

Insight Into Work Environment and Job Commitment of Librarians: Reconnecting the Dots

Goodluck Ifijeh & S.O Popoola

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The results revealed that the social work environment of the libraries was conducive ($\bar{x} = 2.96$), while the physical work environment was barely average ($\bar{x} = 2.52$). There was a significant relationship between work environment and job commitment of librarians ($r = 0.181$). Specifically, physical work environment ($r = 0.338$) and social work environment ($r = 0.487$) had significant relationships with job commitment. Based on the findings, the study advocated for improvements on the physical work environment of librarians to enhance their job commitment levels and ultimately increase job productivity.

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Insight Into Work Environment and Job Commitment of Librarians: Reconnecting the Dots

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ABSTRACT

Job commitment of librarians is intricately linked to organizational factors. Reports reveal that job commitment of librarians in Nigeria is low. Previous studies on job commitment of librarians focused largely on the influence of motivational factors like reward system. This study examined work environment as a determinant of job commitment of librarians in federal universities in southern Nigeria. Social exchange theory (SET) was used as the theoretical framework, while survey design of the correlational type was adopted for the study. 356 librarians in 18 federal universities in southern Nigeria served as the population and a total enumeration of the population was used for the study. The data collection instrument was questionnaire and data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

The results revealed that the social work environment of the libraries was conducive ($\bar{x} = 2.96$), while the physical work environment was barely average ($\bar{x} = 2.52$). There was a significant relationship between work environment and job commitment of librarians ($r = 0.181$). Specifically, physical work environment ($r = 0.338$) and social work environment ($r = 0.487$) had significant relationships with job commitment. Based on the findings, the study advocated for improvements on the physical work environment of librarians to enhance their job commitment levels and ultimately increase job productivity.

Keywords: University Libraries, Work Environment, Job Commitment, Librarians, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Human resources play very vital roles in the attainment of set objectives in any organization, including libraries. As important as information and communication technologies have become in today's world, they require human resources to coordinate and drive them. In line with this, libraries require highly skilled and hardworking professionals (librarians) for information services

delivery. This is particularly important for university libraries whose users consist of intellectuals and researchers. There is no doubt that the effectiveness and efficiency of the library as an integral service- oriented component within the university system, depend on the skills, attitudes, and motivations of the librarians available in the library. In recent times, librarians' job productivity has been a concern in Nigeria, especially in the face of incessant strike actions embarked upon by academic staff, including librarians (Omotunde and Alegbeleye, 2021). This has also stirred up debates on the commitment of librarians to their jobs and the philosophy of librarianship as a profession.

Job commitment is an important factor that could affect the job performance and productivity of librarians. Within the context of this study, job commitment is viewed as a librarian's willingness to persist on a job and reluctance to change, owing to a sense of obligation to stay on the job. It is the level of enthusiasm and feeling of responsibility an employee exhibits towards assigned tasks on the job. Librarians who are committed to their jobs devote time and energy to fulfil their responsibilities and assigned tasks. Job commitment involves an emotional component which enables librarians to experience and express positive feelings toward their jobs. Furthermore, job commitment has a rational component that commits librarians to consciously decide to take their jobs more seriously, make plans and take actions required to accomplish a given task (Abasilim, Gberevbie, and Osibanjo, 2019). Job commitment is manifested in workplace behaviours such as loyalty and responsibility (Osman, Hossain and Al Mamun, 2022). Unfortunately, it has been reported that job commitment is on the decline among librarians, specifically in Nigeria (Ajibare, Fagbemiro and Adewolojo, 2023). There is therefore the need to re-examine factors that could be responsible for the decline and reconnect the missing links. Salau (2017) and Anasi (2020) identified work environment as an important predictor of job commitment among other factors.

Work environment can be classified into two – physical and social environments. The physical environment comprises of the equipment, tools, technological infrastructure, physical or technical elements required for work. These enable employees to carry out their responsibilities and perform their assigned duties. Similarly, the social environment comprises of peers, other staff, team groups, interactional issues and management who employees relate with. It also includes systems, procedures, practices, values and philosophies of the organization. It is the quality of the librarians' work environment that most impacts on their level of motivation and subsequent performance (Kalliath and Kalliath, 2012). It is based on this premise that this study explores the relationship between work environment of university libraries and job commitment of librarians in federal universities in southern Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i. find out the nature of the work environment of federal university libraries in southern Nigeria;
- ii. determine the general relationship between work environment and job commitment of librarians in federal universities in southern Nigeria;
- iii. examine the relationship between specific aspects of work environment and job commitment of librarians in federal universities in southern Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work environment holds implications for job attitudes of employees. Arokiasamy (2013) observed that work environment plays a major role in decreasing or increasing commitment levels of employees. In line with the observation of the latter, Yusuf and Metiboba (2012) examined the relationship existing between work environment and job attitudes of employees in a service-oriented work organisation in Ilorin, Kwara state, Nigeria. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between work environment and respondents' attitude to their jobs. Specifically, the work environment was found to be socially and physically challenging, thereby leading to some negative behaviours on the part of the workers such as absenteeism, low commitment and apathy. To further validate these findings, Ushie, Agba, Ogaboh and Chimaobi (2015) carried out a similar study on a larger population. Their study specifically examined the effect of work environment on employees' commitment in agro-based industries in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study drew participants from two major agro industries in the state, comprising of one thousand, one hundred and ninety-four (1194) employees. The findings of the study revealed that work environment such as consistent communication flow, manageable workload, availability of electricity, and workplace that is free from known dangers are positively associated with employees' commitment. The study therefore recommended that organisations should promote good work environments in their organisations so as to boost employees' commitment, wellbeing and overall performance and productivity.

In the same vein, Ikechukwu, Ezech, Ogochukwu, Nkechinyere, and Dumle, (2019) investigated work environment and employee's commitment in three selected institutions in Nigeria - Rivers State University, University of Port Harcourt and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The findings of the study indicated that, organisations' working environments had an impact on the commitment of employee. The study identified flexibility of working environment, work noise distraction, supervisor's interpersonal relationship with subordinates, presence of job aid, the use of performance feedback and improvement of work incentives in the organisation as work environment factors that had influence on employee commitment.

Furthermore, Adeoye (2018) observed that workplace environmental factors are essential predictors of employee commitment, for achieving organisational goals and objectives. The latter carried out a study that assessed the impact of workplace environmental factors on employee commitment in North East of Nigeria. Adopting a survey design, the research made use of primary data, collected mainly through administering a set of questionnaires to 205 management staff, supervisors and non-management staff of selected manufacturing firms from Adamawa, Bauchi and Gombe states respectively. The findings revealed that there was significant positive relationship between feedback and employee efficiency; incentive positively affected employees' commitment. Incentives as key factor also contributed immensely to employee commitment in workplace. The study concluded that effective performance feedback is critical to employees' efficiency and organisational growth.

Coming to the library setting, Mayowa –Adebara and Aina (2016) carried out a study to examine how work environment correlates with organizational commitment among staff in academic libraries in Lagos state, Nigeria. The population comprised of 272 library staff from 10 tertiary institutions. The results of the study indicated a very strong relationship between work environment and commitment of employees. The results further indicated that the prevailing work environment in academic libraries was task oriented.

However, it was observed that there was a gap in literature in the coverage of job commitment as used specifically in the context of this paper. This study intends to bridge that gap.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The quest to identify factors influencing employees' workplace attitudes has led to the development and adoptions of various theories and models. One of such theories adopted in this study to analyse the relationship between work environment and librarians' job commitment is the social exchange theory (SET). The Social Exchange Theory (SET) was developed by scholars such as Homans (1958) and Blau (1964) to explain what influenced social behaviour. Homans in an essay entitled "social behaviour" was interested in the psychological conditions that induce individuals to engage in exchange. Homans stated that social behaviour is an exchange of both material goods and non-material ones. Homans explained that persons who are prone to giving to others, also try to get more from others, and persons who receive more from others, are in turn under pressure to give more. This process of influence tends to work out at equilibrium to balance the exchanges. In an exchange, what one gives may be a cost, just as what one gets may be a reward. Blau was interested in exchange as the elementary particle of social life, in which social structures are rooted. Blau analyzed exchange processes as the micro-foundation of macro-sociological phenomena. Blau stated that mutual bonds emerge in social interaction as persons who incur obligations reciprocate. SET proposes that HRM practices initiate a positive exchange relationship to which employees reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviour towards the organisation and/ or job. The basic principle with SET is that employees view satisfying HRM practices as an organisation's commitment towards them. Employees thus reciprocate this through positive behaviours like job commitment. They are thus more likely to exchange their commitment for resources and benefits provided by their organisation. For example, when individuals receive economic and socio-emotional resources from their organization, they feel obliged to respond in kind and repay the organization. SET argues that obligations generate through a series of interactions between parties who are in a state of reciprocal interdependence. The core belief in SET is that relationships evolve over time into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments as long as the parties abide by certain "rules" of exchange. The rules of exchange usually involve reciprocity or repayment rules such that the actions of one party lead to a response or actions by the other party. In summary, the propositions of SET indicate that social exchanges employees obtain from organisations such as HRM practices may lead to employee commitment, including job commitment.

The theory's relevance to this study lies in the fact it views librarians' commitments to their jobs as a function of some organisational factors like work environment and so on.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey design of the correlational type was adopted for the study. The choice of survey design was premised on its value and feasibility in addressing the research problem raised in the study. The population comprises 356 librarians in the 18 federal universities accredited by the National Universities Commission (NUC) in southern Nigeria as at August, 2021. Southern Nigerian was chosen because the region has the largest number of universities in the country. The entire population (total enumeration) was used for the study.

The research instrument adopted for the study is questionnaire. The questionnaire was tagged “Work Environment and Job Commitment Questionnaire”. Items on the questionnaire were measured on a 4-point Likert scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). To determine the internal consistency of the instrument, the questionnaire was pre-tested on 30 librarians outside the main population of the study. The following Cronbach’s alpha values were obtained – Work Environment (WE) = 0.75 and Job Commitment (JC) = 0.87. These values are adjudged acceptable internal consistency in research (Adadan and Savasci, 2011)

DATA ANALYSIS

Out of the 356 copies of the questionnaire administered, 297 were completed, returned and used for analysis, representing a response rate of 83.4%. Since the study explores the influence of work environment on job commitment of librarians, inferential statistical tools such as linear and multiple regression analyses were utilized to test the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 significance level. The hypotheses were stated in the null form.

In terms of ethical consideration, participants were not required to provide any information that could be used to identify them. Participation in the survey was voluntary and the purpose was clearly stated. Consequently, the responses obtained from participants was based on implied consent.

RESULTS

Work Environment of University Libraries

Table 1 below presents the result on the nature of work environment of the university libraries under study. The work environment in the study had two indicators namely physical work environment and social work environment. The result revealed that the general weighted mean for physical work environment was 2.52, slightly higher than the criterion mean of 2.5. However, a close look at the table reveals that provision of work equipment (2.43), office furniture (2.39), workspace ventilation (2.45), office lighting systems (2.24), room temperature (2.41) and safety measures (2.38) were rated poor. This means that though generally, the physical work environment in these libraries was fair (based on the criterion mean of 2.50), it fell short of standard practice in some areas as enumerated earlier.

The result of social work environment showed that the weighted mean was 2.96. This suggests that there was a conducive social environment for most of the librarians in the universities used for the study. For instance, majority of the librarians aligned with the statement that “My colleagues in the library have good relationship with me and they are friendly” ($\bar{x}$ =3.45) and that “My work is such that I am able to balance work and family” ($\bar{x}$ =3.22). This implies that most of the librarians affirmed that there was a good social work environment.

Table 1: Nature of the work environment of university libraries

Items	SA		A		D		SD		$\bar{x}$	STD
Physical Work Environment	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Our offices and workspaces are well designed	89	30.0	102	34.3	57	19.2	49	16.5	2.83	0.907
We have the requisite equipment to perform our duties	43	14.5	90	30.3	98	33.0	66	22.2	2.43	0.810
The level of cleanliness here is good	90	30.3	108	36.4	50	16.8	49	16.5	2.89	0.723
The layout of the offices and workspaces here is good	78	26.3	97	32.7	65	21.9	57	19.2	2.67	0.671
The furniture here is unsuitable and not comfortable	44	14.8	76	25.6	106	35.7	71	23.9	2.39	0.695
There is lack of ventilation in the offices and workspaces	52	17.5	77	25.9	99	33.3	69	23.2	2.45	0.732
The lighting systems in the offices and workspaces are poor	43	14.5	53	17.8	109	36.7	92	31.0	2.24	0.873
The temperature at my workplace is too high and there are no air conditioners	62	20.9	74	24.9	93	31.3	68	22.9	2.41	0.886
There are insufficient safety measures and equipment in the workspaces	71	23.9	82	27.6	79	26.6	65	21.9	2.38	1.028
Weighted									2.52	0.814
Social Work Environment	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	$\bar{x}$	STD
The working hours here is too long	83	27.9	95	32.0	62	20.9	57	19.2	2.57	0.914
My workload is too much	90	30.3	104	35.0	52	17.5	51	17.2	3.18	0.913
Management is sensitive and supportive of my work schedule	63	21.2	81	27.3	99	33.3	54	18.2	2.39	0.908

Management support my career path and growth	71	23.9	92	31.0	75	25.3	59	19.9	2.51	0.876
My colleagues in the library have good relationship with me and they are friendly	91	30.6	132	44.4	43	14.5	31	10.4	3.45	1.007
My supervisors have good relationship with me and they are friendly.	89	30.0	116	39.1	53	17.8	39	13.1	3.21	1.003
I have good relationship with colleagues in other departments	88	29.6	118	39.7	54	18.2	37	12.5	3.15	1.015
My work is such that I am able to balance work and family.	95	32.0	122	41.1	46	15.5	34	11.4	3.22	0.793
Weighted									2.96	0.929
Overall Weighted Mean = 2.73										

Key: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4; Agree (A) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2; Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. STD = Standard Deviation.

Criterion Mean = 2.5 ($1+2+3+4 = 10$; $10/4=2.5$)

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between work environment and job commitment of librarians.

The result in Table 2 below indicates that the mean of work environment was 46.37, Std. Dev. = 14.754, while that of job commitment was 51.19, Std. Dev = 16.072. The correlation coefficient was 0.181 with p-value < 0.05. This means that from the result, there is a positive correlation between work environment and job commitment of librarians. The correlation is statistically significant at 5 percent significance level. This implies that a significant relationship in a positive direction exists between work environment and job commitment in the libraries in these universities ($r = 0.181$, $N = 297$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The implication of this result is that an improvement in work environment would relatively improve the level of job commitment of the librarians in the universities used for the study.

Table 2: Relationship between work environment and job commitment of librarians

Variables	$\bar{x}$	STD	N	r	p	Remark
Work Environment	46.37	14.754	297	0.181	0.031	Sig.
Job Commitment	51.19	16.072				

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between specific aspects of work environment and job commitment of librarians.

The analysis of specific aspects of work environment (physical and social) and their correlation with job commitment of the librarians, as indicated in Table 3 below, highlights positive associations between specific aspects of the work environment and the job commitment levels of librarians. Specifically, the physical work environment demonstrates a strong positive correlation with job commitment, as indicated by a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.338. This suggests that improvements or positive factors in the physical work environment, such as comfortable working spaces or conducive facilities, are associated with higher levels of job commitment among librarians. A strong positive correlation implies a meaningful and robust relationship between these variables.

Similarly, the social work environment also shows a positive correlation with job commitment, with a correlation coefficient of 0.487. This implies that positive social dynamics, including effective teamwork, supportive colleague relationships, and a collaborative atmosphere, contribute to higher levels of job commitment among librarians.

Table 3: Correlation matrix showing relationships between specific aspects of work environment and job commitment

Variables	Indicators	$\bar{x}$	STD		job commitment		
					Physical work environment	Social work environment	job commitment
Work environment	Physical work environment	22.69	7.325	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.266	.338
				Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
				N	297	297	297
	Social work environment	23.68	7.429	Pearson Correlation	.266	1.000	.487
				Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
				N	297	297	297
Job commitment	Job commitment	51.19	16.072	Pearson Correlation	.338	.487	1.000
				Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
				N	297	297	297

DISCUSSION

The current study focuses on gaining insights into the influence of work environment of university libraries on the job commitment of librarians. From analysis, the study indicated that a positive and significant relationship was found between work environment and job commitment of

librarians. This corroborates the finding of Ikechukwu, Ezech, Ogochukwu, Nkechinyere, and Dumle (2019) who investigated work environment and employee's commitment in three selected institutions in Rivers State. The findings of the study indicated that work environments had an impact on the commitment levels of employees in the universities examined. Aspects of work environment like flexibility, work noise distraction, interpersonal relationships between subordinates and supervisors, presence of job aid, the use of performance feedback and work incentives had influence on employee commitment.

Furthermore, the finding of this study supports that of Adeoye (2018) who observed that workplace environmental factors are essential predictors of employee commitment. In an assessment of the impact of workplace environmental factors on employee commitment in Northeast Nigeria, the latter revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between good feedback mechanisms in the workplace and employees' commitment. The finding of the current study also agrees with Mayowa –Adebara and Aina (2016) who carried out a study to determine the level to which work environment correlates with organizational commitment among staff in academic libraries in Lagos state, Nigeria. The results of the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between work environment and commitment of library staff. This implies that when the work environment is conducive, employees will be regular at work and perform at optimum productivity levels.

Specifically, the current study revealed that physical work environment indicated a strong positive correlation with job commitment. This suggests that improvements or positive factors in the physical work environment, such as comfortable working spaces or conducive facilities, are associated with higher levels of job commitment among librarians. A strong positive correlation implies a meaningful and robust relationship between these variables. The conclusion is in tandem with the findings of Amadi and Ehule (2023) who examined the physical work environment and employee work commitment in major multinational oil and gas companies in Rivers State Nigeria.

Similarly, the social work environment also shows a positive correlation with job commitment. This implies that positive social dynamics, including effective teamwork, supportive colleague relationships, and a collaborative atmosphere, contribute to higher levels of job commitment among librarians in the universities used for the study. This further corroborates the findings of Adeoye (2018).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study holds practical implications for university and library administrators. Firstly, the study provides university and library management with information on the importance of the library work environment. This information provides awareness to management, which will aid decision-making processes, organisational policies and practices. Improved organisational policies and practices would enhance job commitment of librarians, and ultimately improve productivity.

The study also provides an empirical basis for the reformulation of organisational policies that drive good work environment, emphasising more on practices that would improve job commitment of library personnel.

CONCLUSION

Job commitment is crucial for enhanced productivity of librarians in universities. It was established in this study that work environment (both physical and social) is a significant influencer of job commitment. The study inferred that employee productivity can be enhanced by high levels of job commitment. However, to gain high levels of job commitment, there is a dire need to look in the direction of work environment. The state of physical work environment in many Nigerian University Libraries is poor (Omali and Echedom, 2024). The latter reported the acute shortage of conducive work spaces, work tools and information and communication technology (ICT) facilities. These findings have been further confirmed by the current study. These may be part of the factors responsible for the low job commitment of librarians reported in the country (Ajibare, Fagbemi and Adewolojo, 2023). Therefore, this study serves as a wake-up call on university and library administrators in Nigeria to revamp the poor work environment of libraries, with the aim of enhancing job commitment among librarians and ultimately improve on job productivity. Basic work tools, modern facilities and conducive work environment should be provided for librarians to do their jobs.

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