications of quality of work life on organizational commitment are diverse. The importance of the findings is substantial in the light of the peculiarities associated with Nigeria's tertiary education sector. In view of the multilateral institutional deficiencies, especially relative to the structuring and functioning fundamentals attributable to Nigeria's higher education sector (private and public); there is an apparent

gravitation to embrace processes that emphasize stakeholder growth and development. In effect, because the concept of quality of work life entails a form of social and corporate investment in human capital, such in all reasonable estimation will deliver reciprocal returns in the long-term. Requisite attention should be deployed towards employee involvement in organizational decision making, as this will contribute to facilitating fulfilment in the work place. Also, the insignificant relationship between pay benefits and employee job satisfaction could be attributed to the transactional model. As per the contextual implication; is the high unemployment indicators across sectors in Nigeria, which sometimes makes employers negligent of employee-centric initiatives, such as the enhancement of employee quality of work-life. Progressively, there is a need to optimize employment practices and processes which will facilitate the sustainable achievement of organizational objectives. This outlook is fundamental to the attainment of global tertiary education standards.

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