| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# Employee Engagement and Organisational Commitment in Nigeria: Does it Matters for Local Government Service Commission?

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| **ABSTRACT**

In the human resource literature, employee engagement and organisational commitment are very vital elements that propel organizational commitment, hence the need to empirically investigate if employee engagement matters for the organizational commitment of the local government service commission in Nigeria. The study was built on the social exchange and job demand-resources theories. A cross-sectional survey design and a sample size of three hundred and ninety-six (396) employees of the local government service commission were employed. The study used four (4) dimensions of employee engagement such as organizational learning, communication, leadership and job empowerment. Data obtained were analysed using simple percentages, frequency counts and Pearson correlation. The Pearson correlation results indicated that all four (4) dimensions of employee engagement employed in the study had a strong positive and significant relationship with organizational commitment. Impliedly, we contended that employee engagement matters for the organizational commitment of the local government service commission in Nigeria. Among others, it was recommended that the local government service commission should promote an effective learning environment, communication culture, and leadership and empower employees' in-order to improve staff commitment to the council.

| **KEYWORDS**

Job empowerment; Employee communication; Leadership; Organisational Learning; Local government service commission

## 1. Introduction

The commitment of employees is significantly imperative in every organization since it generates better outcomes and is linked to employee engagement.McElroy, Morrow, Liu, and Weng (2010) believed that for an employer to raise the commitment levels of workers in an organization, the employer should consider the career goals of the employee. Little and Little (2006) positedorganizational commitment is the extent to which an employee is classified in relation to a company and is dedicated to attaining its goals and objectives. Organizational commitment is the relative power with which employees classify and include themselves with a specific company (Newman, Thanacoody & Hui, 2011). Likewise, it is the extent to which employees in an organization classify themselves (Ambar, Saba, Asma, Yasir & Ayesha, 2015).

Engagement measures the level to which employees have a sense of fulfilment and a passionate alliance for their triumph in their job. Beardwell and Claydon (2007) described engagement as a basic principle of soft human resource management (HRM), with more stress on seizing the ideas and opinions of workers and safeguarding their pledge. Engagement means to be sensitively, emotionally and palpable available during a worker's course of work (Saks & Gruman, 2014). Employee engagement is a positive link or connection a worker has with his/her work (Khalid, Khalid, Waseem, Farooqi&Nazish, 2015).

Furthermore, when workers are extremely engaged, they are concerned about the firm and become resolute in accomplishing the objectives of the company (Kruse, 2012). According to Al-Mehrzi and Singh(2016) engagement of employees is a substantial element in the triumph of every organization. According to Attridge (2009), for workers to be very engaged in their jobs, there is a need for them to be both committed and involved in the organization's goals. Commitment is a valuable feature of engagement, which enables workers to achieve the objectives of the company.

The local government service commission, which is under Local government administration in Nigeria, has come of age. Since the 1950s, when the federal system came into operation in Nigeria, local government administration has received considerable scholarly attention not so much forits efficiency and effectiveness but primarily because of its longevity and resilience of its relevance in the administration of the country (Igbokwe-Ibeto cited in Agbodike, Igbokwe-Ibeto&Nkah, 2014). The expediency for the creation of a local government in Nigeria and the world in general stems from the need to facilitate development at the grassroots, but this goal of grass-root development has been denied because of the paucity of the human capital development process in Nigeria.

As important as local government administration has been, there seem to be some constraints that have been infringing on its operations over the years, arguably because of poor service commission management/administration in the states, thus leading to poor employee commitment. Consequent to the above, there is a need to investigate the effect of employee engagement on organizational commitment in the local government service commission in Nigeria. This paper is sectioned as follows: Review of Related Literature; Research Methods; Results and Discussion; Conclusion and Recommendations.

## 2. Literature Review
### 2.1 Conceptualization of Employee Engagement
Employee engagement entails employee involvement, and it has become one of the potential factors for organizational performance. Organizational performance can either take financial or non-financial dimensions (Okoro & Ekwueme, 2020; Okoro & Ihenyen, 2020; Okoro, 2016; and Okoro, 2014). MacLeod and Clarke (2009) described engagement as a fixation of employees on their company's goals and qualities for achievement and a feeling of prosperity. Employee engagement is a passionate, logical duty for the company; that is, the more employees receive financial and emotive support from the company, the more they feel indebted to pay back the benevolence by exerting their mental and physical assets to their work roles (Kahn, 2010).

Furthermore, other literature emphasized that engagement is the vitality and contribution towards the achievement of organizational objectives (Dickson, 2011; Mathis & Jackson, 2011). Heryati (2018) gave some eight (8) reasons for employee engagement: career development, flexible work environment, fair pay structure, adopting a learning culture, transparency and honesty, autonomy, inspiration, good communication culture, employee empowerment or recognition. In this study, we employed four (4) out of the employee engagement rationales advocated by Heryati (2018), such as organizational learning, communication, leadership and job empowerment.

First, one of the factors contributing to employee engagement is by creating a company culture that encourages your employees to keep on learning and acquiring new knowledge all the time. The company can also increase information sharing by encouraging the development of a knowledge-base available for all its employees. An employee who understands that their employer is not only interested in making profits and sales but also in improving and educating all of their staff will soon learn to appreciate the company's learning culture and will get engaged in the company's goals.

Second, communication is another factor that contributes to employee engagement. When there is miscommunication among you or your employees, there will always be problems either in the project or within the company. Try to prioritise a regular team meeting as a critical part of the company's communication, and employees should be able to offer their views on how to improve communications both within their departments and in the company.

Third, organizational learning is one of the factors contributing to employee engagement in the workplace. When employers continuously invest both time and money in their employees' development at the workplace, employees will realize that the company is also interested in the progress in their careers. Employers should start providing employees not only with formal learning programs but also with the opportunity to practice their newly acquired skills and knowledge on the job.

Fourth, great companies know that the employees are the heart of the business; satisfied and engaged employees would bring in not only positive energy to the workplace but also increase the company's profit and sales. Employees who feel they have a positive personal rapport with their management are more likely to be engaged. Not only that, employees would feel appreciated when they get noticed (job empowerment), and this encourages constructive employee engagement.

## 2.2 Organizational Commitment (OC)

Lee, Ashford, Walsh and Mowday (cited in Ahakwa, Yang, Tackie&Atingabili, 2021) proposed the most generally accepted definition for OC as the level to which a person's participation in his/her organization. The authors added that loyalty is demonstrated by an employee's ability to labour successfully in an establishment and the desire to sustain the relationship devoid of attempting to turn to another. The commitment of workers is a sign of greater devotion and improved efficiency. Committed personnel often work assiduously to fulfill the objectives of the establishment and appear to positively consent to their values (Cheah, Chong, Yeo, & Pee, 2016).

Various factors affect the commitment of employees in an organization.OC is a vital job-related result at the employee level that might affect other factors like employee performance, turnover and absenteeism (Fiorito, Bozeman, Young, &Meurs, 2007). Taufik (2014) found that employees who find their job roles unclear might have lower or no commitment to the company. In addition, promotions at the workplace might increase or lessen commitment. Another important job factor that may influence organizational commitment is the level of employee obligation as well as employee independence.

Bakotić (2016) is of the view that the presence of other employment changes can also affect the commitment of employees. According to Agba, Nkpoyen and Ushie (2010), employees with a firm opinion of being able to easily find employment in another company tend to be less committed to their current company because they believe that there are more job opportunities for them. In a situation where employees think there is low job availability, there is the potential for greater commitment by the employee. Meyer and Allen, as cited in Manetje (2009), emphasised that in such a situation, the employee's involvement in the company is grounded on continuance commitment, where workers are constantly evaluating the perils and benefits of leaving or staying in the organization.

According to Meyer and Allen, as cited in Manetje (2009), the commitment of an employee can be pretentious by the worker's individual features such as age, period of service as well as sex. In that regard, Hennekam and Herrbach (2013) are of the view that older workers with longer durations of service or superiority, as well as persons who are content with their levels of job performance, are likely to indicate high commitment. This suggests that mature employees are perceived as being more committed to the company as compared to other age groups. Meyer and Allen, as cited in Manetje (2009), proposed that gender is a vital individual characteristic that may affect the commitment of employees. Moreover, Mathieu and Zajac(2005) contended that gender differences in commitment are a result of different work characteristics as well as experiences that are related to gender.

According to Muthuveloo and Che Rose (2005), the working environment is an alternative element that influences commitment. A mutual work environment condition that may impact commitment is part owner of the business (Manetje, 2009). Any kind of ownership gives workers a sense of importance, and this makes them active in decision-making. The involvement in decision-making by employees gives them a feeling of belongingness to the company. Ndiwalana (2009) concluded that supervisors who partake in budget policy-making are inclined to have more commitment to their company.

Kang, Gatling and Kim (2015) emphasised that the workplace setting is built on working relations such as employee-supervisor relationships. According to Randall, cited in Manetje (2009), this kind of link can affect commitment either affirmatively or negatively. When employees discover the managerial relationship to be unbiased in its practices, they become more committed to the company. The workplace teams or groups may affect the commitment of employees. Mathieu and Zajac (2005) believed that employees could be committed to their organization when they find value through positive work relationships.

According to Al-Qatawneh (2014), organizational structure plays a vital part in commitment. In a workplace where employees' opinions are given less consideration, this tends to have a damaging influence on the commitment of the workers. Zeffanne, cited in Manetje (2009), posited that more flexible structures in the workplace are more probable to have a hand in the improvement of the worker's commitment both in terms of their loyalty as well as their connection to the company. According to Storey, as cited in Manetje (2009), an organization can increase the level of organizational commitment in their workers, provided that the company gives them more direction as well as encouragement.

Zeffanne, cited in Manetje (2009), maintained that commitment of employees to their company may not only depend on providing motivators for them but may also include the management styles of supervisors. As stated by Yahaya and Ebrahim (2009), management styles that inspire the worker to participate in decision-making as well as in the everyday running of the organization can satisfy the aspirations of the worker and help him/her to commit to the company's goals and values. The authors concluded that a more flexible and participatory management style could sturdily improve commitment. Firms must make certain that their management strategies are intended to increase commitment in workers rather than them being submissive (Ihionkhan&Aigbomian, 2014).

### 2.3 Theoretical Framework and Empirical Underpinning

This study is built on the social exchange theory (SET). The social exchange theory is among the most influential theories for understanding workplace behaviour (Croponzano& Mitchell, 2005) and has its roots in anthropology. Social exchange is based on trusting others to reciprocate. Human beings in social situations choose behaviour that maximises their likelihood of meeting self-interests. Critics of social exchange theory have pointed out its weakness as the assumption that people are rational and will always act in rational ways. In reality, however, people sometimes act in irrational ways.

Caution should therefore be exercised when applying the theory to the workplace environment. However, the social exchange theory is a useful model in advancing studies on employee engagement due to its focus on the reciprocal relationship between employer and employees, which may increase commitment; hence it was used as the anchor theory for the study. Prior studies have shown some insightful findings on the relationship between employee engagement and organizational commitment. For instance, Ahakwa, Yang, Tackie, Odai, and Dartey (2021) examined the effect of job autonomy, organizational learning, and work environment on the organizational commitment of public sector employees in the Ashanti region of Ghana. Data were obtained from three hundred and thirty employees from five metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies (MMDAs). Data were analyzed via Partial Least Square. Findings revealed that organizational learning has the most incredible impact on organizational commitment.

AlKahtani, Iqbalb, Sohailc, Sherazd, Jahane, Anwarf and Haider (2021) empirically tested the impact of employee empowerment on organizational commitment through the mediating role of job satisfaction. The non-probability random sampling technique and time lag were used to collect data from 307 employees working at four and five Stars Hotels in two cities, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Pakistan. Smart Partial least squares-structural equation modelling (Smart PLS-SEM v.3.2.8) was used to test the hypotheses. The result indicated that employee empowerment has a significant and positive impact on organizational commitment. Also, job satisfaction is considered a potential mediator between employee empowerment and organizational commitment.

Mia, Thatok, and Dwi (2020) investigated the influence of organizational communication climate and communication satisfaction on job satisfaction and affective commitment in West Nusa Tenggara Province. The research used a causal quantitative approach with a sample of 203 respondents, and data analysis used SEM-PLS (Structural Equation Model - Partial Least Square). Results showed that organizational communication climate has insignificant effects on affective commitment and communication satisfaction, while a significant effect was found for job satisfaction.

Miheso and Mukanzi (2020) investigated the effects of employee communication dimensions on organizational commitment at Kenya's national library service. The primary objective of the study was to investigate the effect of employee communication dimensions on commitment at Kenya's national library service. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire, and the regression results indicated that the employee communication content dimension had a significant positive correlation with employee commitment, employee communication flow was positively correlated to commitment, communication mode was highly and positively correlated to employee commitment, and communication frequency was minimally positively related to employee commitment.

Ali, Akhtar and Jangraiz (2020) studied the impact of employees' empowerment practices on organizational commitment: A case in the telecommunication sector in Khyberpaktunkhwa, Pakistan. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed among 280 employees working in different companies in the telecommunication sector, from which 250 employees participated in filling out the complete questionnaire. Correlation and regression techniques were employed to establish the relationship between the variables. The finding of Pearson's Correlation revealed a significant positive relationship between the variables. Moreover, the results of regression analysis indicated a positive and significant impact of empowerment practices on all types of organizational commitments.

Affandie, Sulistiyono, Mayasari, Suyono and Damarsari (2020) investigated the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between organizational communication on knowledge sharing in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. The study comprised employees of a textile company with a total of 57 employees. Data analysis was done through SEM and PLS. The results showed that organizational communication affects knowledge sharing. On the other hand, the study found that organizational communication has an effect on organizational commitment, while organizational commitment has an effect on knowledge sharing, and organizational communication has an effect on knowledge sharing through organizational commitment.

Tharanya, Gajenderan and Nawaz (2020) studied the impact of employee engagement practices on organizational commitment and job performance among probationary officers in private sector banks in Chennai. The study selected four prominent private banks, and 100 questionnaires were circulated for each of the four banks totaling 400 respondents, out of which 379 were valid.

The result showed that employee engagement (leadership style, training, compensation, organizational justice and policies, and procedures) had a significant influence on employee engagement.

## 3. Methodology

This study adopted the cross-sectional survey design. The target population for the study consists of thirty-eight thousand, eight hundred and ninety-eight (38,898- Rivers State Local Government Service Commission 2021) local government staff of both Rivers and Bayelsa states local government commission with River state have thirty-one thousand eight hundred and fifty (31850) while Bayelsa state has seven thousand and forty-eight (7048) (Bayelsa State Local Government Service Commission 2021). The sample size was determined using the Taro-Yamani formula, while the sampling technique was stratified random sampling. Using the Taro-Yamani sample formula, a sample size of approximately 396 was obtained.

First, the study area was stratified into two (2) groups based on state (Rivers and Bayelsa states). Second, from each stratum or state, one hundred and ninety-eight (198) staff were selected, making a total of three hundred and ninety-six (396) employees of Rivers and Bayelsa states Local Government Service Commissions chosen for the study. The source of data was primary through a questionnaire. Under employee engagement, the study adopted the Work and Well-Being Survey (UWES-9) reported by Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova. The study used four (4) dimensions of employee engagement: organizational learning, communication, leadership and job empowerment.

For organizational commitment, the study adopted the organizational commitment questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Mowday, Steers, and Porter in 1979. OCQ assesses an employee's attachment and commitment to the organization. The instrument consists of six sections. Section A covers the bio-data of the respondents, while sections B to F cover the research questions. Sections B to F are designed in four Likert formats. The reliability of the instrument was determined by using the Cronbach Alpha Statistic. Each section from B to F was determined using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, which was used to determine the reliability of the instrument.

For the reliability of the instrument, thirty (30) respondents(staff) were chosen outside the sample space and were determined by each component of employee engagement considered in the study (organizational learning, communication, leadership and job empowerment) and organizational commitment using the Cronbach Alpha Statistic which .yielded a coefficient of 0.88(88%) for organizational learning, 0.71(71%) for leadership, 0.68 (68%) for communication, 0.77(77%) for job empowerment, and 0.76 (76%) for organizational commitment. Descriptive statistics(simple percentages and frequency counts) were used for the bio-data profile of employees, while Pearson correlation was used to assess the association (negative/positive) between the dependent variable (organizational commitment) and the independent variable (employee engagement).

## 4. Results/Findings

Table 1: Demographic Data of the Respondents

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Gender:  Female | 233 | 61.0 |
| Male | 149 | 39.0 |
| Age:      21-30 | 47 | 12.3 |
| 31-40 | 162 | 42.4 |
| 41-50 | 89 | 23.3 |
| 51- 60 | 84 | 22.0 |
| Educational qualification: SSCE | 72 | 18.8 |
| OND/NCE | 115 | 30.1 |
| HND/First Degree | 150 | 39.2 |
| Master | 42 | 10.9 |
| PhD | 3 | 0.01 |
| Position:          Junior | 144 | 37.7 |
| Senior | 225 | 58.9 |
| Management | 13 | 3.4 |

Source: Researchers' Computation 2022

The result in Table 1 revealed that out of the three hundred and eighty-two (382)  respondents who returned their questionnaire in the survey, two hundred and thirty-three (233), representing 61.0%, are female, while one hundred and forty-nine (149) representing 39.0% are male. This indicated that there was more female respondent (local government staff) in the survey than male. The result also revealed that the age bracket of  21-30 has forty-seven (47), representing 12.3%; those within the age bracket

of 31-40 have one hundred and sixty-two (162), representing 42.4%,  41-50 years of age has eighty-nine (89) representing 23.3%, and 51-60  years of age has eighty-four (84)  representing 22.0% This indicates that most of the respondents surveyed are within the age of 31-40 years of age.

For educational qualification, the result revealed that those with SSCE have seventy-two (72), representing 18.8%; those with OND/NCE have one hundred and fifteen (115), representing 30.1%; and those with HND/First degree have one hundred and fifty (150) representing 39.2%, those with masters have forty-two (42) representing 10.9% and those with PhD has three (3) representing 0.01%. This means that they are more HND/First degree holders in the survey. For positions occupied in the council, the result revealed that those who are junior staff are one hundred and forty-four (144), representing 37.7%, those who are senior staff are two hundred and twenty-five (225), representing 58.9%, and the management staff are thirteen (13) representing 3.4%. This means that they are more senior staff in the survey.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation for Organizational Learning Organisational Commitment

|  |  | Organizational Learning (OL) | Organizational Commitment (OC) |
|---|---|---|---|
| OL | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .750** |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) |  | .000 |
|  | N | 382 | 382 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Computed by the Researcher, 2022

The result in Table 2 shows that the correlation between organizational learning and organizational commitment is 0.750 (75.0%), and the p-value is 0.000. The result indicates that organizational learning has a strong positive correlation with organizational commitment because the correlation coefficient is 75.0%, greater than 50% and significant. After all, the p-value is less than 0.05(5%). This means that significantly, organizational learning has a strong positive effect on organizational commitment in local government service commissions within the period surveyed.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation for Organizational Communication and Organizational Commitment

|  |  | Organizational Communication (OCM) | Organizational Commitment (OC) |
|---|---|---|---|
| OCM | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .709** |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) |  | .000 |
|  | N | 382 | 382 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Computed by the Researcher, 2022

The result in Table 3 shows that the correlation between organizational communication and organizational commitment is 0.709 (71%), and the p-value is 0.000. The result indicates that organizational communication has a strong positive correlation with organizational commitment because the correlation coefficient is 71% greater than 50% and significant. After all, the p-value is less than 0.05(5%). This means that significantly, organizational communication has a strong positive influence on organizational commitment to local government service commission within the period surveyed.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation for Organizational Leadership Organizational Commitment

|  |  | Organizational Leadership (OLD) | Organizational Commitment (OC) |
|---|---|---|---|
| OL | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .742** |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) |  | .000 |
|  | N | 382 | 382 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Computed by the Researcher, 2022

The result in Table 4 shows that the correlation between organizational leadership and organizational commitment is 0.742 (74.2%), and the p-value is 0.000. The result indicates that organizational leadership has a strong positive correlation with organizational commitment because the correlation coefficient is 74.2%, greater than 50% and significant. After all, the p-value is less than 0.05(5%). This means that significantly, organizational leadership has a strong positive influence on organizational commitment in local government service commissions within the period surveyed.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation for Job Empowerment and Organizational Commitment

|  |  | Job Empowerment (JEMP) | Organizational Commitment (OC) |
|---|---|---|---|
| OL | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .715** |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) |  | .000 |
|  | N | 382 | 382 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Computed by the Researcher, 2022

The result in Table 5 shows that the correlation between job empowerment and organizational commitment is 0.715 (71.5%), and the p-value is 0.000. The result indicates that organizational leadership has a strong positive correlation with organizational commitment because the correlation coefficient is 71.5%, greater than 50% and significant. After all, the p-value is less than 0.05(5%). This means that, significantly, job empowerment has a strong positive influence on organizational commitment in local government service commissions within the period surveyed.

This study set out to empirically study the correlation between employee engagement and organizational commitment in the local government service commission. The findings from this study are in line with some extant studies like Tharanya, Gajenderan and Nawaz (2020) studied the impact of employee engagement practices on organizational commitment and job performance among probationary officers in private sector banks in Chennai and established that employee engagement significantly influence organizational commitment. The result for organizational learning revealed that organizational learning has a strong positive influence on organizational commitment. This is endorsed by the studyofAhakwa, Yang, Tackie, Odai and Dartey (2021).

The result for organizational communication revealed a strong positive influence on organizational commitment in local government service commissions within the period surveyed. This is endorsed by the study of Miheso and Mukanzi (2020). For leadership, the result revealed that organizational leadership has a strong positive influence on organizational commitment in local government service commissions within the period surveyed. This is in agreement with the studies of Shiji and Preeti (2015). For Job empowerment, the result revealed that job empowerment has a strong positive influence on organizational commitment in local government service commissions within the period surveyed. This is in line with the studies of Muhammad, Areesa, Asad and Mazhar (2014). Also, the finding is in line with Insan, Astuti, Raharjo and Hamid (2013).

## 5. Conclusion

The objectives of this study were aimed at assessing the relationship between employees' engagement and organizational commitment in local government in Rivers and Bayelsa states. Employee engagement was a dimension of organizational learning; communication, leadership and job empowerment were used. The key findings are that organizational learning, communication, leadership and empowerment have a strong positive and significant influence on the staff of the local government council's commitment to work. This means that when there is effective learning, leadership, communication and empowerment of employees, it produces a positive influence on employee commitment.

Given the findings of the study, it was recommended that local government councils in Nigeria should promote an effective learning environment to improve staff commitment to the councils. Also, a good communication network among and between local government employees should be encouraged to improve staff commitment to the councils. Besides, a good leadership network among local government staff should be encouraged, and lastly, staff should be empowered so that they can put in their best for the growth and development of the council.

The study contributes to knowledge by establishing that organizational learning, communication, leadership and empowerment can be used to enhance employees' commitment to work. The study was limited to employees of local government in Rviers and Bayelsa States; hence, future researchers may consider assessing the relationship between employees' engagement and organizational commitment in other states of the Nigerian federation.

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