

## Perceived Career Development Support and Organizational Commitment among Academic and Non-Academic University Employees

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**Abstract:** Studies have suggested a number of determinants of organizational commitment, but much has not been done about career development as a determinant of commitment, particularly among academic and non-academic employees of tertiary academic institutions. Therefore this study investigated the effects of career development on organizational commitment among academic and non-academic staff of Universities in Nigeria. The study was based on descriptive survey design and employed random sampling technique to draw 678 respondents from the population space. Relevant data was obtained through the structured copies of pretested questionnaires and Pearson correlation technique and multiple linear regressions were used to test the hypotheses. Exception of employment security, significant positive relationship exists between all career development support variables and the three facet of organizational commitment used in this study. Career mentoring made the highest and most significant contribution towards predicting overall organizational commitment for both categories of sample respondents. The implications of this study for career development theory and practice as well as future research were discussed.

**Keywords:** Organizational Commitment, Career Growth, Employment Security

### INTRODUCTION

The world is increasingly globalized and competition in the business environment is ever more tensed by the day. Given these circumstances, most organizations are constantly adopting measures aimed at surviving the onslaught. These measures sometimes lead to radical redesign of business processes, mergers and acquisitions, and other strategies to cope with the dynamic pressures of globalization and competition. At organizational level, the constant procedural and structural adjustments sometimes ignite and re-emphasize the importance of managing people at work, and in particular, the planning and development of their careers [1].

A career is a lifelong process made up of a sequence of activities and related attitudes or behaviors that take place in a person's work life[2]. It is also viewed as: a pattern of work related experiences, such as job positions, jobs duties or activities, work related decisions; and subjective interpretations of work related events, such as work aspirations, expectations, values, needs and feelings about particular work experiences, that span the course of a person's life [3].

Clearly, a career is not just a job, but revolves around a process, an attitude, behavior and a situation in

a person's work life to achieve set career goals. Baruch [2] points out that career is the property of individuals, but for the employed, it is organizations that will plan and manage employee careers. However, during the last few decades the notion that individuals are also responsible to cater to and build their own careers, instead of leaving it entirely to the organization to manage, has received widespread attention[2]. Hence, career development requires initiative from both organizations as well as individuals in order to provide maximum benefit for both.

Career development involves concerted efforts directed towards assessing a worker's potentials, identifying likely career paths for that employee and designing and implementing "various forms of training and experiences to prepare that person for more advanced job. In the description given by Armstrong, [4] organizational career development (OCD) relates to the opportunities provided by the organization to advance an individual's career prospects, such as training and development, challenging assignments, career counseling and employee empowerment.

Organizations must invest in development of workers' career, by so doing employees benefit from improved, more marketable skills, and the organization

benefits from the increased talent of its employees [5], and the increased commitment to achieving organizational goals [5, 6]. Organization's interest in the development of people's career can be perceived as a form of organizational support, and perceived organizational support has been linked to increased organizational commitment [7] which leads to increased job satisfaction and decreased turnover [8].

Consequently, investment in a well-planned career development opportunities ensures increased organizational commitment which according to Allen and Meyer, [9] refers to a strong desire to remain a member of a particular organization, a willingness to exert high levels of efforts on behalf of the organization and a definite belief in and acceptability of the values and goals of the organization [9, 10]. This study thus, attempts to examine the relationship between organizational career development and organizational commitment.

Although the concept of career development and organizational commitment has received a lot of attention in management and organizational behavior literature [8], career development and organizational commitment as it relates to tertiary educational institution in developing economies has not been exhaustively researched. Even in developed economies, the link between career management and organizational commitment in relation to educational institution has only been discussed recently in the literature [11].

The few studies that made the academia their area of concentration narrowly focused on few variables such as turnover intention Chang [12], perceived organizational support Eisenberger et al, [7] and perceived need to reciprocate Yew [13], while omitting other factors and interactions that may be important within the commitment –career development framework. In addition, these studies do not consider the perceived effect of the disparity in the level of affective commitment between academic and non-academic staff in tertiary institutions, whereas this may have far reaching implications for managing tertiary academic institutions. This study examines the effect of career development on organizational commitment of academic and non-academic staff of Nigerian Universities.

Reflecting on organizational commitment and career development of the employees, reports of some researchers [2, 11, 14,] revealed that career development and management has significant influence on organizational commitment. Workers want management to show interest in their career development, which would lead to increased productivity and greater commitment to organizational

goals. In that regards, Tanannenbaum,[15] found a strong positive correlation between commitment and employees' motivation for training.

In fact, Meyer and Allen [9] argued that workers that are exposed to more training opportunities are likely to exhibit higher levels of affective commitment. According to Chang [12], perhaps training should be specifically designed to achieve increased organizational commitment. On the other hand, Salaman et al. [16] emphasized that organizational commitment is a factor of work-related attitudes, and strategic training practices have significant impact on individual effectiveness. When employees believe that their organization is doing a good job in providing training opportunities, they feel that they are concerned with improving on their skill and ability, making them become emotionally attached to their organization. We therefore propose that perceived training development has significant relationship with organizational commitment.

Mentoring is viewed as dynamic relationship aimed at improving competency and supporting growth and productivity while fostering confidence and self-efficacy [17]. Mentoring is defined as a caring and supportive interpersonal relationship between an experienced, more knowledgeable practitioner and a less experienced, less knowledgeable individual.

Eby and Allen [18] conceptualize mentoring as a learning partnership designed to foster individual growth. It is however dependent on the relationship between the mentor and the mentee. One aspect of mentoring relationships is the passing of knowledge from a more-experienced individual (mentor), to a less-experienced individual (protégé)., Ayodeji and Adebayo[19], in their findings from a content analysis study suggest that mentoring facilitate several benefits including welfare, satisfaction, development, progress, feeling rejuvenated in career development, learning how to use new technologies, and becoming aware of business issues, methods, strategies. Therefore, it is our expectation in this study that significant relationship would exists between career mentoring and organizational commitment for tertiary academic institutions.

Similarly, the thought of insecurity for one's job could be frustrating in an environment where retrenchment and termination of appointment and dismissal are rampant. The assurance of Job security is likely to reduce anxiety, motivate good work practices, increase citizenship behavior, and enhance long term commitment. When a worker perceives an organizationas interested in career-oriented development, his/her psychological attachment to the

organization increases [20]. This study therefore examines the association between perceived career development practices and organizational commitment.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study addressed issues relating to the following pertinent questions.

- i. Does perceived training effectiveness influence organizational commitment?
- ii. Is perceived career mentorship related to organizational commitment?
- iii. Is there any significant relationship between perceived employment security and organizational commitment?
- iv. To what extent are perceived career development variables predictors of organizational commitment?

### RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were tested in the course of this study

**H1:** Perceived training and skill development has no significant relationship with organizational commitment.

**H2:** Perceived career mentorship is not related to organizational commitment.

**H3:** There is no significant relationship between perceived employment security and organizational commitment.

**H4:** Career development variables (*training and skill development, career mentoring, and employment security*) would make no significant contributions towards predicting organizational commitment.

### METHODOLOGY

#### Population and sample size

The population of this study was made up of all academic staff and non-academic staff of all Federal Universities in South-South region of Nigeria. A simple random sampling was used to select 2,400 staff from the five conventional Federal Universities in the region. A list of registered members of academic staff union of universities (ASUU) and non-academic staff union of universities (NASUU) in each university provided the sample frame from where sampling procedure was carried out. The study participants were employed in a variety of roles, which ranged from managerial functions to a variety of academic and administrative duties. Out of the 2400 participants that collected copies of survey questionnaire from the ASUU and NASUU offices, 678 had their questionnaire appropriately filled and return within schedule time, yielding a 28.3% return rate.

#### Instrumentation and Measurement

The structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data for the study. The questionnaire

titled: "Career Development and Organizational Commitment Questionnaire" was designed to capture the dependent and independent variables, as well as to provide answers to the research questions. It was designed to measure the extent of employee commitment to the organization given a set of perceived career development support practices and actions from management of their Universities. The instrument consisted of thirty four (34) closed-ended items scored along the 5-point Likert scale statements ranging from strongly agreed=5 to strongly disagree=1.

#### Organizational Commitment

This was taken as the dependent variable and consisted of fifteen (15) items measured by a 5-point Likert-scale with anchors labeled (1=strongly disagree, and 5=strongly agree). Items measuring organizational commitment were taken from the famous "Organizational Commitment Questionnaire" (OCQ) originally designed by Mowday, Steers and Porter cited in behavioral studies such as Harold and Perry [10], Meyer and Allen [9], Aborishade and Obioha [21], and Yew, [13]. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire measures the three dimensions of organizational commitment—*affective, continuance and normative commitment*. The author of this instrument has reported a reliability coefficient of 0.85 which according to Sekaran, [22] is an acceptable rate for internal consistency and reliability.

#### Career Development

This independent variable was operationalized on the basis of four dimensions of organizational support practices: *career mentorship, training and skill development, and employment security*. Questions were designed to elicit information from the respondents about the level of interest the organization shows in workers career development. Upon thorough review of literature, Career mentoring was measured with seven items derived with slight modification from Chang, [12]. The validity and uni-dimensionality of this scale has been substantiated by researchers such as Shore and Wayne [23] and Kelechi and Ihuma, [24]. A sample of item is "I have been assigned to a mentor who gives direction in matters concerning my progress in this department". The authors Cronbach's alpha value was 0.82. Items in the scale were measured by using a 5-point Likert scale ('1' strongly disagree to '5' strongly agree).

Training and skill development variable was measured with 6 items adapted from Okereke, Igboke and Nnenna, [25]. Some samples of item on this scale are: "People who succeed in their career have undergone one or more training programs organized by the University". Concerning the reliability of the

instrument, Okereke et al, [25] reported alpha coefficient of 0.78.

Career Mentoring was measured with 7 items derived with slight modification from Chang, [12]. A sample of item in the career mentoring instrument is "I have been assigned to a mentor who gives direction in matters concerning my progress in this Department". The authors' Cronbach alpha value was 0.82. Items in the scale were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ('1' strongly disagree to '5' strongly agree).

The variable "Employment Security" was measured using scales designed by Bambacas and Bordia, [2]. It consists of 5 items scored using the 5 point Likert scale where 1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree.

### Instrument Validation

A number of steps were taken to ensure reliability and validity of the instrument used in this

study. Firstly, the items selected for the survey were obtained from previous empirical studies with readily established validity and reliability as shown in the preceding sections. Secondly, the questionnaire items were checked and adjusted by experts in the field of behavioural sciences before administering on respondents. A pilot survey was conducted on a number of respondents different from the surveyed population, and items on the questionnaire were adjusted to reflect the piloted feedback. Finally, the reliability of data collection instrument was estimated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient; the reliability test was conducted to check for inter-item correlation in each of the variables in the questionnaire and to compare the alpha coefficients with those reported by original authors of the instruments. Table 1 shows the Cronbachreliability coefficient for each variable of study. It ranges from 0.620 to 0.824 indicating a highly reliable instrument for the study according to Hair[26].

**Table: 1 Cronbach Alpha of Scale Items**

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Training and Skill Development	6	0.698
Career Mentoring	7	0.824
Employment Security	5	0.620
Affective Commitment	5	0.745
Continuance Commitment	6	0.643
Normative Commitment	5	0.732

### Statistical Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was carried out on the study variables showing the mean, and standard deviation. Thereafter, correlation analysis was performed to indicate the direction of the relationship between the variables, and analysis of the research model was carried out through multiple regression analysis. This procedure enabled an estimation of the hypothesized relationships among variables of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Correlation Analysis amongst all variables of the study

Pearson's correlation coefficient is calculated to estimate the relationship between all variables. Table 1 demonstrate the association amongst all the independent variables (*training and skill development, career mentoring, and employment security*) and the dependent variables (*affective, continuance and normative*).

Beginning with the academic staff, Table 1 shows a positive relationship between perceived staff training and skill development and affective commitment ( $r = 0.427, p < 0.01$ ), continuance

commitment ( $r = 0.429, p < 0.01$ ), and normative commitment ( $r = 0.360, p < 0.01$ ) respectively. This means that as the institutions increases the chances for further training and skill development, affective, normative, and continuance commitment increases proportionally.

Similarly, positive correlation is noted between perceived career mentorship and all dimensions of organizational commitment. For instance, mentorship correlate positively with affective commitment ( $r = 0.384, p < 0.01$ ), continuance commitment ( $r = 0.615, p < 0.01$ ), and normative commitment ( $r = 0.430, p < 0.01$ ). This implies that as academic staff perceived increased mentoring effort in their work role, there is likely to be a corresponding increase in all measures of organizational commitment.

However, no significant association exist between employment security( $r = 0.102, p > 0.01$ ) with affective commitment implying that increase or decrease of employment security has no significant effect on affective commitment of academic staff. On the other hand significant relationship exist between employment security and continuance commitment ( $r =$

0.229,  $p < 0.01$ ), and normative commitment ( $r = 0.203$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) amongst academic staff. This implies that members of academic staffs are willing to remain committed as long as there are some material benefits to

gain from the organization, and they are likely to show commitment as a feeling of moral obligation to continue with the organization since job security is guaranteed.

**Table 1: Correlation analysis of all variables for academic staff**

	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Training and skill development	1.00					
2.	Career Mentorship	.478**	1.00				
3.	Employment Security	.224**	.464**	1.00			
4.	Affective Commitment	.427**	.384**	.105	1.00		
5.	Continuance Commitment	.429**	.615**	.229**	.613**	1.00	
6.	Normative Commitment	.360**	.430**	.203**	.527**	.691**	1.00
	Mean	25.06	25.24	20.49	17.25	21.37	23.80
	Standard Deviation	3.206	6.499	3.121	2.493	2.294	3.943

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) i.e,  $p < 0.01$

In the case of the non- academic staff, Table 2 shows significant positive correlation exist between training and skill development and affective commitment ( $r = 0.438$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), continuance commitment ( $r = 0.179$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and normative commitment ( $r = 0.204$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). In the same vein, career mentorship correlate positively with affective commitment ( $r = 0.205$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), continuance commitment ( $r = 0.359$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and normative commitment ( $r = 0.300$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Again, no significant relationship exist between employment security of non- academic staff with affective commitment ( $r = 0.074$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ), and normative commitment ( $r = 0.076$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ). But relationship between employment security and continuance commitment is positive ( $r = 0.236$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). On the basis of the above results, hypotheses 1 and 2 are wholly rejected while hypothesis 3 is partially accepted.

**Table 2: Correlation analysis of all variables for non-academic staff**

	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Training and skill Development	1.00					
2.	Career Mentorship	.236**	1.00				
3.	Employment Security	.308**	.400**	1.00			
4.	Affective Commitment	.438**	.205**	.074	1.00		
5.	Continuance Commitment	.179**	.359**	.236**	.613**	1.00	
6.	Normative Commitment	.204**	.300**	.076	.527**	.691**	1.00
	Mean	23.91	20.90	18.72	16.82	20.11	21.33
	Standard Deviation	3.373	6.290	2.868	2.621	2.321	3.942

Note: Mean scores were assessed on a 5-point scale, \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) i.e,  $p < 0.01$

### Multiple Regression Analysis of all Variables

Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to estimate the magnitude of relationship between the study variables, and to determine the relative contribution of independent variables towards

predicting change in the dependent variable. Tables 3 and 4. show the summary of results of multiple regression analysis for academic and non-academic staff respectively.

**Table 3: Summary of linear regression analysis for academic staff**

Variable	Beta Estimate	Std. Error	T	Sig
(Constant)		5.378	4.552	.000
Training & Development	.182	.182	2.716	.007
Career Mentoring	.234	.119	2.641	.009
Employment Security	-.039	.228	-.596	.552
R	.667			
R <sup>2</sup>	.445			
Adjusted. R <sup>2</sup>	.432			
Standard Error	6.57431			
D-Watson	1.688			
F Value	33.742			

**Dependent Variable (Organizational Commitment)**

Table 3 shows that the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 66.7% while the adjusted  $R^2$  is 44.5% implying that 66.7% of the variation in commitment of academic staff can be explained by overall career development variables. The overall fit of the model is good given an F-statistics of 33.742 at 5% critical level. As shown by the regression results, two of the three dimensions of career development (career mentoring, and staff training and skill development) were significant in predicting organizational commitment of academic staff of universities. However, career mentoring (Beta= 0.234;  $t= 2.641$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) made the highest contribution towards predicting organizational commitment.

This finding is similar to Gartner and Nollen, [20] which found that internal training, pay and promotion opportunities, and organizational support has positive relationship with organizational commitment. The findings also support the view from the hospitality industry where Greenhaus *et al.* [3] concluded that career counseling, mentorship, and interpersonal communication with work supervisor had significant relationship with employee's level of commitment. The finding also corroborates Bambacas and Bordia's [2] study which found that organizational career development (OCD) practices were positively related to employee perceptions and the three components of commitment (affective, continuance, and normative).

**Table 4: Summary of linear regression analysis for non-academic staff**

Variable	Beta Estimate	Std. Error	T	Sig
(Constant)		4.972	5.236	.000
Training & Development	.180	.171	2.657	.009
Career Growth and Counseling	.173	.099	2.358	.020
Internal Promotion	.447	.219	6.048	.000
Employment Security	-.148	.240	-1.990	.048
R	.561			
$R^2$	.315			
Adjusted. $R^2$	.298			
Standard Error	7.11126			
D-Watson	1.865			
F Value	19.393			

Dependent Variable (Organisational Commitment)

Table 4 shows that the coefficient of determination  $R^2$  is 31.5% while the adjusted  $R^2$  is 29.8% showing that only 31.5% of the variation in organizational commitment exhibited by non-teaching staff can be explained by career management variables. Furthermore, the overall fit of the model as shown by F-statistics is 19.393 at 5% critical level.

Table 4 also shows that internal promotion (Beta= 0.447;  $t=6.048$ ;  $p< 0.01$ ), and training and development (Beta= .180;  $t= 2.657$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) were the two significant contributing variables toward predicting organizational commitment. It can be observed that job security made no significant contribution towards predicting organizational commitment of the non-teaching staff. Hypotheses five stated that career development variables (*training and skill development, career counseling, internal promotion opportunities, and employment security*) would make no significant contributions towards predicting overall organizational commitment.

The position of this study also find further support from Sturges *et al.*, [27]'s submission that career counseling is essential and may therefore enable an individual to discover occupations that satisfy his needs.

It is also consistent with which found positive relationship between career counseling and mentorship and job involvement, and employee commitment.

In addition, this study found that employment security has no significant correlation with affective commitment for both teaching and non-teaching staff. It can be inferred that a strong desire to identify with organizations' goals and to remain a member of one's organization has little or nothing to do with the promise of job security. Thus, employment security does not automatically imply organizational commitment. This is consistent with Hancer and George's [28] findings in restaurants, although it contradicts Rad and Yarmohammadian's [29] study in Iranian hospitals, and disagrees with Odegbemi's study [30] of University teachers. This could suggest that employment security may not likely be an essential career development strategy to drive organizational commitment in technically inclined tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Consequently, future empirical research should examine reasons for this development.

**CONCLUSION**

The present research offered an opportunity to uncover a commitment-career development relationship

by taking a comparison of commitment levels of two kinds of employees. The study concludes that significant relationship exist between training and skill development, career mentoring and organizational commitment in both sample studied. In other words, achieving a high level of affective, continuance and normative commitment actually depend on the type of assistance organizations offered individuals in their career development effort. Career development opportunities have been shown to result in higher levels of commitment among the employees. In more specific terms, association between career development and organizational commitment variables was stronger among teaching staff sample than the non- teaching staff. Thus, confirming the earlier expectation of this study.

In addition, an outstanding twist was established as this study found employment security not to be a clear and suitable indicator of organizational commitment among the two categories of University employees. Thus, University staffs have indicated their willingness to stay with their institutions and contribute towards achieving its grand purpose irrespective of whether the security of their job is guaranteed or not.

There are clear implications of the findings to the management of commitment among tertiary institution in Nigeria. Recruiting good employees is not enough. It is equally important that their level of commitment is built and enhanced with right kinds of career development policies. The development of employee career through favourable organizational support can be usefully considered in order to foster high commitment in the face of challenges brought about by globalised environment.

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