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## SOCIOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Nurturing young faculty for improved job engagement: Moderating role of institutional citizenship behaviour in the new normal world of work

Falola Hezekiah<sup>1\*</sup>, Emmanuel Amoo<sup>1</sup> and Daniel Ufua<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This study examined the influence of the nurturance of young faculty on improved job engagement and the moderating role of institutional citizenship behaviour. This study used a quantitative research design, adopting a survey method. Young faculty (Graduate Assistants-Lecturer 1) were considered for this survey. A total of 261 young faculty were drawn from all the colleges of the three randomly selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. Structural Equation Modelling, Smart Partial Least Square (3.0) was used to show the level of relationships and the resultant effect of young faculty nurturing initiatives on improved job engagement with the moderating



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### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Nurturing young faculty is fundamental to the sustainable performance of any institutions of higher learning. The study becomes necessary in Nigeria because the existing studies as established in the literature do not reflect the accurate picture of the significant influence of young faculty nurturance and institutional citizenship behaviour on job engagement in Nigerian private universities. Nurturing faculty members of private universities in Nigeria is needed to improve their primary job engagements in quality teaching, outstanding research, and active participation in community service. It is believed that this will enhance the ranking of these universities by various national and international ranking agencies of the universities around the globe. The universities ranking is a function of quality teaching, outstanding research productivity, reputation, industry partnerships, and collaborations. This study, therefore, provided empirical insight into how the nurturance of young faculty can be leveraged for improved job engagement. An effort was also made to examine the moderating role of institutional citizenship behaviour on the relationship between nurturance of young faculty and job engagement in the new normal world of work. The study also highlighted that nurturance of young and institutional citizenship behaviour could improve teaching, research, and community service productive engagement. Indeed, this study has provided deep insight into how the young faculty can be nurtured to drive job engagement in Nigerian private universities.

role of institutional citizenship behaviour. The findings highlight a significant influence of nurturance of young faculty on improved job engagement (teaching, research and community service), while the institutional citizenship behaviour significantly moderated the relationship between nurturance of young faculty and improved job engagement. Based on the empirical evidence from the study, it is concluded that virtual learning support indirectly influenced improved job engagement among the young scholars in Nigeria private universities. This study contributes significantly by filling a research gap in strategic human resource management and organisational behaviour literature in the institution of higher learning. The empirical studies on the relationship between NYF, ICB and IJE have not been sufficiently researched, particularly within the context of Nigeria educational sector.

**Subjects:** Education - Social Sciences; Work & Organizational Psychology; Higher Education

**Keywords:** Job engagement; Institutional citizenship behaviour; Nurturing of the faculty; New normal; Institution of higher learning

## 1. Introduction

One of the keys that propels the development of people and society at large is access to quality education. However, the quality of education largely depends on the distinctive competencies of the educators, particularly the faculty members of universities and other institutions of higher learning. Faculty roles become more indispensable considering the new normal academic environment as orchestrated by the COVID-19 pandemic that rendered institutions of higher learning, especially in Nigeria, to adapt or adjust to the COVID-19 demands of social distancing and online learnings. Specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic propelled many governments around the globe to shut down schools and public places to curb the possible community spread of the COVID-19 pandemic (Amoo Emmanuel et al., 2020; Bedford et al., 2020). This also necessitated a dramatic and distinctive rise of virtual learning that redefined the teaching, research and community service engagement of the faculty in various institutions of higher learning (Iroaganachi & Izuagbe, 2018; Kim et al., 2018). The emerging shift from the traditional classroom sitting model of learning to the unbridled growth/expansion of online learning has necessitated the need for the backing of skilled online faculty to produce high-quality online courses. While the integral role online faculty play in producing positive learning experiences and quality digital pedagogy, the training and development of these faculty is also imperative (Dhillia, 2017; H. O Falola et al., 2020b). Therefore, nurturing or developing young academic staff for improved job engagement through virtual platforms in this new normal era becomes inevitable.

Previous studies have also identified various forms of academic staff development initiatives that drive work engagement. For example, Falola et al. (2020a) and Akbar (2016) studied the influence of digital institutional initiatives as a catalyst for outstanding faculty teaching and research engagements. Gopang (2016) also looked at professional development initiatives of academic staff as one of the critical factors of work engagement. In a related development, Ghenghesh and Abdelmageed (2018) and Okechukwu (2017) studied how strategic nurturing programmes influenced the job satisfaction of Academic Staff. They emphasised that job engagement of the academic staff is a function of job satisfaction. Besides, Falola et al. (2020c) examined various forms of institutional supports, which include but are not limited to conference participation or attendance supports, payment for research publications, research grant, pedagogy training and supports as driving forces for high performance of faculty in Nigerian universities. Falola et al. (2018a) also noted that faculty high engagement and effectiveness of core job responsibilities is a function of institutional support initiatives put in place by the universities' management. Other researchers also considered digital competencies, learning and development programmes,

professional development programmes, among others as some of the strategic drives for the high job performance of employees (Delgado et al., 2020; Falola et al., 2018b; Malik & Nasim, 2015).

None of these studies investigated the relationship between nurturance of young faculty, job engagement and the moderating role of institutional citizenship behaviour with emphasis on virtual platform opportunities for improved performance. To this end, this current study explores the influence of nurturance of young faculty on job engagement with the moderating role of institutional citizenship behaviour in the new normal era. However, this study sets out to investigate the influence of virtual learning support on job engagement of young faculty, examine the effect of virtual job enrichment on job engagement of young faculty, explore the influence of virtual mentoring on job engagement, and investigate the moderating role of institutional citizenship behaviour between nurturance of young faculty and job engagement.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. *Nurturance of young faculty and job engagement*

Higher education in the new normal era of virtual education is confronted with a plethora of challenges ranging from unstable internet facilities, irregular power supply and other lack of some amenities that aid high-level academic engagement and interactions of faculty with students especially in Nigeria and in public universities in particular (Faborode, 2016). While most of the private universities in Nigeria generate their electricity and have invested in internet facility, there is an imbalance in development and experience with public institutions (Faborode, 2016). This could be one of the reasons why private universities in Nigeria do better in the adoption of digital technology for operational activities (Falola et al., 2020a). The perceived success of institutions of higher learning is premised on the level of quality teaching, research productivity and the community service engagement of faculty members (Okebukola, 2010). However, the distinctive competencies in terms of skills, ability, knowledge, experience, technical know-how and achievement are essential determinants of individual faculty's level in virtual engagement (Billy & Yuan-Li, 2020; Norton et al., 2010). Nurturing young faculty could help in improving teaching, research and community service engagement. As noted by Behari-Leak (2017), Derting et al. (2016), Kathleen et al. (2019), O'Leary and Wood (2019), and Su and Wood (2019), nurturing young academics in this dispensation of the virtual interface will help in re-imagining and reinterpreting teaching excellence, state-of-the-art research and career growth. In his view, Lloyd (2019) posited that using a blended approach of virtual and traditional methods as a means of nurturing or developing less experienced employees will foster outstanding engagement. Some of the strategies that can be leveraged for the nurturance of the young faculty in the institutions of higher learning in this new dispensation included but not limited to (a) virtual learning support, (b) virtual job enrichment, and (c) virtual mentoring.

### 2.2. *Virtual learning supports and improved job engagement*

Virtual learning has become one of the inevitable media of engagement in the new normal era. There has been an incredible increase in the way people engage various learning platforms for the acquisition of new skills, knowledge and other competencies required to be effective and efficient in the virtual world of work (You, 2016). Virtual learning platforms have transformed the way and manner in which faculty interact with students, especially in private universities where virtual resources are available. Specifically, before the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria, online engagement was partially adopted to complement the traditional face-to-face interaction in the classrooms (Falola et al., 2020a). However, COVID-19 propelled many universities, particularly private universities in Nigeria, to engage students virtually. As noted by Iroaganachi and Izuagbe (2018), virtual learning support is regarded as an enabling environment that is based on the adoption of digital technology and resources to foster and facilitate continuous interaction and communication in a virtual space. Mah (2016) also posited that virtual learning support is aimed at providing a set of tools that could enhance the assessment of knowledge transfer, learning and engagement processes remotely. Virtual learning support from the pedagogy point of view

facilitates innovative experiences that foster and strengthen teaching, research and community service engagements via electronic communication and feedbacks (Gašević et al., 2016). Virtual learning platforms are capable of providing a central focus for both faculty and students regardless of their location at any point in time (Sclater et al., 2016). Studies have also shown that virtual learning provides opportunities for faculty members to access the needed information electronically (Billy & Yuan-Li, 2020; Delgado et al., 2020). Investing in and creating a virtual learning environment to nurture the young faculty for improved job engagement could be the right step in the right direction. Based on the foregoing, the study proposes the following hypothesis.

### **2.3. Virtual job enrichment, virtual mentoring, and improved job engagement**

Studies have shown that job enrichment offers added value to employees through diverse programmes, which invariably enhances employees' level of engagement and productivity (Rasheed, 2016; Saleem et al., 2012; Wika & Andreas, 2019). It is also a process of engaging employees in gratifying and pleasurable job tasks. As noted by Davoudi and Mehdi (2013), job enrichment stimulates employees to explore their competencies. To this end, more responsibilities with commensurate autonomy and high involvement motivate employees to extend beyond themselves (Sanda et al., 2015). Salau et al. (2014) posited that job enrichment is the process of redesigning job responsibilities in a way that allows employees to experience feelings of accomplishment, recognition and considerable control over job schedules. The purpose, as noted by Sanda et al. (2015), is to help employees build confidence, self-management, self-respect and self-reliance that will culminate in outstanding performance in the world of work. However, in the new normal era, where most employees are compelled to work remotely, virtual job enrichment suffice. Virtual job enrichment is described as a process of stimulating employees by giving them autonomy and opportunities to use their distinctive competencies to accomplish more job responsibilities electronically or remotely. This suggests that virtual job enrichment may foster improved job engagement of the employee.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has made it practically impossible for the usual face-to-face mentoring interactions between the mentors, i.e. professors and mentees (young faculty). The lockdown of schools, including institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, was the major reason for this. However, in the new normal era where most organisations leverage digital technology, virtual mentoring suffices. No doubt, digital technology has become generally accepted as a means of communication. This has contributed to the active engagement of mentor-mentee on different digital media platforms (Harris & Lee, 2019). As noted by Briscoe (2019), virtual mentoring is the process through which mentors and mentees interact electronically. E-mentoring also refers to a relationship in which a senior or more experienced person provides directions, tips and instructions to a less experienced employee remotely (Drouin et al., 2015). Virtual mentoring provides opportunities for young faculty to interact electronically with experienced and senior faculty without any hindrance. This could perhaps improve their research, teaching and community service engagement in the new normal era. Job engagement, as noted by Ogbonnaya et al. (2017), is a process through which the faculty of institutions of higher learning are motivated to carry out their job functions productively. Osborne and Hammoud (2017) opined that job engagement is the tenacity and enthusiasm that drives faculty's willingness to carry out their research, teaching and community service responsibilities beyond expectations. Virtual mentoring could be a driving force for engaging young academic staff in higher institutions. This is because the opportunity to interact with more experienced colleagues within and outside the host country via electronic media could help in the level of job engagement of the faculty members. As noted by Falola et al. (2018b) and Kanik et al. (2018), engaged employees see their jobs as fun with a deep sense of responsibility and enthusiasm towards any given assignment.

#### **2.4. The relationship between nurturance of young faculty, institutional citizenship behaviour and job engagement**

Institutional citizenship behaviour (ICB) is also known as organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). As noted by Aftab et al. (2018) and Serife (2016), ICB is regarded as informal but necessary behaviour that contributes to the overall performance of the organisations. Also, Khaola and Coldwell (2017) and Bryan and Harish (2017) described ICB as discretionary behaviour that is not officially demanded but useful for the growth and sustainable performance of the organisations. ICB is not officially demanded from employees, and so it is not part of the work description as well as the terms and conditions of employment (Arogundade & Lawal, 2016; Nadim et al., 2016; Thiruvankadam & Durairaj, 2017). In a related development, Rauf (2016) and Ojebola et al. (2020) posited that institutional citizenship behaviour is optional and discretionary behaviour exhibited by the employees as part of the effort to contribute to the attainment of organisational goals and objectives. Thiruvankadam and Durairaj (2017) and Kandeepan (2016) identified some of the dimensions of ICB which include but not limited to self-development, individual initiative, civic virtue, sportsmanship, employee loyalty and employee's compliance.

### **3. Methods and materials**

This study employed a cross-sectional survey research design. Faculty members of three randomly selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria, were recruited as survey participants. The three selected private universities have a total of 957 faculty members excluding senior lecturers, associate professors/readers and professors, which represents the population of the study. In other words, only Lecturer 1 to Graduate Assistants cadres is categorised as young faculty in this study. The state is selected for having the highest concentration of universities and higher colleges in Nigeria (Amoo Emmanuel et al., 2020; NUC, 2020).

#### **3.1. Sample size and sampling procedures**

The sample size was determined using Bartlett, Kotrlik and Higgins (2001) table chart (at a margin of error of 0.05) which produced 399 participants but was approximated to 400. The study used the Proportional affixation criterion (PAC) to determine the number of copies of the questionnaire to be administered to each selected university. This suggests that the sample in each stratum is proportional to the relative weight of the study population, as depicted in Table 1.

Purposive, stratified and convenient sampling techniques were used in this study. Purposive sampling was used because only Graduate Assistants, Assistant Lectures, Lecturer II and Lecturer I participated in the survey. What informs the choice of stratified sampling was because the population comprises different strata while a convenient sampling method was used because the probability of availability and willingness of all the categorised faculty in the selected universities is unrealistic because of the lockdown.

Only 65.2% of the total questionnaire distributed was returned. The attrition rate (34.8%) was due to the fact that the survey was administered during the Covid-19 period and because the participation in the survey was voluntary and no incentive was served for participating.

Responses were measured anonymously, hence we could not profile the demographic profile of the respondents. Besides, they are all academic, have attended higher institutions (universities in this case) and are all working. We ignored gender analysis or other segregation criteria.

#### **3.2. Measures and variables**

The structured questionnaire, which was adapted from the existing literature, was used for the collection of the data from the respondents. The questionnaire was presented using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agreed (5) to strongly disagreed (1). Google form was used to collect information from respondents that could not be physically reached because of the COVID-19. At the same time, some copies of the questionnaire were administered by the research staff and one research assistant.

**Table 1. Breakdown of selected universities**

<b>Selected Universities</b>	<b>The population of young faculty</b>	<b>Sample size (Proportional affixation criterion)</b>	<b>Questionnaire returned</b>	<b>Attrition rate (%)</b>
University A	327	137	83	39.4
University B	332	138	91	34.1
University C	298	125	87	30.4
Total	957	400	261	34.8

The variables that were used to capture or measure NYF have 12 items that represent the three domains of (1) Virtual Learning Opportunities, (2) Virtual Job Enrichment, and (3) Virtual-Mentoring.

Virtual learning opportunities are a framework that provides educators with digitally based solutions for developing productive, interactive learning environments. Job enrichment, on the other hand, virtual job enrichment is described as a process of stimulating employees by giving them autonomy and opportunities to use their distinctive competencies to accomplish more job responsibilities electronically or remotely. Meanwhile, virtual mentoring refers to a relationship in which a senior or more experienced person provides directions, tips and instructions to a less experienced employee remotely.

Four items each were used to measure each domain on a Likert scale of 5 ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Some of the examples of the items in each domain include: Virtual learning opportunities “My university pays for my virtual conferences”; “My university encourages Faculty to participate in online short courses”; My university provides online training for all faculty to cope with the new normal era”, “My university subscribed to many scientific databases for the use of all faculty”. Virtual Job Enrichment “My department assigns lively but challenging virtual job responsibilities to me in the spirit of the new normal world of work”, “My university provides adequate facilities for effective delivery of my online engagement with my students”, “I have the opportunity for career advancement in the new normal world of work”, “I am trained to multitask”. Virtual-Mentoring “My virtual interaction with my mentors has helped me grow in my chosen profession”, “I regularly interact with my mentors online”, “I am satisfied with the quality of advice received from my mentors online”, “I get prompt feedback from my mentors online anytime I need professional advice”.

The questionnaire for the measurement of job engagement of faculty was developed into eleven items representing the three domains of (1) Teaching engagement, (2) Research engagement, and (3) community service engagement.

Teaching engagement refers to how enthusiastic faculty members are about their careers, how dedicated they are to their organisations, and how much discretionary effort they put into their work. In a related development, research engagement is the productive and passionate disposition of the faculty in carrying out state-of-the-art research and publication productivity. Also, community service engagement means the ardent involvement of faculty in the various voluntary community services.

Four items each were used for the measurement of each domain, except the last one that has three items. A 5 Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5), agree (4), indifference (3), disagree (2), to strongly disagree (1) was adopted to get individual faculty opinion on the items presented therein. Some of the examples of the items are as follows: Teaching engagement “The lockdown does not affect my teaching engagement”, “I enjoy teaching because of the availability of virtual

teaching facilities provided by my university”, “My virtual teaching engagement with my students has been quite interesting and interactive”, “The virtual teaching platforms are effective for quality teaching delivery”. Research engagement “I have published articles in high indexed journals in this period of new normal”, “I have attended a virtual conference with a paper presentation in this new normal era”, “I have a manuscript(s) already submitted for publication consideration in high impact learned journals”, “I am motivated to do research in this period of a new normal era”. Community service engagement “I have reviewed at least one manuscript for a reputable journal in this new normal era”, “I have participated in safety sensitisation and sanitation initiatives in my university community”, “I have been partaking in virtual institutional services during this new era.”

The moderating variable, i.e. institutional citizenship behaviour, was measured with three items as presented in the research measurement instruments. Institutional citizenship behaviour is discretionary behaviour that is not officially demanded but useful for the growth and sustainable performance of the organisations. Some of the examples of the items are as follows: “Encouraging myself to perform task creatively (Individual Initiative behaviour)”, “Going the extra mile to acquire skills (Individual Development Behaviour)” and “I always find it easy to adapt to change in my university (Compliance Behaviour)”. This suggests that individual initiative behaviour, self-development behaviour and compliance behaviour are the three main domains of institutional citizenship behaviour.

### **3.3. Ethical consideration**

Due reconnaissance was observed to familiarise ourselves with the environment of the universities and by seeking formal permission from various heads of colleges concerned. Researchers also discussed the research mission with the heads of various groups and association where available, especially the heads of prominent groups of committees where such associations are non-existent (e.g. heads of Women Faculty groups). These procedures have also been followed by other researchers (Amoo Emmanuel et al., 2018; Falola et al., 2020a). The researchers informed all the respondents about the objectives of the study. This was intended to enable free participation as well as preserve the participants’ choice of an exit from participation in the research process. At the end of it all, only willing faculty in the category selected participated in the survey. All issues relating to research ethics were strictly adhered to by asking the respondents to remain anonymous and an assurance that responses would be treated with topmost confidentiality (D. E. Ufua et al., 2020).

### **3.4. Statistical methods**

Face, construct and content validity of the items were thoroughly checked, while reliability tests of each of the constructs were carried out through composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE) estimate and Cronbach’s Alpha. The researchers conducted a pilot study to determine the validity and reliability of the research instrument. Five per cent of the sample population, which accounted for 20 copies of the questionnaire, were administered to faculty members at public universities that were not part of the main study. The results obtained from the pilot survey showed that the data were normally distributed. Besides, the factor loadings compose reliability, average variance extracted (AVE) estimate, Cronbach’s Alpha as well as Rho. Values are depicted in Table 2. It is imperative to note that all the values of the scale reliabilities are above the recommended benchmarks.

Smart PLS 3.0 of the structural equation modelling was used for the analysis of the data. As suggested by Samani (2016), the study considered the systematic evaluation of PLS-SEM, which includes the evaluation of the measurement model in terms of the reflective and formative measurement model to determine the internal consistency, construct validity, discriminant validity, collinearity among the indicators, as well as the significance of outer weight.

The second step that was considered in this study as part of the assessment of smart PLS-SEM was the evaluation of the structural model. This involves the collinearity assessment, path coefficient/test of hypotheses, R-squared values, the effect of F-squared and the predictive relevance.



**Table 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

	<b>Loading</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>Compose Reliability</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>RhO.A</b>
Constructs	≥0.7	≥0.5	≥0.8	>0.7	
Virtual Learning Supports (VLS)		0.528	0.817	0.706	0.726
VLS1-Virtual conference support	0.790				
VLP2-Online short courses opportunities	0.725				
VLS3 -Virtual training opportunities	0.677				
VLS4—Access to digital scientific databases	0.711				
Virtual Job Enrichment (VJE)		0.541	0.825	0.719	0.735
VJE1- Challenging virtual job responsibilities	0.730				
VJE2- Availability of facilities for effective delivery of my online engagement	0.656				
VJE3- Opportunity for career advancement	0.750				
VJE4-Multitasking	0.800				
Virtual Mentoring (VM)		0.614	0.862	0.787	0.844
VM1-Regular online interaction with mentors	0.914				
VM2- Quality mentorship satisfaction	0.660				
VM3- Effective professional advice	0.751				
VM4- Prompt feedback from mentors	0.787				
Job Engagement		0.595	0.811	0.772	0.774
Teaching Engagement	0.869				
Research Engagement	0.819				
Community Service Engagement	0.599				
Institutional Citizenship Behaviour (ICB)		0.669	0.857	0.760	0.669
ICB1- Individual Initiative behaviour	0.740				
ICB2- Individual Development Behaviour	0.782				
ICB3- Compliance Behaviour	0.920				

This study also used a two-stage approach for the test of moderating effect. This is because the moderator is formatively measured. The orthogonalization approach was avoided because the sample size was above 200. This was in line with Henseler and Chin (2010) suggestion.

The data captured information that aided the determination of the influence of the nurturance of young faculty on improved job engagement and the moderating role of institutional citizenship behaviour in three selected private universities in Ogun State, Southwest, Nigeria. We adopted a multivariate analytic technique for the data analysis. Four hypotheses were formulated to underscore the objectives of this study. The first tested whether virtual learning support has a significant influence on improved job engagement of faculty. The second considered the likely implications of virtual job enrichment on improved job engagement of faculty. While the third proposition is to test whether virtual mentoring has no significant influence on job engagement of

faculty, the last hypothesis confirmed the significant moderation of institutional citizenship behaviour in the relationship between NYF and IJE of faculty.

We also used the algorithm model to represent the structure of regressions in terms of weight trajectories that helps in determining the path co-efficient, the r-square values and the significance values. On the other hand, bootstrapping determines the significance testing of coefficient and t-values. The bootstrapping default subsample of 500 was increased to 5000 to enhance the significant results. In the analysis, nurturance of young faculty in the selected private universities was measured with three constructs: virtual learning support, virtual job enrichment and virtual mentoring. On the other hand, the dependent variable, i.e. job engagement, was also measured with three constructs, teaching engagement, research engagement, and community service engagement, while the moderating variable, i.e. institutional citizenship behaviour, was measured with individual initiative behaviour, personal improvement behaviour and compliance behaviour.

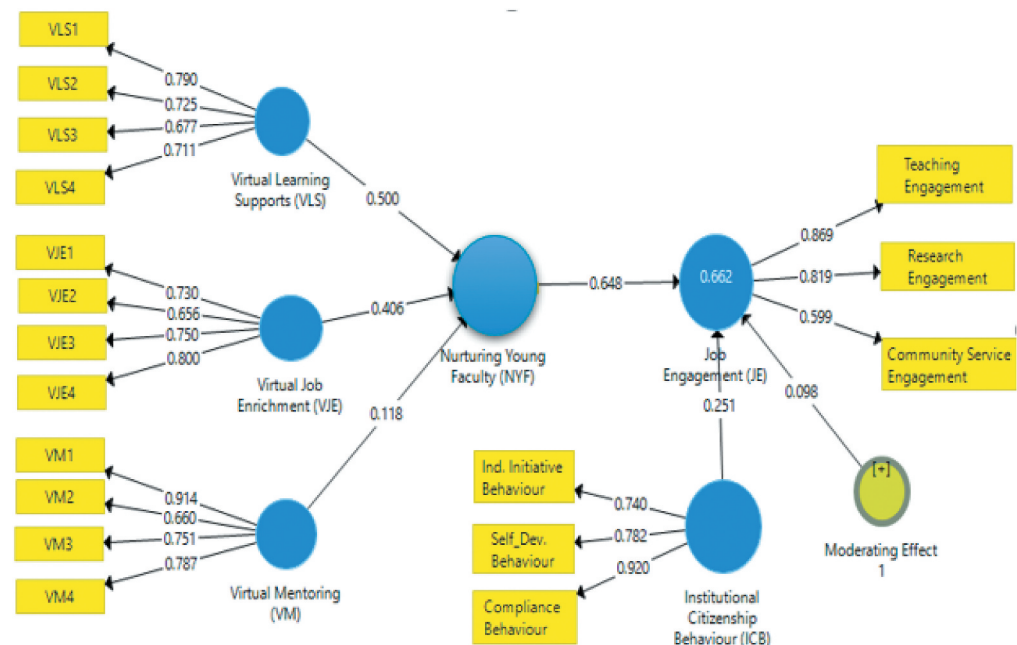
#### 4. Results

However, for the multivariate level, the interpreted results use key statistics, such as structural path co-efficient ( $\beta$  value), the R-square value, t-statistic and p-values. Pictorial representations were also included.

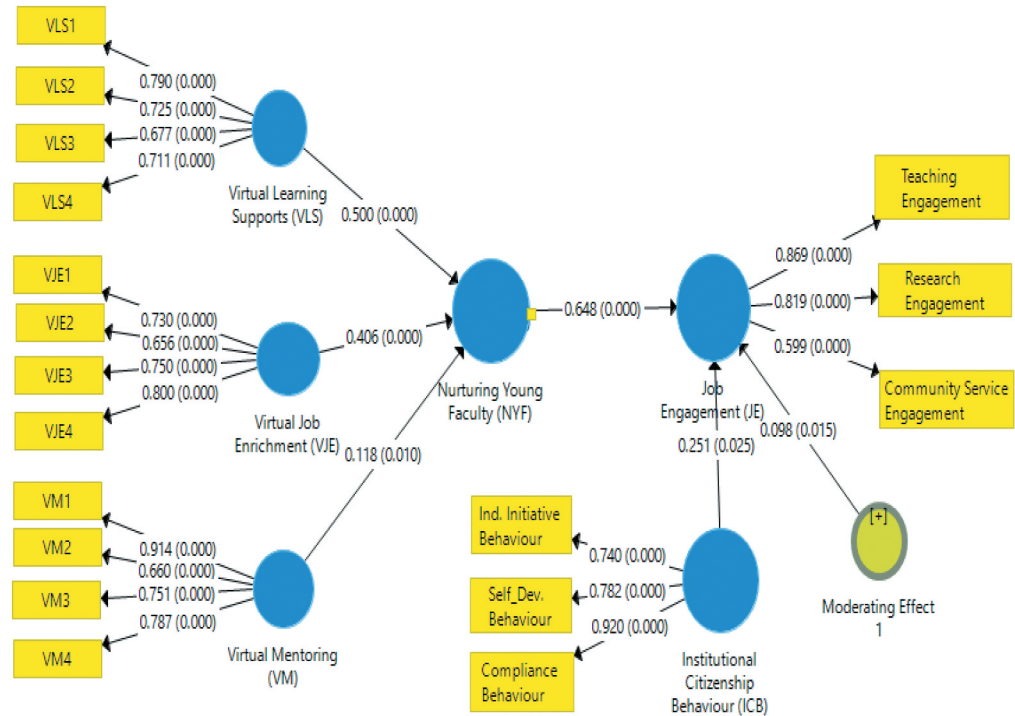
Further to the Partial Least Square (PLS) algorithm model depicted in Figure 1, the path coefficient that shows the level of relationship between the observed variables revealed that the ability of the universities to nurture the young faculty has a significant relationship with the level of job engagement. However, the R-square value ( $R^2 = 0.662$ ) shows the degree of variance of NYF and JE (Figure 1 and 2). This suggests that NYF explains 66.2% variance in JE.

PLS Bootstrapping is usually used to evaluate the t-statistic values and the default bootstrapping setting is 500. For this study, the researchers increased the setting to 5000 to enhance the output

**Figure 1. PLS Algorithm Model of NYF, JE and ICB.**



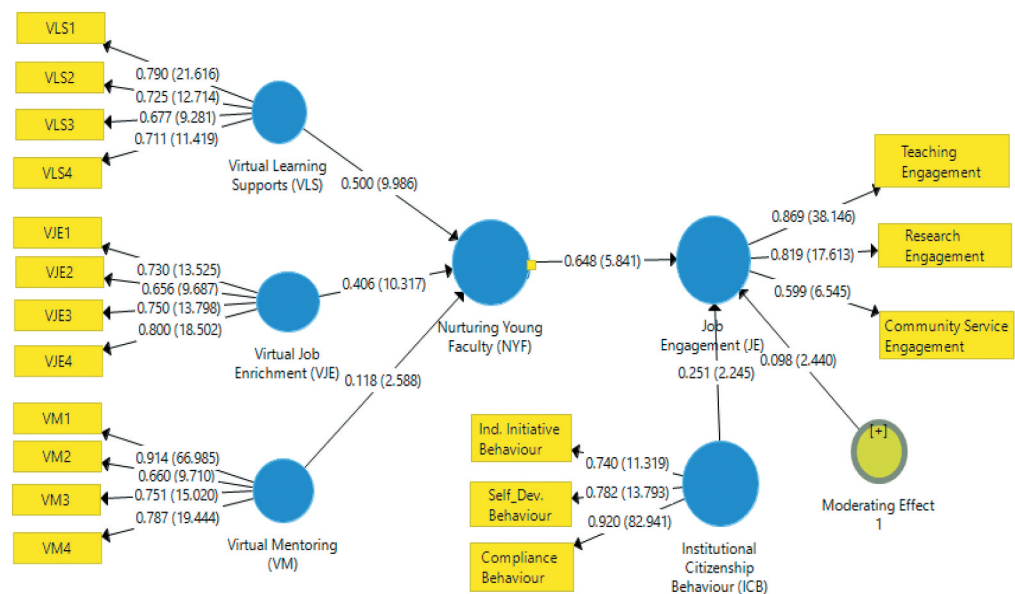
**Figure 2. PLS Bootstrapping Model with  $\beta$  and P values of NYF, JE and ICB.**



of the models as well as affirmative purposes. Bootstrapping model with  $\beta$  and p-values help in determining the structured path coefficients and the significant values of the different constructs used for the measurement of the observed variables.

Figure 3 shows the outer loading, T-statistics and total effects of all the observed variables. This suggests that NYF has a significant influence on improved JE. At the same time, ICB significantly

**Figure 3. PLS Bootstrapping Model with  $\beta$  and T values of NYF, JE and ICB.**



**Table 3. Path Co-efficient of NYF, ICB and JE**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Path Co-efficient</b>	<b>Indirect Effect</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>T Statistics</b>	<b>P Values</b>
NYF- JE	0.648		0.111	5.841	0.000
Virtual learning support 1 → Nurturing Young Faculty	0.500		0.050	9.986	0.000
Virtual learning support 2 → Job Engagement		0.324	0.064	5.280	0.000
Virtual job enrichment 1 → Nurturing Young Faculty	0.406		0.039	10.317	0.000
Virtual job enrichment 2 → Job Engagement		0.263	0.050	5.280	0.000
Virtual mentoring 1 → Nurturing Young Faculty	0.118		0.045	2.588	0.010
Virtual mentoring 2 → Job Engagement		0.076	0.034	2.263	0.024
Institutional Citizenship Behaviour → Job Engagement	0.251		0.112	2.245	0.025
Moderating Effect → Job Engagement	0.098		0.040	2.440	0.015
<b>R Squared</b>					
R Square			Adjusted R Square		
0.662			0.659		
<b>F-Squared</b>					
Nurturing Young Faculty → Job Engagement			0.521 (>0.02)		
Institutional Citizenship Behaviour → Job Engagement			0.124 (>0.02)		

**Table 4. Summary of Hypothesis**

Hypotheses	Coefficients	t-value	p-value	Empirical Evidence
Virtual learning support has no significant influence on improved job engagement of Faculty.	0.500	9.986	0.000	Null hypothesis Rejected
Virtual job enrichment has no significant influence on improved job engagement of Faculty.	0.406	10.317	0.000	Null hypothesis Rejected
Virtual mentoring has no significant influence on job engagement of Faculty	0.118	2.588	0.000	Null hypothesis Rejected
ICB moderates the relationship between NYF and IJE (teaching, research and community service) of Faculty.	0.098	2.440	0.015	Null hypothesis Rejected

moderates the relationship between NYF and JE. The  $\beta$  value, which shows the expected variance in JE for a unit variation in NYF, was used to test the significance of the hypotheses formulated. The higher the  $\beta$  value, the more substantial the effect on NYF. All three constructs showed significant relationships at 0.05. Specifically, the path coefficient showed that virtual learning support (VLS) provided by the management of the selected private universities indirectly but significantly influenced improved job engagement (JE) of faculty member ( $\beta = 0.324$ , T-value = 5.280 > 1.96, P-value = 0.000 < 0.05). Similarly, the path co-efficient also revealed that virtual job enrichment (VJE) also indirectly and significantly influenced job engagement JE ( $\beta = 0.263$ , T-value = 5.280 > 1.96, P-value = 0.000 < 0.05) while path co-efficient value of virtual mentoring which has an indirect significant influence on job engagement ( $\beta = 0.076$ , T-value = 2.263 > 1.96, P-value = 0.000 < 0.05). The significant impact of NYE and ICB on talent engagement was confirmed via the T-statistical test as depicted in [Figure 3](#) and [Table 3](#).

It is equally important to note that the f-squared value for nurturing young faculty and job engagement is 0.521 which is above the benchmark of 0.02 as suggested by Cohen (1988). Therefore, nurturing young faculty has a significant effect on job engagement. Similarly, the f-squared value for institutional citizenship behaviour and job engagement is 0.124 (>0.02). This implies that institutional citizenship behaviour has a significant effect on job engagement.

The summary of the hypotheses tested is presented in [Table 4](#). The hypotheses were formulated in a null form. The findings showed that all the null hypotheses were rejected as presented in [Table 4](#).

### 5. Discussion

This study provides evidence of nurturing young faculty for improved job engagement with the moderating role of institutional citizenship behaviour in the new normal world of work. Improved job engagement in terms of quality teaching, research productivity and community impact in this era of new normal as orchestrated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is a function of virtual

learning support. Virtual learning support for young faculty could be informed of opportunities and financial support provided by the management for the young faculty to attend virtual conferences. Also, the ability and readiness of management of the universities to support and encourage young faculty to participate in online short courses, webinar training in the area of research interest and specialisation will enhance their teaching, research and community service engagement in this new normal world of work. In addition to that, the ability of universities management to subscribe to scientific databases and make the same available for all the faculty members particularly the young faculty will go a long way in improving and enhancing their job engagement. This finding validates the submission of Billy and Yuan-Li (2020) and Falola et al. (2020a) who noted that digital initiatives programmes remain sine-qua-none of academic staff engagement, particularly in this new normal world of work. The finding corroborates the submission of Kathleen et al. (2019) and H. O Falola et al. (2020b). They posited that management initiatives for improved job engagement at a time like this, where COVID-19 has redefined the world of work, are indeed a welcome development.

Also, virtual job enrichment contributes significantly to the teaching, research and community service endeavours of young faculty in the new normal workplace. This also suggests that if the management of universities assigns lively but challenging job responsibilities to young faculty that will be carried out online, it will make them extend beyond themselves. In an attempt to do this, adequate facilities for online engagement must be provided. In other words, challenging job responsibilities makes people multitask and provide opportunities for career advancement in the new normal work era. This validates the conclusion made by Kim et al. (2018) and Tobarra et al. (2020). While the usefulness of virtual learning has broadly supported young faculty development, especially among Nigerian universities, it is arguable to note that the long-term sustainability of its usage can equally result in the emergence of further new normal in the Nigerian university educational sector. For instance, available evidence suggests a high cost of acquisition and implementation of virtual learning platforms tends to be a critical impediment to their success among universities in Nigeria (Okiki, 2011; Olasina, 2012). Affordability, therefore, can project an even higher cost of university education in Nigeria. It is therefore arguable to note that cost can remain a key determinant of the success of online learning facilities in Nigeria (Sánchez-Prieto et al., 2019).

Similarly, the issue of unwillingness and commitment among Nigerian to change due to the COVID-19 pandemic, i.e. an almost complete migration from the classroom teaching system to a near-complete virtual platform can become a key impediment to its implementation. This argument aligns with Ufua (2014) who note that in some cases many organization members tend to show outright resistance to changes in an operational process. This observation tends to pose a challenge on how to get the young faculty members to embrace changes such as migration from classroom to virtual learning. The current suggests that the depth of emerging change requirement that would involve some organization members, such as young faculty in a Nigerian university, should be matched with a suitable motivation that can be worth the embrace of emerging changes in the operational process.

A similar raised in this study is the issues with the strength of the legal systems existing policies in supporting the full stake of virtual learning, development and implementation in Nigeria. The current research sees the legal systems and policies as key factors that can determine the extent to which virtual learning and development can impart the university educational systems in Nigeria. According to Olujobi, Olujobi and Ufua (2020), the Nigerian legal system requires a productive review to make compliant with regulating key operational activities in the economy. This includes the educational systems focused on the research. Moreover, D.E Ufua et al. (2020) reckon that adequate legal requirement is needed to move a business operational process in the right direction in Nigeria, to effectively avoid unnecessary breaches, and due consideration for an end-to-end effect on operational decisions and actions among organisations, such as the Nigerian university educational sector. It is therefore advisable for Nigerian universities to adhere strictly to legal regulations, while the

government and the appointed regulatory authorities pay due attention to the legal system and policies in the implementation of virtual learning and development among young faculty members.

On the other hand, virtual mentoring, if encouraged by the management of higher education institutions, is capable of enhancing and improving job engagement of young faculty of universities. Also, regular virtual interaction with mentors helps in enhancing productive job engagement and career progression. This corroborates with the position of Boboc et al. (2012) and Liu et al. (2012). They found out that a good mentor–mentee relationship is a panacea to academic engagement and excellence in higher education institutions. This was also validated by Peretomode (2017).

This suggests that ICB contributes considerably to the level of teaching, research and community service of the young faculty. This also implies that ICB (faculty initiative behaviour, self-development and compliance behaviour) of faculty members of the selected universities are no doubt major drivers of job engagement. It is equally important to note that ICB significantly moderates the relationship between NYF and JE. This finding supports the submission of Thiruvankadam and Durairaj (2017) and Kandeepan (2016) that discretionary behaviour of faculty contributes to the acquisition of skills that will help qualify teaching and outstanding research productivity.

## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the empirical evidence from the study, it is concluded that virtual learning support indirectly influenced improved job engagement among the young scholars in Nigeria private universities. Virtual learning and training of young academic are projected in this study as indispensable if sustenance of quality academic performance is to be achieved in private university and by extension, other higher learning institutions. The authors, therefore, recommend that stakeholders in higher education, especially the private universities should invest in and support digital and virtual engagement for quality teaching and outstanding research productivity.

## 7. Limitations and suggestions for further studies

Only three private universities were selected from Ogun State, Nigeria, and future studies can broaden the scope of the study to include more private universities or extend it to public universities. The exploration of the qualitative method instead of a structured questionnaire could also be used as personal experiences of faculty concerned. Other future engagement could introduce a mixed-method approach, perhaps to provide opportunities for additional information that could aid adequate decision-making purposes. Another limitation was the difficulties in administering the copies of the questionnaire due to the lockdown of schools to curb the community spread of COVID-19. The researchers were able to address this by developing and converting the instrument into a Google form for online administration.

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