

Demographic and Organisational Antecedents of Commitment among SME Employees in Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The study examined some demographic (gender, age, length of service, educational qualification and marital status) and organisational (level of job tension and perceived job characteristics) antecedents of commitment among employees of fourteen SMEs in Imo State of Nigeria. A total of 174 participants, comprising of 117 females and 57 males, aged between 18 – 40 years with a mean age of 24.99 years and SD of 4.56 were administered with three instruments: Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn and Snoek's Job-related Tension Inventory; Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Scale and Meyer, Allen and Smith's three dimensional Organisational Commitment Questionnaire. Survey designed and One-Way MANOVA was used for data collection and analysis. Results indicated that, employees did not significantly differ in their levels of job tension on the three dimensions of organisational commitment. Also, employees' perceived level of job characteristics, except for the continuance commitment, did not significantly differ in affective and normative commitment. Results also show that gender and age differences were significant for affective commitment but were not significant for continuance and normative commitment. Furthermore, the findings showed that length of service, educational qualification and marital status were not significant across all three dimensions of organisational commitment. The results were discussed with particular reference to the commitment needs of SME employees in Nigeria.*

Keywords: Organisational Commitment, Job Related Tension, Job Characteristics, Demographic.

1. Introduction

Previous and more recent studies show that high levels of organisational commitment (OC) is a catalyst to decreased turnover, increases in productivity, performance, retention and job satisfaction [1], [2], [3], [4]. As a result, several researchers have increasingly tried to identify antecedents that determine employee commitment purely because for researchers to alter commitment, they have to understand its antecedents.

One area where commitment studies have been relatively spares is in the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises sectors. In the last two decades, government and non-governmental agencies have given a lot of emphasis on the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria [5]. Various programs and facilities have and are still being provided to increase the performance of SMEs. The activities of government in this area, within the last fourteen years of democratic experience, have offered SMEs viable opportunities for growth. In further response to these efforts, investors are springing up in this sector, with Nigeria experiencing more and more investments in SME [5], [6]. It is believed that SMEs employ over 58% of the global working population and contribute over 30% to the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) [7]. Moreover, SMEs have continued to face severe constraints in Nigeria. The main identified constraints are poor funding [7] and inadequate managerial skills [5]. These reasons contribute to the alarming rate at which SMEs become moribund. However, there may be more unidentified constraints than has been attributed to poor financing and inadequate

management skills. One of these unidentified constraints is the low level of organisational commitment among SME employee. Employees in SMEs use such organisations as stepping-stones because they are unskilled or semi-skilled. So, when these employees gain experience or additional experience, they move on to bigger and better firms. Also, since employees form the fulcrum of the daily organisational activity, thereby determining the upswing in business activity and consequently, the success of the organisation depends, to a large extent, on their high level of commitment which in the case of Nigerian SMEs is doubtful.

Furthermore, SME employees' commitment may not only be as a result of the organisation type. Demographic characteristics such as age, educational level, gender, job grade-level, job tenure, family life cycle status (made up of marital status; number of children; age of youngest and oldest child; and number of children living at home), salary, and alternative job opportunities influence their level of commitment [8]. Also, the inherent organisational characteristics of the job such as aspects of the task (e.g., skill variety, task autonomy) the employee is engaged in, the degree to which the job is interesting to the incumbent (e.g., job challenge and scope) and the degree to which the job is defined and is under the control of the incumbent (e.g., role conflict and role ambiguity) could also be influencing the low level of commitment among SME employees.

Based on the above proposition, this study, therefore, aims at;

1. To identify whether SME employees' level of organisational commitment (on three dimensions) is

- inversely related to their level of job-related tension.
2. To access whether SME employees' level of organisational commitment will be different from their perceived level of job characteristics.
 3. To find out whether older SME employees were different on the three dimensions of organisational commitment than their younger counterparts.
 4. To identify whether female SME employees will be different on the three dimensions of organisational commitment than their male counterparts.
 5. To confirm whether SME employees differ on the three dimensions of organisational commitment based on length of service
 6. To access whether the three dimensions of organisational commitment differs among employees of different level of educational qualification
 7. To identify if married SME employees differs on the three dimensions of organisational commitment from their single counterparts.

2. Literature Review

Literature defines commitment as an employee's level of attachment to some aspect of work [9]. Various authors have been instrumental in identifying different types of employee commitment as critical constructs in understanding attitudes and behaviours of employees in an organisation. [10] identified more than 25 employee commitment concepts and measures. They further group commitment into three foci; commitment to work/job, commitment to career/profession and commitment to organisation.

Work commitment refers neither to commitment to the organisation nor to ones career, but to employment itself [11], [12]. Employees who are committed to their work hold a strong sense of duty towards their work and place intrinsic value on work as a central life interest [13]. On the other hand, career commitment refers to identification with, and involvement in ones occupation. It is similar in conceptualization to occupational commitment [14]. Employees who are high in career commitment tend to be committed to their career or occupation rather than to the organisation of which the employee is a part of.

Organisational commitment forms a subset of employee commitment. It is the willingness of employees to accept organisational values, and goals, and to work towards achieving these; to be fully involved, and participate, in all the activities, both work and non-work related, of the organisation; and to dedicate time, and effort, towards the betterment of the organisation [15], [9]. The committed employee, for example, is less absent, and is less likely to leave the organisation voluntarily, than are less committed employees [15]

For the purpose of this study, Commitment is defined as "a force that binds an individual towards a course of action" [16]. In the case of employees in the Nigerian SME sector, commitment should keep them with the organisation, irrespective of other openings available to them as a result of the skill they have acquired. The concept of commitment is relevant because commitment influences behaviours independently of other motives and attitudes and, in fact, can

lead to persistence in a course of action even in the face of conflicting motives or attitudes. Commitment, for instance, can lead individuals to behave in ways that, from the perspective of neutral observers, might seem contrary to their self-interest.

2.1 Organisational Commitment and Age

In a large survey undertaken in three public secondary schools in Dodoma, Tanzania on job satisfaction (general, intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction) and organizational commitment levels, [17] sampled the responses of 103 public secondary school teachers. Findings from the study revealed no statistically significant difference in teachers' organizational commitment associated with gender, educational level and age groups though younger teachers showed slightly lower commitment than older groups.

In a more recent study, [18] investigated workers' attitudes toward union and non-union construction firms in terms of organizational commitment (OC) and turnover intention. Control variables in organisational commitment and turnover intention include personal characteristics, job characteristics, group-leader relations and organizational characteristics. In terms of age, the study found an inverse relationship of age with organisational commitment. The reason given for their result not confirming with [19] meta-analysis who found significant positive relationship, was that it may have been due to the nature of construction work where employees' organizational tenure is relatively short compared with other industries.

2.2 Organisational Commitment and Gender

On gender, results from studies involving gender and organisational commitment have been somewhat ambiguous. These diverse outcomes have been blamed on the manner in which gender in relation to organisational commitment has been studied. Gender, as a topic in organisational commitment literature, has been approached from both the gender-model and the job model [20]. [20] completed a meta-analysis of studies of the relationship between gender and organisational commitment and concluded that similar commitment can be won from both males and females when organisations treat all employees fairly. In a gender effect study, [21] using the job-model research approach in a study involving urban elementary and middle school teachers found that gender was not a factor that influenced organisational commitment. Recent study by [22] on the impact of work-family role conflict on organizational commitment among 247 industrial workers in public and private organizations in Nigeria found a significant difference between organizational commitment of male and female employees, with male employees exhibiting higher organizational commitment than their female counterparts.

2.3 Organisational Commitment and Tenure

From earlier studies, organisational tenure was found to correlate positively with organisational commitment. [19] Reviewed 38 studies that included 12,290 participants and found an overall mean weighted correlation of .17 ($p \leq .01$). [21] in his study of urban elementary and middle school

teachers also found a positive correlation ($r = .17, p \geq .05$) between the number of years in teaching and organisational commitment, but the correlation was not significant at the .01 or the .05 alpha level.

Furthermore, recent studies found a significant relationship between tenure and organizational commitment. For example, in [4] study, affective commitment was found to be stronger for employees with longer tenure. [2] also found a significant relationship between organizational commitment and tenure among a sample of 128 employees from service industry in Muscat.

However some other studies reported otherwise. [23] found that older tenured and more highly educated did not report a higher level of commitment than their younger short-tenured and less educated counterparts with regard to affective and normative commitment. Age and tenure also did not show any correlation with employee commitment among 300 ICT professionals in Hongkong [24]

2.4. Organisational Commitment and Job Characteristics

Researchers have attempted to examine relationship between job characteristics and different variables including organizational commitment. All job characteristics variables studied had statistically significant correlation with job satisfaction and organizational commitment [25]. Using supervisory ($n = 45$) and non-supervisory staff ($n = 172$), [26] found job characteristics for supervisors to be positively related ($p = .019$) to organisational commitment with variety being the only significant individual characteristics. For non-supervisory staff, the model was also significant ($p = .0001$), with variety and feedback being the significant individual characteristics. Supervisors had higher perceived variety, autonomy, feedback, dealing with others, scores than did non-supervisory employees. A recent finding by [27] involving permanent and temporary teachers in Victoria, Australia, reveals a positive relationship between organisational commitment and organisational identification, variety, skill utilization and organisational citizenship behaviour.

[28] Found inconsistent relationships between job characteristics and organizational commitment. Only two of the five job constructs were significantly related to organizational commitment. Skill variety and feedback had significant positive relationship with organizational commitment ($p < 0.01$).

2.5 Organisational Commitment and Job-Related Tension

Most previous studies on job-related tension and organisational commitment have consistently showed negative correlations between job-related tension and organisational commitment. Several studies [29], [30] have reported that role ambiguity is negatively related to affective and normative commitments, but not significantly related to continuance commitment. Findings of [31] showed that employees who perceive their job roles to be clearly delineated and show less tension are more likely to exhibit higher levels of affective and normative commitment. Role ambiguity has further been found to be correlated with

decreased motivation, quality of work life, organizational commitment, individual and group productivity, and an increase in withdrawal behaviours [32]. Individuals who are committed to the organization demonstrate a willingness to provide significant efforts on behalf of the organization and accept and support the values and goals of the organization [33].

2.6 Organisational Commitment among Nigeria Employees

Researches on organisational commitment among Nigerian SME employees are scanty. In fact only two studies [34], [35] were found on employee commitment among medium scale enterprises. Also, there are divergences of opinions among Nigerian researchers on organisational commitment. Some Nigerian researchers believe that Nigerian workers are not committed to their organisations [36]. Others believed that they are committed to organisational goals but it is the organisations that do not show commitment to the plight of the workers [37], [38]. These categories of researchers believe that organisational commitment reflects one side of the reciprocal organisational commitment relationship between the employer and the employee and as such each party has to play its role.

Generally, there is paucity of researches on the correlates of organisational commitment among industrial workers in Nigeria [38]. Therefore, this study is designed to fill such research gaps in Nigeria.

2.6 Hypotheses

1. SME employees' level of organisational commitment (on the three dimensions) will be statistically significantly different based on their level of job-related tension
2. SME employees' level of organisational commitment (on the three dimensions) will be statistically significantly different based on their perceived level of job characteristics.
3. Older employees will be statistically significantly different on the three dimensions of organisational commitment than their younger counterparts.
4. Female employees will be statistically significantly different on the three dimensions of organisational commitment than their male counterparts.
5. SME employee's will statistically significantly differ on the three dimensions of organisational commitment based on length of service
6. There will be a statistically significant difference in the three dimensions of organisational commitment based on level of educational qualification
7. Married SME employees will be statistically significantly different on the three dimensions of organisational commitment from their single counterparts.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

Participants for this study consisted of volunteer employees of 14 randomly selected Small and Mediums Scale Enterprises (11 service and 3 manufacturing organisations)

in Imo State of Nigeria. One hundred and seventy-four (57 males and 117 females) employees took part in the study. The participants, who were between 18 and 40 years with a mean age of 24.99 years and a standard deviation of 4.56, were selected through purposive sampling method.

3.2 Instruments

Three sets of instruments were used for the study. [39], Job-related Tension Inventory (JT), [40], Job Characteristics Scale (JCS), and [41] Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). In addition, demographic variables which included name of business enterprise, gender, age, educational qualification, length of service, and marital status were included in the overall instrument used for the study.

The Job-related Tension Inventory (JT) is a 15-item inventory designed to assess the nature, causes and consequences of feelings of tension, discomfort, uncertainty, indecisiveness and distress that employees experience, as a result of the social and physical circumstances of the work setting [42]. JT assesses two components of organisational stress namely; Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity. Each item of the JT is scored directly on a 1-5 point Likert-scale ranging from never (1) to nearly all the time (5) reflecting the degree to which the items applied to a participant. Sample items of the JT included statements such as, "Being unclear on just what the scope and responsibilities of your job are", "Thinking that you'll not be able to satisfy the conflicting demands of various people over you", and "Not knowing just what the people you work with expect of you", etc. [43] and [44] reported a coefficient alpha of .87 and .39 respectively. Also, [43] obtained a validity coefficient of .01 by correlating JT with rated performance while [44] obtained a coefficient of .46 when he correlated JT with the Checklist Symptoms Stress by [45] thereby ascertaining that the JT scale is valid and reliable for the purpose of this study.

The second instrument used in data collection was the Job Characteristics Scale (JCS) by [40]. The JCS is a 21-item inventory which specifically assesses employee's perception of seven principal job characteristics. Items in the JCS are scored directly and in reverse. The direct scoring items are items 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 32, 33, 34, 36, 38, 39, and 40 while the reverse scored items are 23, 25, 29, 31, 35, 37, and 41. Scoring was done on a 7-point scale ranging from Very Inaccurate (1) to Very Accurate (7) reflecting the degree to which each item applies to an employee. Sample items of the JCS included statements such as: "The job is simple and repetitive", "The outcome of my work can affect other people in very important ways", "People almost always let me know how well I am doing on the job", etc. [40] and [45] obtained the following internal consistency alpha reliability coefficient for American and African Sample: Skill Variety, .71, .78; Task Identity, .59, .62; Task Significance, .66, .59; Autonomy, .66, .63; Feedback from Job; .71, .70; Feedback from Agents, .78, .83; and Dealing with others, .59, .59. Also, [40] validated the JCS by intercorrelating the scores of the seven sub-scales with the factor structure of the responses to the individual items and obtained a convergent validity coefficient ranging from .16 to .51 (median .24). Thus, confirming the validity and reliability of the JCS for

the purpose of this study.

The third instrument used for data collection was a 12-item Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) by [41], adapted by Gbadamosi (2006). The OCQ is designed to measure the extent to which a worker is attached and loyal towards the achievement of the goals and values of his/her organisation. OCQ measures three dimensions of organisational commitment namely; Affective, Continuance and Normative Commitments. The original Mayer, Allen and Smith's OCQ had 18 items (6 items each for affective, continuance and normative commitment) but after factorially validating the 18-item OCQ, only 12-items had factor loadings above .31 (4 items each for affective, continuance and normative commitment). Only these were used for the study while the remaining items that failed to load were discarded. The discarded items were items 3, 6, 8, 12, 16 and 17. Items in the OCQ are scored directly and in reverse. The directly scored items include 42, 43, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, and 53 while the reverse scored items are items 44, and 45. Each dimension of the OCQ could be scored separately. Scoring was done on a 7-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) reflecting the degree to which each item apply to an employee. Sample items of the OCQ included statements such as; "I really feel as if this business enterprise's problems are my own", "Right now, staying with this business enterprise is a matter of necessity as much as desire", and "I would feel guilty if I left this business enterprises now", etc [41], reported internal consistency reliability estimates (Cronbach alpha) for affective commitment (.82), continuance commitment (.74), and normative commitment (.83). Similarly, using African samples, [47] obtained in internal consistency alpha reliability coefficients of .73 for affective commitment, .74 for continuance commitment, and .66 for normative commitment. The internal consistency reliability estimates for the OCQ in this study were affective commitment (.97), continuance commitment (.92), and normative commitment (.78)). The only adjustment made on the OCQ was the substitution of the word "organisation" with "business enterprise". This was done only with the intention of making the instrument suitable to the participants who perceive their organisations more as a business enterprise.

3.3 Procedure

A set of questionnaires for assessing demographic data information, job-related tension, job characteristics and organisational commitment were administered on the respondents directly by the researcher who visited each participant at their various work places. The respondents were approached by the researcher who explained the nature of the study and assured them of the confidentiality of their responses and were requested to give the researcher an appointed date for the collection of completed questionnaire. Upon collection of completed questionnaires, the respondents were thanked for participating in the study. Respondents who no longer wish to complete the questionnaires were requested to return it back to the researcher at their own convenience. A total of 220 questionnaires were distributed out of which 185 were returned giving a return rate of 92.5%, but only 174 were found usable after data screening and were subsequently

used for data analyses.

3.4 Design and Statistic

The survey research design was employed in this study while the One-Way MANOVA on SPSS Ver. 13.0 was used in analysing the seven hypotheses. This is because of its suitability in analysing the variance for two or more dependent variables by one factor or variable with two or more levels. Also, it enables the testing of both balanced and unbalanced models (SPSS, 2004).

4. Results

Table 1: Summary Table of Means and Standard Deviations for Job Tension (JT) on Organisational Commitment (OC)

| OC | JT | Means | SD | n |
|-------------|---------|-------|------|-----|
| Affective | High JT | 24.84 | 7.30 | 134 |
| | Low JT | 27.25 | 7.37 | 40 |
| Continuance | High JT | 29.75 | 7.50 | 134 |
| | Low JT | 30.50 | 8.02 | 40 |
| Normative | High JT | 27.99 | 6.72 | 134 |
| | Low JT | 28.53 | 6.23 | 40 |

Table 2: Summary Table of One-Way MANOVA for Job Tension (JT) on OC

| Source | DV | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | p |
|--------|-------------|----------------|----|-------------|------|-------------------|
| JT | Affective | 179.54 | 1 | 179.5 | 3.36 | .07 ^{NS} |
| | Continuance | 16.98 | 1 | 16.98 | .29 | .59 ^{NS} |
| | Normative | 8.73 | 1 | 8.73 | .20 | .66 ^{NS} |

$p > 0.05$, ^{NS} = Not significant

The results indicated, at the 95% confidence interval, no statistically significant difference on the three dimensions of organisational commitment between employees who reported high level of job tension and those who reported low level of tension ($F = 3.36$, $p = .07$; $F = .29$, $p = .59$; $F = .20$, $p = .66$).

Table 3: Summary Table of Means and Standard Deviations for Job Characteristics (JT) on Organisational Commitment

| | Perception of JC | Means | SD | N |
|-------------|---------------------|-------|------|----|
| Affective | Positive Perception | 25.60 | 7.81 | 82 |
| | Negative Perception | 25.21 | 6.97 | 92 |
| Continuance | Positive Perception | 29.06 | 7.40 | 82 |
| | Negative Perception | 31.45 | 7.65 | 92 |
| Normative | Positive Perception | 28.17 | 6.64 | 82 |
| | Negative Perception | 28.07 | 6.60 | 92 |

Table 4: Summary Table of One-Way MANOVA for Job Characteristics on Organisational Commitment

| Source | DV | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | p |
|------------------|-------------|----------------|----|-------------|------|-------------------|
| Perception of JC | Affective | 6.63 | 1 | 6.63 | .12 | .73 ^{NS} |
| | Continuance | 246.55 | 1 | 246.55 | 4.34 | .04* |
| | Normative | .48 | 1 | .48 | .01 | .92 ^{NS} |

$p < .05$, *significant, ^{NS} = Not significant

The MANOVA results indicated, at the 95% confidence interval, no statistically significant differences between two of the three dimensions of organisational commitment and

employee's perception of their job characteristics. There were no statistically significant differences between employees perceived job characteristics and their affective and normative commitment ($F = .12$, $p > .73$; $F = .01$, $p = .92$); however, there was a statistically significant difference between employees perceived job characteristics and continuance commitment ($F = 4.34$, $p = .04$). The means and standard deviations obtained further show that employees with positive perception of their job had higher mean scores on affective and normative commitment than those with negative perception of their jobs (Table 3). However, employees with negative perception of their jobs scored higher than those with positive perception.

Table 5: Summary Table of Means and Standard Deviations for Employees' Demographic Characteristics on Organisational Commitment

| Gender | | Affective | Continuance | Normative |
|-------------------|-------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| Male | Means | 24.97 | 30.24 | 27.86 |
| | SD | 7.44 | 8.06 | 6.67 |
| Female | Means | 26.25 | 30.49 | 28.63 |
| | SD | 7.32 | 7.41 | 6.58 |
| Age | | Affective | Continuance | Normative |
| Young | Means | 24.52 | 29.77 | 27.61 |
| | SD | 7.25 | 7.59 | 6.55 |
| Old | Means | 26.32 | 30.92 | 28.60 |
| | SD | 7.41 | 7.63 | 6.66 |
| Length of Service | | Affective | Continuance | Normative |
| < 1 Year | Means | 24.81 | 28.13 | 28.16 |
| | SD | 7.23 | 7.69 | 6.72 |
| 1 - 3 Years | Means | 25.17 | 31.06 | 28.32 |
| | SD | 7.54 | 7.85 | 6.29 |
| 4 - 5 Years | Means | 26.36 | 32.21 | 27.73 |
| | SD | 7.14 | 5.93 | 7.35 |
| 6 - 7 Years | Means | 24.00 | 33.33 | 27.33 |
| | SD | 7.21 | 8.08 | 9.50 |
| 8 - 9 Years | Means | 33.67 | 35.00 | 27.33 |
| | SD | 7.37 | 8.89 | 2.08 |
| Education | | Affective | Continuance | Normative |
| Secondary | Means | 24.83 | 29.37 | 28.06 |
| | SD | 6.98 | 7.56 | 7.11 |
| ND/NCE/TC | Means | 26.09 | 30.46 | 27.52 |
| | SD | 8.31 | 7.83 | 6.48 |
| HND | Means | 26.87 | 30.84 | 28.58 |
| | SD | 8.38 | 8.18 | 5.34 |
| Bachelors | Means | 23.68 | 33.26 | 28.47 |
| | SD | 4.82 | 5.67 | 7.16 |
| Marital Status | | Affective | Continuance | Normative |
| Single | Means | 25.30 | 29.70 | 28.34 |
| | SD | 7.49 | 7.65 | 6.70 |
| Married | Means | 25.72 | 32.46 | 27.33 |
| | SD | 6.99 | 7.13 | 6.26 |

Table 6: Summary Table of One-Way MANOVA for Employees' Demographic Characteristics on Organisational Commitment

| Source | DV | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | p |
|--------|-------------|----------------|----|-------------|-----|-------------------|
| Gender | Affective | 240.5 | 1 | 240.50 | 4.6 | .03* |
| | Continuance | 10.0 | 1 | 10.0 | .17 | .68 ^{NS} |
| | Normative | 10.4 | 1 | 10.43 | .24 | .63 ^{NS} |
| Ages | Affective | 313.8 | 1 | 313.78 | 6.0 | .02* |
| | Continuance | 6.1 | 1 | 6.13 | .11 | .75 ^{NS} |
| | Normative | 22.6 | 1 | 22.61 | .51 | .48 ^{NS} |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|--------|---|-------|-----|-------------------|
| Length of Service | Affective | 399.7 | 4 | 99.92 | 1.9 | .11 ^{NS} |
| | Continuance | 353.77 | 4 | 88.44 | 1.5 | .20 ^{NS} |
| | Normative | 155.71 | 4 | 38.93 | .88 | .48 ^{NS} |
| Education | Affective | 82.23 | 2 | 41.11 | .79 | .46 ^{NS} |
| | Continuance | 126.17 | 2 | 63.09 | 1.1 | .34 ^{NS} |
| | Normative | 124.46 | 2 | 62.23 | 1.4 | .25 ^{NS} |
| Marital Status | Affective | 6.84 | 1 | 6.84 | .13 | .72 ^{NS} |
| | Continuance | 67.55 | 1 | 67.55 | 1.2 | .28 ^{NS} |
| | Normative | 47.23 | 1 | 47.23 | 1.1 | .30 ^{NS} |

p < .05, * = significant, ^{NS} = Not Significant

The One-Way MANOVA results on the differences between gender, normative and continuance commitment revealed no statistically significant differences ($F = .24, p = .63$; $F = .17, p = .68$). On the other hand, gender and affective commitment indicated a statistically significant difference ($F = 4.59, p = .34$). The means and standard deviations obtained for gender revealed that males scored higher on the continuance and normative commitment while females scored higher on the affective dimension (Table 5).

On age, the results indicated no statistically significant difference between older and younger employees on normative commitment ($F = .51, p = .48$) and continuance commitment ($F = 0.105, p = 0.747$). However, statistically significant differences existed in affective dimension ($F = 5.987, p = 0.016$). The means and standard deviations obtained for age revealed that older employees scored higher on the three dimensions of organisational commitment (Table 5).

The results of length of service, educational qualifications and marital status all revealed no statistically significant differences across the three dimensions of organisational commitment ($F = 1.91, p = .11$; $F = 1.51, p = .20$; $F = .88, p = .48$; $F = .79, p = .46$; $F = 1.08, p = .34$; $F = 1.40, p = .25$; $F = .13, p = .72$; $F = .16, p = .28$; $F = 1.06, p = .30$).

5. Discussion

The study examined the extent some selected demographic characteristics (i.e. gender, age, length of service, educational qualification and marital status) and organisational characteristics (i.e. job-related tension and job characteristics) influence the commitment level of SME employees in Nigeria. Therefore, the discussion is based on the tested hypotheses that guided the study as well as the various assumptions made.

Hypothesis I, which predicted that SME employees' level of organisational commitment (on the three dimensions) will be statistically significantly different with their level of job-related tension, was rejected. Organisational commitment, on the three dimensions, was found not to be statistically significantly different among employees who reported high level of job tension and those who reported low level of job tension ($F = 3.36, p > .05$, $F = .30, p > .05$, $F = .20, p > .05$). The result implies that employees, irrespective of their level of job tension, could be committed to their organisations. The results contradicts the findings of [31] who reported that

employees who perceive their job roles to be clearly delineated and show less tension are more likely to exhibit higher levels of affective and normative commitment. However, the means obtained from the study, showed that employees who reported low level of job tension ($M = 27.25, 28.52$) were more affectively and normatively committed than those who reported high level of job tension ($M = 24.84, 27.99$) thus corroborating the findings of [31].

For the second hypothesis which states that SME employees' level of organisational commitment (on the three dimensions) will be statistically significantly different from their perceived level of job characteristics was only partially accepted for the continuance commitment, and rejected for both the affective and normative dimensions of organisational commitment. Job characteristics was found not to be statistically significantly different among employees who reported positive perception of their job characteristics and those who reported negative perception on the affective commitment ($F = .12, p > .05$) and the normative commitment ($F = .01, p > .05$). However, a significant difference was found between employees who reported positive perception of job characteristics and those that reported negative perception ($F = 4.34, p < .05$). On the continuance dimension, those with negative perception ($M = 31.45$) showed better commitment than their counterparts with positive perception ($M = 29.06$).

A possible explanation for this result is that employees with negative perception may be those who merely remain, not because of their belief or likeness for the organisation but, because of the benefit they receive through remuneration or other like benefits. These employees may also have career investment or a need to acquire skills in their respective SMEs. They thereby remain committed to the organisation because "they need to [41]. This result accords with earlier findings by [26] and [27] who reported significant positive relationship between job characteristics and continuance commitment.

In line with previous studies, hypothesis III which states that older employees will be statistically significantly different on the three dimensions of organisational commitment than their younger counterparts was found to be significantly different in affective commitment ($F = 5.99, p < .05$). This shows that older employees ($M = 26.32$) are more committed (on the affective dimension) than their younger colleagues ($M = 24.52$). This result corroborates with earlier findings by [29], [19], [26] who reported that older employees score higher in affective commitment. However, no significant differences were found in continuance ($F = .12, p > .05$) and normative ($F = .51, p > .05$) commitment. A further perusal of these results show that older employees ($M = 30.92, 28.59$) scored more than their younger colleagues ($M = 29.77, 27.61$) indicating that, though not statistically significant, the older employees are more committed than younger employees. A possible explanation for this trend could be that, older employees in the SME sector have settled down to their fate of being employed in such enterprises while the younger employees may be aiming for better employment or higher educational pursuit, as a result, younger employees do not show as much commitment as their older colleagues.

Hypothesis IV which states that female employees will be statistically significantly different on the three dimensions of organisational commitment than their male counterparts was rejected. No statistically significant differences was found between male and female employees in the continuance ($F = .17, p > .05$) and normative ($F = .235, p > .05$) dimensions of organisational commitment. This finding corroborates those of [21], [35] who found gender not to be a factor that influences organisational commitment.

However, the mean scores for gender on the continuance and normative dimensions of organisational commitment show that females ($M = 30.49, 28.63$) scored higher than males ($M = 30.24, 27.86$). On gender and the affective dimension of organisational commitment, it was found that a statistical significant difference exists between males and females ($F = 4.589, p > .05$). A further perusal of the data showed that females ($M = 26.25$) scored higher than males ($M = 24.97$) in affective commitment. This finding gives credence to findings to previous studies [20], [19] which found females to be more committed than males in the affective dimension. A possible explanation for this is that females, generally, had to overcome more barriers than males in securing employment.

Findings on the last three hypotheses on tenure, educational qualifications and marital status all showed no statistical significant differences across the three dimensions of organisational commitment. Employees, based on four categories of tenure (1-3 years, 4-5 years, 6-7 years and 8-9 years) showed no statistical significant difference in the three dimensions of organisational commitment ($F = 1.91, p > .05$, $F = 1.51, p > .05$, $F = .88, p > .05$). Similarly, employees' educational qualifications, based on four categories (Secondary Education, ND/NCE/TC, HND and Bachelors Degree) also showed no significant statistical differences on the three dimensions of organisational commitment ($F = .79, p > .05$, $F = 1.08, p > .05$, $F = 1.40, p > .05$). However, the mean scores obtained show some interesting outcomes. Employees in the two middle educational qualifications of ND/NCE/TC and HND scored higher in virtually all the three dimensions than their Secondary and Bachelors Degree counterparts (Table 5). A possible explanation for this could be that the ND/NCE/TC and HND employees viewed their chances of overcoming the barriers of better employment opportunities or higher educational qualifications, to be narrower than those of their Secondary Education and Bachelors Degree counterparts in Nigeria; hence, their higher level of commitment. Furthermore, it was only in the continuance dimension that the Bachelors Degree employees scored higher, thus indicating that this category of employees may only be committed to their organisations merely because "they need to" [41] This finding partially confirms continuance dimension of organisational commitment which view continuance commitment as the cognitive attachment between employees and their organisations because the cost of leaving the organisation outweighs the benefits.

Finally, marital status of employees was found not to be statistically significantly different on all three dimensions of organisational commitment ($F = .13, p > .05$, $F = 1.15, p > .05$, $F = 1.06, p > .05$). These findings did not support earlier findings by [8] who suggested that organisational

commitment increases with family life cycle status (ranging from bachelor to married with children). A possible explanation for this outcome is that most of the employees who participated in the study may have been newly married based on the study's mean age of 24.9 years. As a result, the attendant responsibilities of marriage (e.g. child rearing) may not be too intense for them to view themselves as having too much responsibilities and greater financial burden than their single counterparts.

5.1 Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have great implications for managers of organisations, government policy makers and the academia at large. Firstly, it provided managers of organisations, especially those in the SME sector, with data that could enhance their recruitment practices. Secondly, for government policy makers, this study will serve as evidence for analysing some inherent characteristics existing within employees of SMEs in Nigeria. Finally, the study serves as a veritable source of literature and data on the three dimensions of organisational commitment, as being propagated by Allen and Meyer.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

Despite the cross-cultural knowledge proffered by this study on the antecedents of employee's organisational commitment, caution in interpreting the result is warranted since there are limitations in the study's findings. First, although organisational commitment is now, more being viewed as containing three distinct constructs, the study was unable to generalize most of its findings on the single construct of organisational commitment. This may have been an easier way of explaining the findings. Furthermore, this study was unable to relatively balance the samples across the independent variables especially those of marital status and gender of the participants. This may have influenced the results thereby making the study's generalization prone to errors. Thirdly, the negative attitudes exhibited by employees of SMEs towards behavioural surveys leaves the future of behavioural research in Nigeria in danger. Most employees who were approached showed aversion towards the researchers' intentions. This really affected the intended sample for the study. Also, this study was unable to include several antecedents of organisational commitment as part of the independent variables. Some identified antecedent in Western studies not included in this study include retention factors, work-life policies, alternative job opportunity, employee-leader relations, employee perception of organisation, career stage, career opportunity, corporate culture, organisational values, turnover intentions among others. Finally, generalization of results in this study across Nigeria may be biased as participants were predominantly Igbos and residing mainly in Imo State. A wider spread of sampling may make the study more acceptable for generalization in Nigeria.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Studies

With increasing interest in the activities of SMEs in Nigeria, future research on organisational psychology should focus more on this sector. This is because evidence on the

relevance of SMEs in the development of the Nations industrial base abound. Also, future studies should try to replicate this study in other sectors of the Nigerian industrial/organisational base. This would increase the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, efforts should be made in future studies to use heterogeneous samples (i.e. people of different tribes and residents in Nigeria) as this would increase the generalizability of studies.

Finally, more antecedents of organisational commitment should be included in such studies as there are several others yet to be studied in Nigeria. Examples of these include alternative job opportunity, employee-leader relations, employee perception of organisation, career stage, corporate culture, turnover intentions among others.

5.4 Summary/Conclusion

The study examined some antecedents of organisational commitment among SME employees in Nigeria. The participants were made up of one hundred and seventy-four participants drawn from 14 Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (11 service and 3 manufacturing organisations) in Imo State of Nigeria. Three measures employed in the study included Job-related Tension Inventory (JT), Job Characteristics Scale (JCS) and the three dimensional Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). Based on the seven hypotheses postulated, it was ascertained through the One-Way MANOVA that three of the hypotheses were significant only in the affective and continuance dimensions of organisational commitment.

Age and gender were significant only in the Affective dimension while perceived job characteristics were significant only in the continuance dimension. The study recommended, based on the results, theoretical and practical implications aimed at ensuring a guaranteed national development. Also, based on the limitations discovered, several ideas were suggested for future research in organisational commitment and studies on SMEs in Nigeria.

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