



Is Psychological Contract Related to Organizational Commitment? A Study of Civil Servants in Rivers State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

Organizations are hopeful for employees that are committed to the cause of the organization, and employees on the other hand seek for organizations that help in fulfilling their contracts in making them better in a symbiotic relationship. The present study investigated the relationship between psychological contract and organizational commitment. A total of 242 employees working in Rivers State civil service commission were conveniently sampled for the study. Study data was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. We found a positive relationship between psychological contract and organizational commitment ($r = .27, p < .05$). The study added to the social exchange theory which posited that employees hold an obligation to fulfill to an organization in appreciation for the benefit received from the organization. Study implications were highlighted, and suggestions for further studies stated.

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Introduction

Organizations projects having employees that are within the frame of actualizing their goals; as such, organizations seek for employees committed to their growth and development. Commitment of employees to the growth of organizations have their positive effect on the organization; hence, organizational commitment is an important element in the work environment. Organizational commitment highlights the situation by which employees are in compliance with the aims and objectives of the organization, principles within the organization, the rules and norms, as well as behaviours that ensure the survival of the organization (Dominic & Salim, 2018). Xerri and Brunetto (2013) stated that in organizational commitment, employees accept and align with an organization, as well as engage in behaviours aimed towards achieving organizational goals.

Such commitment according to Meyer and Allen (1984) occur in 3 forms, which are affective, normative and continuance commitment. Affective commitment highlights forming emotional attachment with the organization, while projecting it through behaviours; normative commitment highlights feelings of being responsible and accountable for the organization; continuance commitment highlights perception of loss in evaluation of intention to leave the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1984). Thus, commitment to the organization cuts across duty of responsibility, duty of attachment, and duty of being part of the organization. Employees tend to be committed to their organization, through emotional attachment, when it is perceived that the organization is providing opportunity for growth, development in careers, and skill improvement through skill trainings and workshops (Anggraeni, et al., 2017).

Such perception tilts towards achieving both organizational and personal goals, and work environment that ensures the welfare of employees are put into consideration; thus, employees would be more committed to the progress of the organization through positive organizational behaviour. Furthermore, higher perception of organizational commitment facilitates employees' need to remain in the organization, achieve organizational goals, and improve on their performances (Almeida et al., 2017). Also, it leads to higher levels of connection with the organization, feelings of being part of the organization, being satisfied with jobs, reduces the level of burnout, and limits the amount of absenteeism among employees (Almeida et al., 2017). With this, it is pertinent to understand the dynamics of organizational commitment

Demir et al. (2009) opined that being recognized at work, work environment, support from supervisors, the amount of workload, style of leadership in the organization, as well as characteristics of the individual and job are the factors that fosters the commitment of employees to the organization. Job characteristics, such as the psychological contract may also be a factor that influences employees' organizational commitment, with the perception of fulfilment of organizational contract leading to organizational commitment (Rousseau et al., 2018). Such idea is based on the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) which posits that two parties are obligated to each other in an interdependent interaction, such that one party shows a positive attitude and behaviour in appreciation for the resources and value they benefit from the other party (Mitchell et al., 2012).

Psychological contract explains the belief an employee has in line with the benefits and obligations established for an employer and an employee in an exchange relationship (Aranda et al., 2018), and this is proposed to influence how employees act towards the organization (Fantinelli et al., 2023). Thus, a contract between an employer and employee is established, and the fulfilment of such contract by the employer influences positive attitudes and behaviours of the employees towards the organization. Expanding on this, the perception of the employee on the fulfilment of the aspects of job contract by the employer trigger higher levels of connection towards the organization (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014). Similarly, employees' extra role behaviours (e.g. organizational commitment) is activated when employers act towards fulfilling their expectations in the work environment (Panaccio et al., 2015). In addition, Chordiya et al. (2017) posited that a positive reciprocal behaviour in terms of stronger emotional commitment towards the organization surfaces in the event that employees perceive that they are being cared for, they are satisfied with remuneration, security of job, level of autonomy, and level of career advancement.

However, literature has showed the link between psychological contract and organizational commitment. Revealing this, Zhou et al. (2014) showed that the dimensions of psychological contract was related to

organizational commitment. Also, Sharma et al. (2019) found a positive impact of psychological contract on organizational commitment. More so, Peng and Li (2021) revealed that relational psychological contract influenced organizational commitment. Notwithstanding these studies, there is dearth of researches linking psychological contract on organizational commitment in the Nigerian sample.

It is paramount to unravel this, as large number of employees seem not to perceive the fulfilment of work contract, especially in Nigerian civil services; thus, the commitment of employees may not fully be accounted for, leading to high level of absenteeism, and need for career adjustment and advancements in civil services. Nigerian studies linking psychological contract with organizational commitment (e.g. Opara, 2016; Usanga, 2020) have all been conducted on employees in private sectors, such as, banking sector and private university respectively. Due to the competitions among private firms, there is bound to be fulfilment of psychological contract on the platform of creating a good brand image. However, government in Nigeria are less motivated to fulfil the contract of workers in their respective parastatals. Thus, it is important to explore how the perception in the fulfilment of psychological contract among employees working in civil service in Nigeria influences organizational commitment.

Hypothesis: *There will be significant relationship between psychological contract and organizational commitment.*

Method

Participants and Procedure

A total of 242 employees working under the Rivers State civil service commission were sampled for the study in a cross sectional survey design. These participants were sampled across three government ministries, out of the six government ministries, in a population of 967 employees (Sylva & Comfort, 2017). These ministries were selected randomly, and they include ministry of education, ministry of environment, and ministry of transport. Response return rate is at 41.79%, as 579 questionnaires were administered, and only 242 were part of the final study. Participants' grade level ranged from grade level 7 to 15, and their age ranged from 18 to 60. They comprised of 125 males, 117 females, and 47 were single, 185 were married, 5 were divorced, and 5 were widowed. Participants were conveniently approached in their different parastatals, and consents to participate in the study was sought through consent forms, after study approval was granted by the ethics and research committee, Rivers State Research Board. Participants were also assured of the confidentiality of study data, and were encouraged to be objective in their responses, and were given study questionnaires afterwards.

Instruments

Psychological Contract was assessed with the 16-item Millward and Hopkins (1998) Psychological contract scale. The scale was designed to assess two dimensions of psychological contract; transactional and relational contract. However, the scale also has items covering *perceived balanced obligation* and *development of the contract*. Each participant responded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – Strongly disagree to 5 – Strongly Agree. Some of the items in the scale include: “I am uncertain of the duration of years I am willing to spend in the organization, due to employers' commitment”, “The job I do is strictly for the money”, “The organization work hard to keep her obligations, such that workers are ready to work for a very long time or till retirement”. The internal consistency of the scale for the present study is at Cronbach's alpha .82

Organizational Commitment was assessed with the Mowday et al. (1979) 15-item Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. The questionnaire assesses employees' commitment to the organization in three dimensions; willingness to exert effort, desire to maintain membership in the organization and acceptance of organizational values. Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – Strongly disagree to 5 – Strongly agree. Some of the items in the scale include “I am ready to put a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help the organization be successful”, “I feel very little loyalty to this organization”, “It would take me very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave the organization”. The internal consistency of the scale for the present study is at Cronbach's alpha .87

Method of Data Analysis

Pearson Product Moment correlation was used to analyze study data. According to Leard Statistics (2018), Pearson Product Moment Correlation is a statistical tool that measures the strength in linear association between two variables.

Results

Table 1: Respondents' Socio-demographics (N = 242)

Category	Level	N(%)
Name of organization	River state civil service	242(100)
Ministry	Environment	62(25.8)
	Education	112(46.2)
	Transport	68(28.0)
Position	Level 15	29(11.8)
	Level 14	33(13.6)
	Level 13	8(3.2)
	Level 12	109(45.2)
	Level 10	47(19.4)
	Level 9	3(1.1)
	Level 8	10(4.3)
	Level 7	3(1.1)
Gender	Male	125(51.6)
	Female	117(48.4)
Age	18-25	3(1.1)
	26-40	81(33.3)
	41-60	158(65.6)
Marital status	Single	47(19.4)
	Married	185(76.3)
	Divorced	5(2.2)
	Widowed	5(2.2)
Educational level	BSc	117(48.4)
	MSc	117(48.4)
	OND	8(3.2)
Years in service	0-5 years	5(2.2)
	6-10 years	78(32.3)
	11-15 years	128(52.7)
	16 years and above	31(12.9)

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the relationship between psychological contract and organizational commitment

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Psychological contract	45.06	5.50	-	
2. Organizational commitment	41.61	5.18	.27*	-

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result from the statistical analysis (Table 2), shows that there was a positive significant relationship between psychological contract and organizational commitment ($r = .27, p < .05$). This implies that increase in psychological contract tends to increase organizational commitment.

Discussion

The present study explored the relationship between psychological contract and organizational commitment among civil servants in Rivers State. The study finding showed that there is a positive relationship between the psychological contract and organizational commitment among civil servants in Rivers State. This imply that increase in psychological contract tends to increase organizational commitment. That civil servants perceive that their organization fulfills its promises and obligations towards them, they are more likely to develop a stronger sense of commitment. This includes fulfilling promises related to job security, career development opportunities, fair treatment, recognition, and rewards.

This finding agrees with Waribugo and Dan-Jumbo (2017) who reported that there are moderate and positive correlations among the dimensions of ethical culture and employee productivity. Zhou et al. (2014) found that the fulfillment of knowledge workers' psychological contract contributed to the development of increased organizational commitment which in turn contributed to increased knowledge workers' job satisfaction level. Furthermore, studies have found that when civil servants perceive a breach in their psychological contract, such as unfulfilled promises or unfair treatment, it can lead to reduced levels of organizational commitment (Chinwendu et al., 2021).

This can result in negative outcomes for both the individual and the organization, including decreased job satisfaction, increased turnover intentions, and lower levels of performance. The findings suggest that when civil servants perceive that their organization fulfills its promises and obligations, it leads to higher levels of organizational commitment. Conversely, when there is a breach in the psychological contract, it can result in reduced commitment. Factors such as leadership style and organizational culture play a significant role in shaping this relationship.

Implications of the study

The finding from this study highlights the importance of initiating positive perception of psychological contract among members of civil service, as it helps in fostering commitment among employees in civil service. Government should place more importance on making sure the growth of their employees are achieved, aside the payment of remuneration. Training towards career development path should be initiated, such that the employees perceive they are part of the system and would thus contribute meaningfully to the growth of their respective parastatals through positive work behaviour.

In addition, employees' welfare in the civil service should be made a priority, and a conducive work environment provided for them, as that in turn, draws in perception of being valued, which would trigger emotional and normative commitment. Such commitment shows through increased productivity, increased performance, and increased responsibility. Also, the study adds knowledge to the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which posits that reciprocal positive behaviour is initiated by employees when they perceive that their work environment is beneficial to them in a symbiotic relationship. Adding to this is the notion that when employees are satisfied in their jobs, they offer higher levels of positive work outcome, such as organizational commitment (Cropanzano & Michel, 2005).

Recommendation

To enhance the commitment and performance of civil servants, the study recommends that the Rivers State government prioritize the creation of a supportive organizational culture and adopt a transformational leadership style. Additionally, the study suggests that the government should provide job security, career development opportunities, and supportive supervision to enhance the psychological contract and organizational commitment of civil servants.

Limitations of the Study

Study was limited on the area of study where the sample size was drawn. Only a state's civil service from the federation made up the study population; thus, the study outcome may not be generalized to the population of the civil service across the country. In addition to this, the study did not consider psychological contracts at different levels of civil service and their respective levels of organizational commitment, as commitment to organizations might differ across levels. People in lower levels may be more committed than people in higher levels. Also, personality of employees under the civil service were not accommodated in line with how they influenced organizational commitment. Notwithstanding tendency for perception of fulfilled psychological contract to yield organizational commitment, personality types may influence commitment behaviours.

Future study on this should explore the role of personality in explaining the effect of psychological contract on organizational commitment. Also, future study on this should also explore how different levels in civil service influence the levels of organizational commitment. More so, future study on this should get more representative population, such that the outcome of the study can be generalized to the entire population.

Conclusion

The study's findings highlight the importance of the psychological contract in shaping the employment relationship and organizational commitment of civil servants in Rivers State. It is therefore concluded that that civil servants in Rivers State are having transactional psychological contract and not relational, in the same vein.

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