Original Paper

Affective Commitment of Academic Staff in Higher Educational Institutions

Micheal Mwebaza[1*], Kizza Ssali Francis[2], Samuel S Kafuuma[3] & Raymond Mwesigye[4]

[1] Makerere University, College of Education and External Studies, P.O Box 7062, Kampala

[2] Bugema University, P.O. Box 6529, Kampala, Uganda

[3] Uganda Management Institute (UMI), P.O. Box 20131 Kampala, Uganda

[4] University of Rwanda, Institute of Education, P.O. Box 55, Rwamagana, Rwanda

[*] Micheal Mwebaza, E-mail: micheal.mwebaza@mak.ac.ug

Abstract

The study established the level of Affective Commitment (AC) of academic staff of universities in Uganda. Academic staff from two universities, Uganda Christian University (UCU) and Kyambogo University (KyU), participated in the study. It was guided by three specific objectives: to establish the status of Academic Commitment (AC), to establish the perception of academic staff on their affective commitment, and to suggest ways of improving affective commitment among academic staff. The study utilised a model by Meyer and Allen to extensively discuss affective commitment. It was a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. The population involved lecturers from the two universities. These were sampled using simple random sampling. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire and interview guide. This data was analysed at the univariate level using descriptive statistics means and standard deviations. Lecturers in the two universities indicated their moderately high degree of affective organisational commitment to their universities in their thoughts, feelings, and emotions. This study provides at least some evidence of how the affective commitment of academic staff can be devised to ensure organisation effectiveness. The university's continued efforts should be geared towards improving work conditions, encouraging creativity and participation, ensuring satisfaction, and acting in ways that increase the affective commitment of academic staff to their institutions.

Keywords

Commitment, Affective Commitment, Universities, Academic Staff

1. Introduction

In the highly competitive environment of today, organisations can only achieve great performance if every person is committed towards attaining those organizational goals (Radosavljevic, Cilerdzic & Dragic, 2017). Therefore, in order for any organisation to compete favorably and become successful in this demanding and fast growing global world, a committed work force is paramount (Rubel et al., 2021). Organisation are therefore investing in improving structures, procedures, practices and policies that ensure commitment (Vance, 2006). Affective Commitment (AC) is related to higher productivity and lower employee turnover, which is responsible for rendering a competitive edge in organisations. Consequently, to keep someone consistent with their plan of action and become relevant to their goal, affective commitment is sought. AC of personnel is a burning aspiration to uphold the organization's welfare and to exercise a strong mental connection in support of organisational aims. So, affective commitment gives strength to staff's identification and participation in an organisation.

2. Conceptual Framework

Accordingly, Meyer and Allen designedly inferred that employees that are affectively committed to their organisation have a strong sense of alignment with its goals and objectives as a whole. The employee is interested in staying a part of the organisation. The employee unconditionally falls in love with the organisation since he/she "wants to". The commitment here is subjective to the various individual variables and perceptions: age, tenure, sex, and education. The issue with these traits, however, is that despite being visible, they cannot be accurately and precisely described. According to Velickovic et al. (2014), Meyer and Allen drew heavily from the perception of commitment by Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982), which then had referenced earlier work by Kanter (1968), in establishing this concept. The foundation of commitment of this nature is the notion that the organisation respects and values what they do, is concerned for their welfare, and evaluates if it is prepared to reward their increasing efforts. Organisational development and recruitment and retention practices are becoming more and more concerned with retaining employees' love and, subsequently, shown commitment (Zachary, 2015).

The strongest and most reliable predictor of successful organisational results has been determined to be affective commitment. This leads to higher attainment of organisational vision and goals. It has the highest emotional bond of staff to the university, which explains the strong dedication and loyalty. Meyer and Allen suggested that work experiences like leadership support and organisational rewards have shown a stronger relationship with affective commitment. Affective commitment is needed in such a competitive environment that is rapidly changing with continued globalization. This state creates an environment of uncertainty and requires universities to have a workforce that is dynamic and committed to the institution's demands in a changing society. Therefore, the affective commitment of university academic staff is important due to the complexity of learning and teaching, the need for adaptability, and community demand initiatives required to be fulfilled by the university.

3. Literature Review

Organizational success requires the maintenance of high levels of affective commitment (Khalifa, 2023). Affective component strongly correlates with important organisational variables like turnover, absence, abscondment, and this has made it a core component of organisational commitment (Mercurio, 2015). Individuals with affective commitment identify with their organisation because the perceived goals, missions and values are congruent with what that individual recognizes (Grund & Titz, 2021). They have a strong attachment to the organisation and the feelings to be part of the organisation. Studies about affective commitment has showed varying results, for instance an excursion conducted by Cemaloglu, Sezgin and Kiline (2012) discovered that, teachers' low affective commitment is attributed to criticism in their community but when the leader used management by exception style, there was a high affective commitment. Morrow (2011) emphasized that the effective management of affective organisational commitment can present the most significant relationship with the desired employee behaviors.

Affective commitment is the most consistent in enabling achievement of positive organisational outcomes (Suifan, 2019; Chai et al., 2020; Khaola & Rambe, 2021; To & Huang, 2022). Employees who exhibit affective commitment become strongly identified with the company and feel a connection to it. The sense of belonging increases employee engagement in the organization's activities. They learn about the organization's mission, goals, and vision. This acquaintance increases productivity, which leads the organization to compete favourably. The emotional state of employees with affective commitment is so strong that everything that goes wrong in the organisation leads them to feel failing the organisation. Any reward, appreciation and contribution offered to these workers increases their efforts and energy in serving the organisation. The increased efforts result in a sense of duty towards the organisation and ownership of organization's welfare. Such employees are held in high regard and like fostering relationships and cooperation inside the workplace. These employees enjoy the collegial relationship with their leaders and co-workers. The accomplishment of organisational objectives is facilitated by all of these traits. It is hard to find affectively committed employees with behaviours of resentment, abscondment and withdrawal.

4. Methodology

The study was a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. A total of 289 academic staff participated in the study. These were sampled using simple random sampling. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire and interview guide. A total of 235 questionnaires were returned out of the 289 that were distributed. The data was analysed at univariate level using descriptive statistics means and standard deviations.

5. Results

Results showed that males made up the majority of the study participants 151(64.3%), compared to 84(35.7%) females. This finding somewhat suggested that university education could be predominantly benefiting male lecturers. Results also disclosed that many study respondents, 92(39.1%) ranged between the ages 30-39. This age bracket was followed by that of lecturers in the age group of 40-50 years who were 84(36.7%). Conversely, the elderly lecturers were found to be the least likely to participate in this study, just 28(11.9%). Furthermore, 90% had sufficient qualifications as recommended by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE, 2005). The results signified that 8(3.4%) were post-doctoral fellows, 60(25.5%) had a PhD and almost 60 per cent, that is, 139(59.1%), had a master's degree. In fact, only 28(11.9%) had a bachelor's degree.

A large number of the study respondents 164(69.8%) were working as contracted professionals, followed by 62(26.4%) on a permanent basis and least 9(3.8%) were casual employees. Lastly, experience showed that a large number that responded 80(34%) were of sufficient experience, between 6-10 years. This was followed by 71(30.2%) with experience between 3-5 years. Those with experience above 10 years were 54(23%) and the smallest percentage had worked between 0-2 years; 30(12.8%). These results suggested that academic staff experience was quite high implying that their affective commitment would be convincing.

Worth noting about the perception of study participants, (48.9%) concurred that they would find it very delightful to work in higher education for the remainder of their careers. In contrast, 31% of respondents disagreed, and 20% of respondents lacked a firm opinion. Nonetheless, with the opinion arithmetic mean of 3.276 and standard deviation at 1.328, there is a moderate respondent insinuation of uncertainty about their wholly stay in the respective organizations for the rest of their career time. This, in a way, could connote that though the lecturers appear to be happy to the extent of staying in the university, the university authorities should not get tired of constantly improving and maintaining organizational quality and more so, the lecturers' wellbeing. This will check the possibility of academics flying away.

On the notion whether respondents really saw their university's problem as their own, about 45.3% of the respondents were in agreement with this questionnaire statement. Conversely, though, about 33.2% of the respondents were in disagreement with the notion, as well as 11.5% being impartial or non-committal to the set questionnaire statement. With the computed arithmetic mean of 3.283 (moderate position in the opinions of the respondents on the Likert scale) and standard deviation of 1.280, it is probable that the respondents may also have had other reservations (though mild) besides what they may have articulated as being a general view that they see their university's problems as their own.

On the questionnaire statement that sought to find out whether respondents felt "emotionally attached to their university", slightly over 64% were in agreement with it. This was in contrast with about 20% who disagreed with the statement and the 15.7% who were recorded to be non-committal. Although the arithmetic mean of 3.553 was close to the 4th Likert scale point (Agree) with SD=1.176, this may imply that respondents had agreed that they were emotionally attached to their universities and had the university at heart, though moderately. The findings supposed that in all ways academic staff were touched by what was happening in their universities, but there was some room left for improvement.

On whether the university had profound meaning for the lecturers, 73.6% of the respondents agreed to this notion (Mean value 3.834, SD=1.067 on Likert scale), as compared to 14.9% who disagreed while 11.5% were non-committal. Thus, there was agreement that respondents' universities had great meaning to the lecturers. Finally, over 77.1% of the study respondents agreed feeling strongly belonging to their universities (Mean: 3.893, SD=1.074); insignificantly below 4.0 points on the Likert scale. Nevertheless, this was opposed to 15.8% who disagreed with this notion and the 7.2% respondents who were non-committal. This high sense of belonging implied that lecturers take their job as a home entity where all parties involved work for the common good. To get a general view of how respondents rated their Affective Organizational Commitment, aggregation of all items into one average index was done. Results from the histogram and curve showed that, the largest proportion of participants were concentrated on the right side of the histogram and curve. This suggests that affective commitment of lecturers at Kyambogo University and Uganda Christian University was fair. However, the mean value of 3.57 meant that there was some level of agreement with affective commitment. Lecturers in the two universities indicated their moderately high degree of affective organisational commitment to their universities in their thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

6. Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendation

Academic staff who participated in the study indicated that a significant number remained in their prime for employment, which could be a significant and dependable element in the realm of affective commitment. The qualification of respondents revealed that academic staff in the two universities were qualified to teach in universities. However, the academic staff without PhDs and Masters, which are the minimum requirements for one to teach in a university, was still significant. This may lower their level of commitment as their security on the job was at stake. This presupposes that there is still much effort needed to make lecturers move to higher ranks of senior lecturers, associates, and full professors. These percentages suggest that since most lecturers who participated in the study were on a contract basis, this was likely to negatively affect their level of affective commitment, as this category is always on the move from one university to another. Hence, academic staff with doubted permanence on the job may probably result in their insignificant affective commitment. Therefore, in order to improve affective commitment, universities should conduct various activities, which might include creating a strong team of workers and

112

ensuring they are working in a favourable environment. Building working teams is very important. These employees come from different backgrounds with divergent views. When the organisation carries out team building, workers would love to work together, hence increasing their affective or continuance commitment. Group cohesion enables collegial relationships, trust, and a combined effort to achieve organisational goals. This will result in committed members of the group. The second way to improve commitment is to be transparent and encourage open communication. Academic staff don't want to work in an environment of uncertainty. They want to set targets that they are sure of achieving. They prefer to know what the crucial aspects of their university and job assignments are so that they are excellent at the work. Therefore, openness in communication is vital. In addition, the university should maintain high standards of work ethics. Employees feel respected and feel that they have a great equal role in the organisation when they are assured of royalty. The university therefore should also ensure a positive culture and develop trust. This also improves the commitment of employees. Furthermore, there is improved affective commitment in an environment that encourages innovation, where the feedback is provided constructively, tasks are delegated efficiently, and rewards or incentives are offered.

References

Cemaloglu, N., Sezgin, F., & Kilinc, A. C. (2012). Examining the relatiohsip between school Principas' transformational and transactional leadership styles and teachers' organisational commitment. *The online journal of New Horizons in Education*.

Chai, D. S., Jeong, S., & Joo, B. K. (2020). The multi-level effects of developmental opportunities, pay equity, and paternalistic leadership on organizational commitment. *European Journal of Training and Development*, *44*(4/5), 405-424. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-09-2019-0163

Grund, C., & Titz, K. (2021). Affective Commitment through Further Training: The Roles of From Provision and Employee Participation. *Review of Managerial Science*, *16*, 1195-1226. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-021-00460-1

Kanter, R. M. (1968). *Commitment and Social Organization: A Study of Commitment Mechanisms in Utopian Communities*. American Sociological Association. https://doi.org/10.2307/2092438

Khalifa, H. M. (2023). The moderating effect of gender on the salary equity-affective commitment link: An empirical study of university academic staff in Egypt. *Cogent Business & Management*, *10*(1), 2210894. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2023.2210894

Khaola, P., & Rambe, P. (2021). *The effects of transformational leadership on organisational citizenship behaviour: The role of organisational justice and affective commitment*. https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-07-2019-0323

Mercurio, Z. A. (2015). Affective commitment as a core essence of organizational commitment: An integrative literature review. *Hum Resour Dev Rev.*, *14*(4), 389-414. https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484315603612

Morrow, P. C. (2011). Managing organizational commitment: Insight from longitudinal research. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *79*(1), 18-35. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2010.12.008

Mowday, R. T., Porter, L. W., & Steers, R. M. (1982). *Employee-Organization Linkages: The Psychology of Commitment, Absenteeism, and Turnover*. New York: Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-509370-5.50005-8

Radosavljevic, Z., Vesna, C., & Milan, D. (2017). Employ Organizational Commitment. *International Review 2017 No1-2 Belgrade Serbia*. https://doi.org/10.5937/intrev1702018R

Rubel, M. R. B., Kee, D. M. H., & Rimi, N. N. (2021). High Commitment Human Resource Management Practices and Hotel Employees' Work Outcomes in Bangladesh. *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*, *0*(5), 370-452. https://doi.org/10.1002/joe.22089

Suifan, T. S. (2019). The effect of organizational justice on employees' affective commitment: The mediating role of job satisfaction. *Modern Applied Science*, *13*(2), 42-53. https://doi.org/10.5539/mas.v13n2p42

To, W. M., & Huang, G. (2022). Effects of equity, perceived organizational support and job satisfaction on organizational commitment in Macao's gaming industry. *Management Decision*. https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-11-2021-1447

Vance, R. J. (2006). *Employee Engagement and Commitment; A guide to understanding, measuring and increasing engagement in your organization*. Society for Human Resource Management Foundation.

Velickovic, V. M., Misnjic, A., Jovic, S. A., Radulovic, O., Sargic, C., Milhajlovic, J., & Mladenovic, J. (2014). Organisational Commitment and Job Satisfaction among Nurses in Serbia: A factor Analysis. *Nursing Outlook*, *62*(6), 415-427. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2014.05.003

Zachary, A. M. (2015). Affective Commitment as a Core Essence of Organizational Commitment: An Integrative Literature Review. *SAGE Journals*.