

Employee Engagement and Academic Staff Commitment in Tertiary Institutions in Delta State, Nigeria

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Purpose: Social exchange theory captures the commitment, feelings of loyalty, dedication, and discretionary effort and all sorts of reciprocal exchange of duties, services on the part of workers, and responsibility of care, engagement, incentives, favours, and privileges on the part of the employer. This study therefore examine the interactions between employee engagement and staff commitment focusing on the tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria

Method: A cross-sectional survey design approach to research with 1208 academic staff of six tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria was studied. The sample size was gotten from Krejchic and Morgan sample size determination table.

Findings: The result showed employee engagement significantly influence academic staff commitment in tertiary institution in Delta State, Nigeria.

Conclusion: The study therefore recommended that management should explore every opportunity to achieve higher level of academic performance among academic staff of tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. This study offers significant contribution to literature conceptually, theoretically, and empirical.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Employee Engagement, Employee Loyalty, Organizational Commitment

Introduction

Job performance is one of the major driving forces of an organisation and it is critical for the survival of every organisation especially tertiary institutions. Academic staff in Delta State are involved in teaching, conducting examination, carrying out research, attending conferences and workshops that are meant to enhance their teaching and research capacity. When a well-trained

academic staff of Delta State tertiary institutions deliver value, it will potentially improve academic output and give due recognition for the institution (Robert, et al., 2020). However, it is perceived from preliminary investigation that academic staff of tertiary institutions in Delta State are not performing at an optimum level required in terms of their creativity with teaching, commitment to work, teaching quality, and productivity in terms of publication output. This poor performance is corroborated by the position occupied by the best school in Delta on the global and national university rankings which is 9213 and 49 respectively (Tavan, et al., 2017). This only reinforces the notion of poor institutional performance of tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria.

These perceived challenges identified may be traced to poor training, bad work relationship, and severe leader to staff relationship. Nevertheless, if care is not taken, these challenges will negatively affect the institution in the area of student academic performance, quality of teaching and technology to advance research. By extension, it may affect the Nigeria economy by producing incompetent graduate to handle the nation's economy and administrative affairs. Moreover, sustained employee engagement and training and development, has been identified as the potential factor contributing to the challenges experienced in job performance of academic staff in tertiary institutions in Delta State (Salau, Falola, et al., 2020). Academic staff of Delta State tertiary institutions were perceived not to undergo adequate training after gaining employment, it is also perceived that the relationship the academic staff and the governing body of the institutions is not cordial which often led to disruption of academic activities. It is therefore imperative to address all these challenges in the light of providing a system and structure that produce students and graduates that can compete globally and attain excellence.

Though several studies exist on employee engagement and how they influence staff commitment. However, empirical studies that combined the two variables within the context of academic staff performance in tertiary institutions in Delta State seem scarce. The few studies done have focused on other contexts hence reinforcing the narrative that there is need for a study that would substantiate the interaction between employee engagement, training and development, and performance of academic staff of tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria ((Salau, Falola, et al., 2020). In line with the above statement, this study intends to investigate the influence of employee engagement, and training & development on performance of academic staff of tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Theory and Hypothesis Development

The idea of employee engagement is better explained by social exchange theory, which provides a more rational foundation (MacLeod & Clarke 2019). Scholars consider Social Exchange Theory (SET) to be one of the oldest and most popular theories of social behavior because it best describes the social exchange and relationship between management and workers. Interactions between or among stakeholders who are in a position to offer tangible or intangible resources in exchange for a return of what they expect from each other generate responsibilities that are voluntarily agreed upon, entered into, and created through social exchanges between or among social actors. Social Exchange Theory comprises of devotion, commitment, feelings of loyalty, and discretionary effort and all types of mutual exchange of obligations, services on the part of employees, and duty of care, rewards, involvement, favors, and privileges on the part of the employer. Employees respond positively to favorable events and adversely to unfavorable situations (Kompaso, & Sridevi, 2020). This idea lays the groundwork for understanding why workers choose to participate more or less. If an employee is not treated well, they will respond in kind. As a result, less engaged employees engage in behaviors that may jeopardize their career and the business.

Employee Engagement and Academic Staff Performance

Several studies looked at the impact of organizational commitment on employee performance in the Nigerian hospitality business. The study investigates the impact of emotional commitment, continuation commitment, and normative commitment on job performance among Nigerian hospitality sector personnel (Bagale, 2017). This study used descriptive survey research, with data collected from 75 respondents in selected hotels and restaurants in Osun State, Nigeria, using a structured questionnaire and personal interview. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) and Linear Regression were used to analyze the data. The study found that Affective commitment and continuance commitment have a positive but insignificant impact on job performance. The findings also show that normative commitment has a negative but minor impact on work performance. According to the findings, affective and continuous commitment

have a negative impact on work performance, however normative commitment has a positive impact. Following that, the study suggests that management shoulder its responsibilities by encouraging employees through motivational elements that have a major impact on employee job performance.

Based on leasing firms in Sri Lanka, a study was conducted to examine the impact of employee commitment on work performance. A total of 115 employees were polled, with personnel from licensed financing companies (LFCs) and specialized leasing businesses (SLCs) represented (Bakker & Demerouti 2011). A method for assessing employee commitment in terms of affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuation commitment, as well as a tool for assessing work performance, has been created (Bandura, 2007). The data was analyzed with the SPSS software program, and the results of the study, which include main and secondary research findings, were shown. The main conclusion was that there was a link between employee commitment and work performance. The correlation test showed that employee commitment had an impact on employee work performance. It was thus proven that employee commitment is highly connected with job performance. In addition, the data analysis shows that employee dedication has a considerable influence on work performance. Furthermore, in this study, employee commitment to work performance is most impacted by continuity commitment. Finally, the findings of this study show that employee commitment has a major influence on job performance and that there is a positive correlation between employee commitment and job performance.

In a study carried out in Nigeria Brewery PLC on the influence of organizational commitment on employee productivity (Chiaburu & Tekleab, 2017), the study employed a descriptive research design and a survey approach. with a two-point Likert scale of "YES" and "NO." The sample size was determined using a stratified random sampling procedure. The study's participants are 200 Nigeria Brewery Plc employees who work at the company's headquarters. For the objective of this study, a total of 200 participants were chosen, which included senior employees and supervisors. The study's data was gathered mostly from primary sources. The percentages of those who answered "Yes" and "No" were obtained by first collecting the frequencies of those who responded "Yes" and "No" while evaluating the data. Chi-square inferential statistics were employed to test the hypotheses. The hypotheses investigated revealed

that an organization's dedication to its employees has a considerable influence on employee performance. The importance of employee devotion to the organization's productivity cannot be overstated. Because it will increase employee morale, organizational motivating measures will have a substantial impact on staff productivity.

Based on a case study of the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA), the study assessed the impact of organizational factors on employee commitment (Chiaburu & Tekleab 2017). A descriptive study approach was used. A total of 168 people from various organizational roles or divisions made up the study population. A sample size of 92 respondents was drawn using a stratified random sampling procedure. A custom-made structured questionnaire was developed as the data collection tool. Data was analyzed using descriptive, standard deviation, covariance, and correlation methods. The study found that organizational factors have significant impact on employee commitment. Organizational dependability, the efficacy of the organization's social processes, and the organizational environment are among these aspects. Organizational factors like the strong work ethic, demand for perfection, organization's dependability, organization's promotion of top-down social interactions, organization's encouragement of the formation of self-managing teams, employee interaction with the organization, organization's strong management style, organization's promotion of teamwork, and organization's encouragement of employee retention all had significant impact on the employee commitment. Out of these factors, the strong management style had a strong influence most. The study suggested that in the context of a customer service, the organizational factors that should be emphasized are organization's strong management style and demand for perfection while individual factors that should be emphasized include older staff, their positions and years of work experience.

A study on Employee Commitment and Performance of Manufacturing Firms was carried out by Jusoff in 2019. The study's primary data was gathered from respondents using questionnaires. Dangote Flour Mills' 79 responders were chosen at random. The information was presented using tables and percentages. The study's hypotheses were tested using Pearson correlation analysis and multiple regression. The study revealed that 57.2 percent of respondents have a strong connection to their company. Correlation analyses showed that work satisfaction and employee organizational commitment have a positive connection (+0.445). Employee

commitment is influenced by income and job advancement, according to multiple regression analysis. It is suggested that manufacturing companies place a premium on salary and career advancement in order to increase employee loyalty and productivity.

Employee engagement has been investigated in connection to other characteristics such as contextual performance and task performance by a number of studies. Organizational Citizenship Behaviour, although there has been little study on the link between involvement and organizational citizenship behavior. This research was carried out in poor nations like Pakistan to see if there was a relationship between professors' employee engagement and organizational citizenship behavior. Employees who are highly engaged are less likely to participate in counterproductive job conduct, whereas disengaged employees are more likely to engage in such activity. From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, the link between employee engagement and organizational citizenship behavior may be better understood (SET).

Internal connections, which overlap to some extent with company culture and strategy, are antecedents of employee engagement. Employees continually receive aid from their leaders, managers, and coworkers, which is the connections and interactions among members of the company, through "internal relationships" or "psychological environment" contributing to employee engagement. Furthermore, the influence of social exchange connections on innovative work behavior was investigated, and it was discovered that POS and leader-member exchange were positively connected with work engagement. Furthermore, among 291 Malaysian employees, psychosocial safety atmosphere was linked to employment resources that were supportive of employee engagement (Kuijpers, Schyns, & Scheerens, 2016). Other research that demonstrated the favorable association between the psychological environment and employee engagement included.

A report based on a survey of 433 workers from Indian travel agencies. According on a survey of 283 employees in six US sectors and a conceptual article by Bakker et al. (Bakker et al., 2011). The importance of leadership was underlined in both corporate culture and strategy, as well as internal relationships. According to a systematic research analysis of 285 articles, servant leadership via mediators such as job resources, psychological empowerment, or trust atmosphere resulted in follower attitudinal outcomes of engagement at the individual and group levels.

Furthermore, there was moderation in the link between servant leadership and follower engagement, such as leader-follower social contacts and goal congruence, as well as the leader's hierarchical dominance and action-oriented leadership style. Engagement was a mediator between servant leadership and performance outcomes like inventive activity and follower behavioral outcomes like workplace deviant conduct.

The impact of organizational commitment on employee work performance in the Nigerian hotel sector was studied. The study included 75 participants, with data analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) and Linear Regression. According to the findings, emotional and continuous commitment have no effect on JP, however normative commitment has both a negative and minor effect on JP (Lipsitz, et al., 2019). Employee performance and commitment to continuity were investigated at the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton Kenya. Stratified sample and basic random sampling procedures were used to recruit 106 employees for the research. The data was analyzed using inferential statistics. Employee performance was found to have a modest negative association with continued commitments, according to the study. Empirical evidence from academic staff of Oyo state-owned tertiary institutions in Nigeria was used by several researchers to explore the influence of organizational commitment aspects on employee performance (Lugo-Ocando, & Malaolu 2020). Purposive and random sampling techniques were employed to recruit 197 workers, and data analysis included Pearson product moment correlation coefficients and multiple regression analysis. Employee performance is influenced by organizational commitment aspects both together and separately, according to the study. In Iran, a professor investigated the influence of OC on the JP. OC has three dimensions: affective, continuous, and normative. SEM (structural equations modeling) is a data analysis approach. According to the findings, all three aspects of OC had a good and substantial impact on JP.

Methodology

This study used a cross-sectional survey design with a population of 1,288 academic staff from Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku, Federal College of Education Technical, Asaba, Petroleum Training Institute, Effurun, and Nigerian Maritime University, Okerenkoko, Warri. To provide a representative representation of tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria, the tertiary institutions mentioned cut across federal, state, and private sectors. The academic staff of the Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku, Federal College of Education Technical, Asaba, Petroleum Training Institute, Effurun, and Nigerian Maritime University, Okerenkoko, Warri, make up the sample size of this study, which is 297. The sample size was calculated using the sample size table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

Each institution received 297 copies of the questionnaire, which were distributed via random sampling, which ensured that all respondents had an equal chance of being utilized in the study. Previous empirical investigations were used to create a structured questionnaire. The instrument's items were acquired from a survey of related literature and adaptations of questionnaires used by other researchers. The supervisor and other specialists in the field of information management were consulted for both face and content product validity. Corrections were integrated into the final questionnaire, which was distributed to the research participants.

Results

Validity and Reliability Test

The questionnaire was put through a reliability test to ensure that all of the items assessing each variable in the study were consistent. The instrument's reliability was tested in a pilot research with 30 copies of the questionnaire sent to Delta State School of Nursing academic personnel who were not part of the study. The split approach was used to produce two samples of the questionnaire for Cronbach Alpha analysis to determine the reliability coefficient. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data to address the study's goals in accordance with current research.

The Department of Information Administration, Lead City University, provided a letter of introduction and a project attestation form, which were used to get authorization to conduct the survey from the management of all higher institutions in Delta State. Five (5) research assistants were given a two-day training to make the administration, retrieval, and initial sorting of questionnaire copies easier. The academic staff of tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria, would get 291 copies of the questionnaires. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 24 was used to examine the data.

Table 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	101	36.6%
	Female	175	63.4%
Age	25-35 years	109	39.5%
	36-50 years	143	51.8%
	51 years and above	24	8.7%
Academic Qualification	HND	75	27.2%
	BSc	23	8.3%
	MSc	101	36.6%
	PhD	52	18.8%
	MBA	23	8.3%
	Others	2	0.7%
Work Experience	1-10 years	118	42.8%
	11-20 years	116	42.0%
	21 years and above	42	15.2%

Source: Researcher's Result via SPSS Version 24 (2021)

This part contains background and respondent information, which includes basic information such as the respondent's gender, age, academic qualifications, and job experience. Table 4.1 summarizes the findings in this regard.

The demographic and personal profile of respondents utilized in this study is shown in Table 4.1. Table 4.1 shows the demographic and personal characteristics of responders. The gender profile revealed that 101 respondents (36.6%) were males, while 175 respondents (63.4%) were females, showing that the majority of the respondents were females. According to the demographic and personal profile of respondents shown in table 4.1 by age, 109 respondents (39.5%) were between the ages of 25 and 35, 143 respondents (51.8%) were between the ages of 36 and 50, and 24 respondents (8.7%) were between the ages of 51 and above, indicating that there were more respondents between the ages of 36 and 50. Furthermore, 75 respondents (27.2%) said that they had an HND, 23 respondents (8.3%) had a BSc, 101 respondents (36.6%) had an MSc, 52 respondents (18.8%) had a PhD, 23 respondents (8.3%) had an MBA, and 2 respondents (0.7%) had other credentials. In terms of job experience, 118 respondents (42.8%) were between the ages of 1 and 10, 116 respondents (42.0%) were between the ages of 11 and 20, and 42 respondents (15.2%) were between the ages of 21 and beyond. This result suggests that those who have worked for 1-10 years have worked more than those in other groups.

Hypothesis: There will be no significant influence of employee engagement (job security, work relationship, career development and leadership) on commitment of academic staff of tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria.

To test the null hypothesis one, Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was adopted using the SmartPLS statistical platform version 3.3.3. The study used the PLS-algorithm's command which is appropriate for predicting impact, ran the bootstrapping to ascertain the level of significant of the prediction, and ran blindfolding to confirm the predictive relevance of the model. The choice of PLS-SEM (via SmartPLS) is because it is a more advanced multivariate analytical technique which offers more strict and robust analysis compared with the outcomes of SPSS ².

The independent variable employee engagement includes sub-measures such as job security, work relationship, career development and leadership while commitment of academic staff constitutes the dependent variable. Data from two hundred and seventy-six (276) respondents were collated for the analysis. The result of the PLS-SEM is presented in three models and in table. Figure 2 shows the path analysis, figure 2 shows the t value which confirm the significance of the path analysis and figure 4 shows the Q^2 which established the predictive relevance of the structural model. The table 4.2 provides a tabular summary of the information.

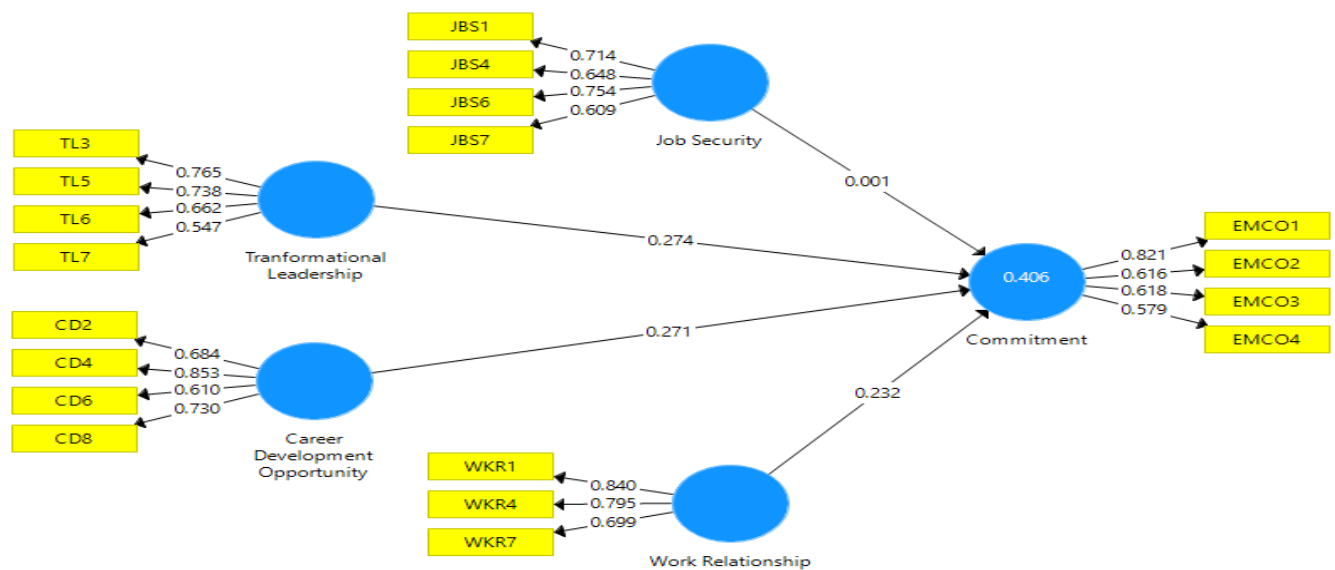


Figure 2. Path Analysis for Hypothesis One

Source: Researcher's Computation via SmartPLS V3.3.3

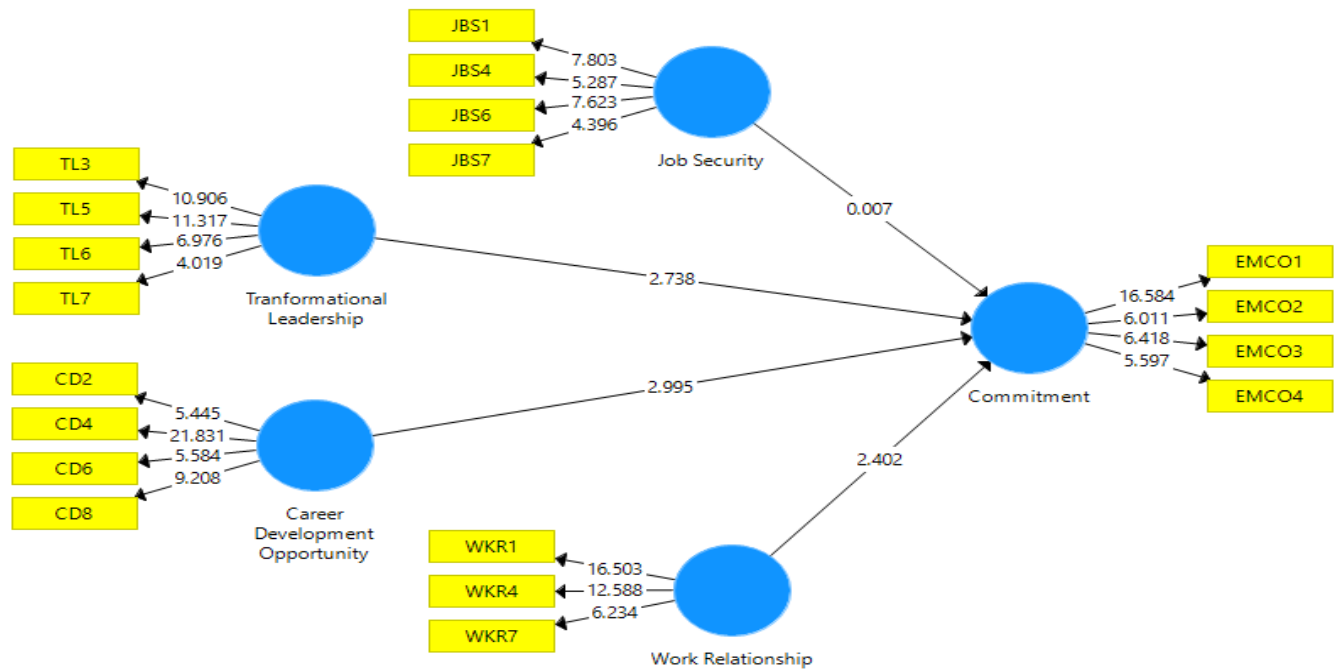


Figure 3. T-Statistics for Hypothesis One

Source: Researcher's Computation via SmartPLS V3.3.3

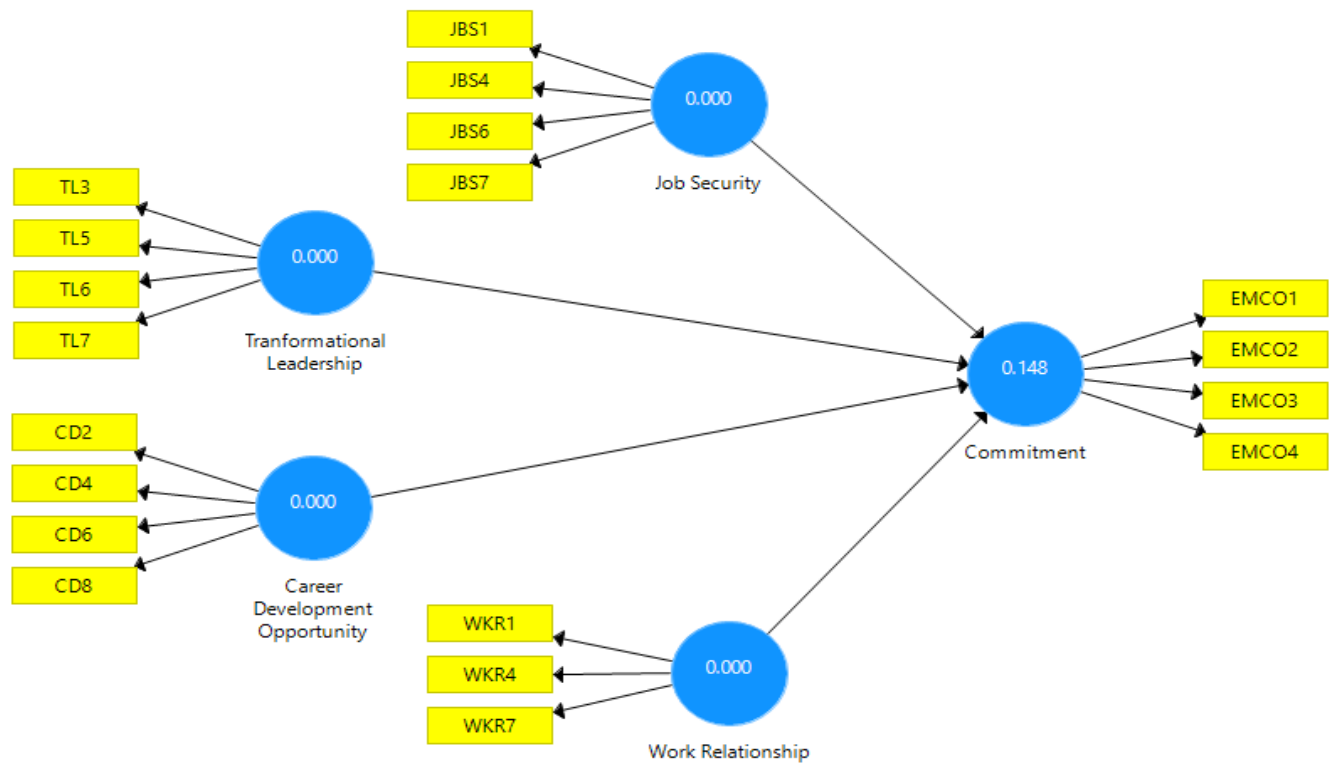


Figure 4. Q² Statistics for Hypothesis One

Source: Researcher’s Computation via SmartPLS V3.3.3

Tables 4.2: Summary of the influence of employee engagement on commitment of academic staff of tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria using PLS-SEM

Path Description	Original sample (o)	t	Sig.	R²	Adj. R²	Sig.	Q²
	Unstandardized Beta						
Career development → Commitment	0.271	2.891	0.004				
Job security → Commitment	0.001	0.007	0.995	0.406	0.380	0.000	0.148
Transformational leadership → Commitment	0.274	2,584	0.010				
Work relationship → Commitment	0.232	2.527	0.012				

Dependent Variable: Commitment, Predictors: Job security, work relationship, career development and transformational leadership.

Source: Researcher’s Result via SmartPLS Version 3.33 (2021)

Figure 2, 3, and 4 presents the results of PLS-SEM analysis for the influence of influence of employee engagement on commitment of academic staff of tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria using PLS-SEM. The Adjusted R² was used to establish the predictive power of the study’s model. From the results, the adjusted coefficient of determination (*Adj R²*) of 0.380 shows that employee engagement explained 38% of the changes experienced in commitment of academic staff of tertiary institutions in Delta State while the remaining 62% variation in academic staff’s commitment is attributable to other exogenous factors different from employee engagement measures considered in this study and the influence is statistically significant at 95% confidence interval.

The path coefficient of each employee engagement measures (Job security, work relationship, career development and transformational leadership) represents the coefficient of determination (β) which shows the relative influence of each employee engagement measures on commitment of academic staff of tertiary institutions in Delta State. The PLS-SEM results in fig. 2, 3, and 4 revealed that at 95% confidence level, career development ($\beta = 0.271$, $t= 2.891$), transformational leadership ($\beta = 0.274$, $t= 2.584$), and Work relationship ($\beta = 0.232$, $t= 2.527$) are significant however, Job security ($\beta = 0.001$, $t= 0.00$) is statistically insignificant. This result shows that while the relative influence of career development, transformational leadership, and work relationship and its corresponding t-value are greater than the threshold of 1.96 suggesting a statistically significant relative influence. However, the relative influence of Job security has t-values below the acceptable threshold of 1.96 to suggest that the relative influence is statistically insignificant.

The results also show that if all other independent variables are set to zero, a unit change in career development will result in a 0.271 rise in academic staff commitment in Delta State if all other factors remain constant. Also, if all other independent variables are kept constant, a unit change in transformational leadership will result in a 0.274 rise in academic staff commitment at tertiary institutions in Delta State. The result also shows that if all other independent variables are set to zero, a unit change in work relationship will result in a 0.232 increase in academic staff commitment in Delta State if all other factors remain constant. Overall, transformational leadership ($\beta = 0.274$) has the highest relative influence, followed by career development $\beta = 0.271$ and lastly work relationship $\beta = 0.232$.

Given the PLS-SEM predictive results in table 4.6 ($Adj R^2=0.380$; $p=0.000$, $Q^2 =0.148$), this study can conclude that employee engagement has positive and significant influence on commitment of academic staff of tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. Hence, the study rejects the null hypothesis one (H_01) There will be no significant influence of employee engagement (job security, work relationship, career development and leadership) on commitment of academic staff of tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria.

The findings of hypothesis (H₀₁) revealed that employee engagement had significant influence on creativity of academic staff of tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. Hence, the study rejects the null hypothesis (H₀₁). The findings found support in previous studies; Employee engagement has been investigated in connection to other characteristics such as contextual performance and task performance by a number of studies. Organizational Citizenship Behaviour, although there has been little study on the link between involvement and organizational citizenship behavior. This research was carried out in poor nations like Pakistan to see if there was a relationship between professors' employee engagement and organizational citizenship behavior. Employees who are highly engaged are less likely to participate in counterproductive job conduct, whereas disengaged employees are more likely to engage in such activity. From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, the link between employee engagement and organizational citizenship behavior may be better understood (SET). Employees respond positively to favorable events and adversely to unfavorable situations (William, 2018). This idea lays the groundwork for understanding why workers choose to participate more or less. If an employee is not treated well, they will respond in kind. As a result, less engaged employees engage in behaviors that may jeopardize their career and the business.

Internal connections, which overlap to some extent with company culture and strategy, are antecedents of employee engagement. Employees continually receive aid from their leaders, managers, and coworkers, which is the connections and interactions among members of the company, through "internal relationships" or "psychological environment" contributing to employee engagement. Furthermore, the influence of social exchange connections on innovative work behavior was investigated, and it was discovered that creativity and leader-member exchange were favorably connected with job engagement. Furthermore, among 291 Malaysian employees, psychosocial safety atmosphere was linked to employment resources that were supportive of employee engagement (Aboyade, 2021).

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Management should explore every opportunity to achieve higher level of academic performance among academic staff of tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. This study offers significant contribution to literature conceptually, theoretically, and empirical. Conceptually, the study focused on identifying gaps in literature pertaining to employee engagement and academic staff commitment. The conceptual framework of this study equally offers conceptual contribution as it was constructed by the researcher while analyzing gaps identified in literature. The model combined independent variables (employee engagement) and dependent variable (academic staff commitment). The model also can be adapted to suite future studies.

Overall, these above-mentioned points lay emphasis on the fact that this study offers significant contribution to knowledge and has practical implication for the management of tertiary institutions in Delta state, Nigeria. The present study was carried out in the six tertiary institutions in Delta state, further studies in the area of employee engagement, training and development and academic staff performance can as well be carried out in other tertiary institutions so as to be able to extend the knowledge gained from this work to all tertiary institutions in the region. This study investigated employee engagement academic staff commitment in tertiary institutions in Delta state, Nigeria, a comparative study with tertiary institutions in other tertiary institutions in the country such as Osun, Kano, and Lagos may be considered in the nearest future.

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