

Career Development and Employee Commitment: A study of selected higher institutions in Abia State

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Abstract: *This study examines career development and employee commitment of selected higher institutions in Abia State. Convenience sampling was adopted. A total of 120 senior staffs were surveyed. Sample size was 92 using Taro Yamane formula. Ninety-two copies of the questionnaire were administered to the five higher institutions. Seventy-two copies of the questionnaires were found useful for data analysis. Instrument was measured with 5-items on 5-point Likert scale ranging 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=disagree, 2=strongly disagree and 1=undecided. Validity of the instrument was ascertained using face and construct validity. Reliability of instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used for bivariate analysis with the aid of SPSS 20.0. The findings of the study revealed that mentoring and job enrichment enhances employee commitment in the higher institutions. The study concluded that career development measured in terms of mentoring and job enrichment improves employee commitment. The study recommended that human resource managers should incorporate mentoring and job enrichment as factors that can improve career development of their employees which in turn increases their commitment to achieve organisational goals.*

Keywords: *Career development, mentoring, job enrichment, employee commitment*

I. Introduction

In every business activity, there is the foot-soldier that pilots its affairs within and outside the organisation. This personality is the employee. Organisation can hardly survive without the employee commitment. Huezinsky and Buchanan (2001) elucidated that employee commitment is directly associated with organisational growth, expansion and sustainability. Robbins (2003) contended that as a result of commitment of firm's workforce organization is able to withstand environmental turbulences. Another scholar Snell and Bohlander (2007) argued that workers' commitment bring about increase in productivity and firm's profitability. When employee is dedicated to his/her duty; employee-employer relationship is enhanced in the workplace (Truss, 2008). However, apart from workplace benefits from employee commitment, employee on his/her part receives satisfaction from the job itself. Supporting this submission, Nkpoyen (2003) contended that when employees' are giving a sense of belonging in the organization, their commitment to the workplace increases without being coerced.

From the foregoing analysis, employee commitment can be further enhanced if the organization will develop their career by instituting programmes that will help improve their skills. In the words of Çiğdem and Belgin (2014), "career development programs enable all the workers to make progress in the organization from the beginning." They also contended that career development also "helps to determine career paths and remove all the obstacles against the progress of the workers". Werther and Davis (1992) posited that career development will enhance organizational loyalty among employees, result in higher levels of job satisfaction, lower employee turnover, and fewer employee complaints. Osibanjo, Oyewunmi and Ojo (2014) enunciated that career development enables organizations to have adequate, required, and formidable human resources for their growth and relevance in the industry. Byars and Rue (2004) in Osibanjo, Oyewunmi and Ojo (2014), put the following three major objectives of career development: "(i) to meet the immediate and future human resource needs of the organization on a timely basis; (ii) to better inform the organization and the individual about potential career paths within the organization; and (iii) to utilize existing human resource programs to the fullest by integrating the activities that select, assign, develop, and manage individual careers with the organizations' plans."

In the light of the above, few trends of studies on the criterion variable have been examined. Agba, Festus and Ushie (2010) examined the relationship between career development and employee commitment in industrial organizations, in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. Findings of their study showed that, career advancement, career counseling and career opportunities significantly influence workers commitment. Secondly, Çiğdem and Belgin (2014) examined the impact of career development programs in organizations, and organizational commitment on employees' job satisfaction. Result of their findings revealed that

organizational commitment affects job satisfaction directly and positively, whereas career development programs in organizations do not affect the level of employee's job satisfaction. Thirdly, Aina, Adeyeye and Ige (2012) investigated the relationship between organizational culture and employees' commitment in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. Results of their study showed that there is a significant relationship between organizational culture and employees' commitment in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State. Fourthly, Chung-Chieh and Chih-Jen (2013) analysed the relationship between employee commitment and job attitude in the tourism industry and its effect on service quality. The study found that biographical characteristics of the employees have an effect on job attitude and job commitment.

Aim/Objectives of the study

The aim of the study is to examine the relationship between career development and employee commitment. However, the specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the relationship between mentoring and employee commitment
2. Examine the relationship between job enrichment and employee commitment

Research Hypotheses

Drawing from the objective of the study, the following null hypotheses were formulated.

HO1: Mentoring does not significantly associate with employee commitment

HO2: Job enrichment does not significantly associate with employee commitment

II. Review Of Related Literature

The concept of Career Development

Career development involves various alternatives such as developing abilities, preserving current skills and getting ready for the future ahead of just receiving promotion (Çiğdem and Belgin, 2014). In the words of Amah (2006), career development is the building of organisational members' knowledge and skills to prepare them for new opportunities and challenges. Byars and Rue (2004) contended that "career development is defined as "an ongoing, formalized effort by an organization that focuses on developing and enriching the organization's human resources in light of both the employees' and the organization's needs". Agba, Festus and Ushie (2010) elucidates that "career development involves concerted efforts directed towards assessing a workers' potentials identifying likely career paths for that employee and designing and implementing various forms of training and experience to prepare that person for more advanced job".

Nevertheless, some empirical studies on career development were visited. Kwamboka (2007) examined the effect of employee career development among teachers in public primary schools in Starehe District, Nairobi County. The findings of Kwamboka's study were that promotion, job mobility, redeployment and continuous learning affect the performance of employees to a great extent. Azman, Nurrul and Rizal (2014) examined the relationship between the workplace career programme, perceived career development support, and job satisfaction. The finding of their study indicates that there is a relationship between career planning and career management was positively and significantly correlated with job satisfaction. Yishu (2009) examined the influences of career identity on career development in China and in the Netherlands. Yishu's results show that work centrality leads to the content-oriented career development and the desire for upward mobility leads to the process-related career development. Zulkarnain (2013) investigated an integrative of quality of work life in public service employee. Zulkarnain's results shows that career development was related to quality of work life of employee.

Finally, career development is established to enable employees match their needs for personal growth and development with the needs of the organization (Amah, 2006). For employees to move to the next level in the organization certain factors need to be considered. These include mentoring, on-the-job training, classroom instruction, job rotation, job enrichment as well as formal education (Amah, 2006). It is in this backdrop that mentoring and job enrichment were used in this study as dimensions of career advancement.

Mentoring

Mentoring is planned early intervention designed to provide timely instruction to mentees throughout their apprenticeship, to shorten the learning curve, reinforce positive work ethics and attitudes, and provide mentees with role models (Hipes and Marinoni (2005). A mentor is someone who helps another person through an important transition such as coping with a new situation like a new job or a major change in personal circumstances or in career development or personal growth (Judy, Carol and Mark, 2003). Few studies on mentoring have been noticed. Lonnie and Crawford (2005) reviewed the literature of formal mentoring programs in organizational settings. The finding of their study showed that "formal organizational mentoring can be effective to meet the needs for all employees to have the opportunity to be mentored, to learn from the wisdom, experience and mistakes of others, and to increase the protégé's career opportunities".

Job enrichment

Amah (2006) posits that job enrichment refers to a situation where an employee is assigned to a task higher than the one he/she is performing. Job enrichment can also refer to when an employee is given a responsibility as a result of the experience acquired over the years or due to educational advancement. Wehrich, Cannice and Koontz (2008) points out that job enrichment is “building into jobs a higher sense of challenge and achievement. Few studies on job enrichment have been highlighted. Khyzer and Haris (2012) examined how job enrichment causes high level of employee commitment during the performance of their duties in Pakistan. The result of their study indicate that “if the jobs of the employees in any kind of organization are enriched, their commitment level would increase positively and that ultimately increases their productivity level in both, the public sector as well as in the private sector organizations”. Career development has great benefits to organization, employee as well as managers and supervisors at large. Managementstudyguide.com (2016) highlighted the following four benefits of career development to the enterprise, employees, managers and supervisors as enlisted below:

Benefits of a career development system to organization (managementstudyguide.com)

- Once organization has a fair idea about employee’s strengths and weaknesses, attitude and behaviour, values and future aspirations and skills and competencies, they are able to make better use of employee skills and put them at the right place.
- The organization can disseminate all important details and information at all organizational levels in order to ensure effective communication at all levels. It fosters and lays emphasis on better communication within the organization as a whole.
- It also helps organization retain valued employees by providing them what they want. Since the organization is able to collect all necessary information about a specific individual, it can make efforts to retain them.
- It establishes a reputation of the organization in the market. More and more working professionals see it as a people developer and get attracted towards it.

Benefits of a career development system to employees (managementstudyguide.com)

- The major benefit of career development system to employees is that they get helpful assistance and guidance with their career decisions. They get to know about their own aspirations, objectives and desires and understand how to shape their career.
- By using this system, they can set more realistic goals and objectives that are feasible to be accomplished over the span of one’s life.
- It fosters better communication between the employee and the manager as well as at all levels of the organization.
- The best part is that they can get feedback on their performance. This helps them improve their working style and compels them to upgrade their skills.
- The process leads to job enrichment and enhanced job satisfaction.

Benefits of a career development system to managers/supervisors (managementstudyguide.com)

- A career development system helps managers and supervisors in improving and upgrading their skills in order to manage their own career. Even they get to where they are heading to and what their aspirations are.
- It fosters better communication between managers and employees.
- It helps them in retaining valued employees as they get to know about their skills and competencies and future aspirations as well.
- It helps in discussing productive performance appraisal of employees and planning their promotions as well as their career graph.
- It leads to greater understanding of the organization as a whole and cultivate a supportive and conducive culture in the organization.
- It helps managers in understanding the hidden aspects of employees and guides them to allocate employees the right job that matches to their skills and competencies.

The concept of Employee Commitment

The paradigm of employee commitment rests on theoretical foundation of organisational commitment (Hall and Schneider, 1972; Porter, William and Smith, 1976; Meyer and Allen 1991). From the emergence of commitment to management and social sciences, scholars have semantically disentangled the concept of organisational commitment to either employee dedication to task, career commitment, employment commitment, employee obligation, workers commitment, industrial commitment, enterprise commitment, organisational attachment, workers identification and so on. However, Organizational commitment is describe as a more active and positive orientation toward the organization (Porter, William and Smith, 1976). It is an

“attitude or orientation toward the organization which links or attaches the individual or worker to the establishment. It entails a process whereby the goals of the individual or worker is increasingly integrates with that of the organization (Hall and Schneider, 1972). Hersevitch and Meyer, (2002) posits that organizational commitment can also be defined as the degree to which an employee identifies with the goals and values of the organization, and is willing to put in efforts to help the organization to achieve these goals. Narrowing commitment down to employee, Bratton and Gold (2007) contended that employee commitment is relative to the workers’ attachment to or participation in the organizations in which they employed. Employee commitment is the degree to which an employee identifies with the organization and wants to continue actively participating in it (Nystrom, 1993).

III. Methodology

Target population for the study covers selected higher institutions in Abia State. Convenience sampling was employed to selected fivehigher institutions which serve as accessible population for the study. A total of 120 senior staffs were surveyed. Sample size is 92 using Taro Yamane formular. 92 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the five higher institutions. After data cleaning 72 copies of the questionnaire were found useful for data analysis. Dimensions of career development were measured with 5-items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=disagree, 2=strongly disagree and 1=undecided. Validity of the instrument was ascertain using face and construct validity. Reliability of instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. Spearman’s Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used for bivariate analysis with the aid of SPSS 20.0. The finding of the study revealed that mentoring and job enrichment enhances employee commitment in the higher institutions. The study concluded that career development measured in terms of mentoring and job enrichment improves employee commitment. The study recommended that human resource managers should incorporate mentoring and job enrichment as factors that can improve career development of their employees which in turns increases their commitment to achieve organisational goals.

IV. Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Percentage was employed to ascertain degree of agreement of respondents on how mentoring and job enrichment can enhance career development in the higher institutions.

Table 1.Response rate on mentoring

Degree of Agreement	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	52	72
Agree	18	25
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Undecided	2	3
Total	72	100

Source: Field Survey (2016)

From the table above, 52 respondents representing 72% strongly agree that mentoring improves employee commitment in the higher institutions. 18 respondents representing 25% agree that mentoring enhances employee commitment in the higher institutions under study.However none of the respondents disagree nor strongly disagree that mentoring cannot enhance employee commitment. Nevertheless, 2 respondents representing 3% were not certain that mentoring can either improve or lower employee commitment in the higher institutions.

Table 2.Response rate on job enrichment

Degree of Agreement	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	41	57
Agree	12	17
Disagree	2	3
Strongly Disagree	11	15
Undecided	6	8
Total	72	100

Source: Field Survey (2016)

Table 1.2 above shows degree of agreement of72 respondents on job enrichment.41 respondents representing 57% strongly agree that job enrichmentenhances employee commitment in the higher institutions. 12 respondents representing 17% agree that job enrichmentimproves employee commitment in the higher institutions. 2 respondents representing 3% disagree that job enrichment cannot improve employee

commitment. Finally, 6 respondents representing 8% strongly disagree that job enrichment cannot promote employee commitment.

Drawing from the above descriptive statistics, Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was employed with the aid of SPSS 20.0 for the bivariate analysis. This statistical tool was chosen on the basis that it requires the use of ranked variables (ordinal scale) (Brase and Brase, 1987) in Ogbuji (2005).

H01: Mentoring does not significantly associate with employee commitment

Correlations

		Mentoring	Employee commitment	
Spearman's rho	Mentoring	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	
		N	72	
	Employee commitment	Correlation Coefficient	0.812**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.020	.
		N	72	72

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

From the above SPSS output, mentoring has a strong positive significant relationship with employee commitment. Reasons being that p-value (0.020) is less than the level of significance (0.05). Null hypothesis is therefore rejected and alternate hypothesis accepted. The study hereby states that mentoring is positively associated with employee commitment. This is in line with the results of Lonnie and Crawford (2005). They review formal mentoring programs in organizational settings. The finding of their study show that "formal organizational mentoring can be effective to meet the needs for all employees to have the opportunity to be mentored, to learn from the wisdom, experience and mistakes of others, and to increase the protégé's career opportunities".

H02: Job enrichment does not significantly associate with employee commitment

Correlations

		Job enrichment	Employee commitment	
Spearman's rho	Job enrichment	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	
		N	72	
	Employee commitment	Correlation Coefficient	0.787**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.
		N	72	72

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The above SPSS output, shows that job enrichment has a strong positive significant relationship with employee commitment. This is because the p-value (0.000) is less than the level of significance (0.05). Null hypothesis is therefore rejected and alternate hypothesis accepted. The study hereby states that job enrichment is positively associated with employee commitment. This is in line with the findings of Khyzer and Haris (2012). They examined how job enrichment causes high level of employee commitment during the performance of their duties in Pakistan. The result of their study indicate that "if the jobs of the employees in any kind of organization are enriched, their commitment level would increase positively and that ultimately increases their productivity level in both, the public sector as well as in the private sector organizations".

V. Conclusion

The study concluded that career development measured in terms of mentoring and job enrichment improves employee commitment in the higher institutions.

VI. Recommendations

1. Human resource managers should incorporate mentoring and job enrichment in their functions to improve the employees' commitment.
2. Higher institutions should employ the services of qualified and certified human resource personnel that will man the human resource department for effective career development of the employees.

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