



Contributions of job characteristics in organizational commitment of police officers in Enugu urban, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Commitment to organizational goals by workers is necessary for the achievement of desired outcomes in any organization. There has been much research on organizational commitment, but little effort has been made to study this issue in the Nigerian police. Building on the theoretical assumptions of the affect model linking job characteristics to organizational commitment, this cross-sectional study investigated the contributions of job characteristics in organizational commitment among police personnel in Enugu urban area of Enugu state, Nigeria. One hundred and ninety (190) police officers, comprising 125 men and 65 women between the ages of 20 to 59 years ($M = 36.83$, $SD = 6.07$) were sampled using multi-stage sampling techniques. The 21-item Job Characteristics Scale and 23-item Organizational Commitment Scale were the measures for data collection. Results of multiple regression revealed that all the dimensions of job characteristics did not equally predict organizational commitment. Specifically, task significance and feedback from agents, independently predicted organizational commitment while the other facets did not significantly predict organizational commitment. Job characteristics accounted for 13.4% of the variance in organizational commitment among officers of the Nigerian police. There is need for policy makers in Nigeria such as the Police Service Commission to consider job characteristics especially task significance and feedback from agents in order to enhance organizational commitment of police officers.

Introduction

In a country like Nigeria which is threatened by crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, human trafficking, political violence and insurgency, the responsibilities of the police only require professionalism but also organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is a psychological link between an employee and his or her organization that makes it less likely that the employee will voluntarily leave the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996), and the extent to which an employee develops an attachment and feels a sense of allegiance to his or her employer (Redmond, 2010). According to Mowday, Steers and Porter (1982), organizational commitment is an employee's strong belief in an organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of an organization and a strong desire to remain a member of the organization. Organizational commitment is the state in which an employee identifies with the organization and its goals and wants to remain a member of that organization (Gautam, Van Dick, & Wagner, 2004). Committed employees in any organization must possess sense of belonging to the organization, sense of excitement in the job, and confidence in management leadership (Mullins, 1999), hence Martins and Nicholls (1999) viewed organizational commitment as encapsulated in the phrase 'giving all of you while at work'. This commitment involves using time constructively, paying attention to details, making extra effort to attain the organizational goals etc.

An important model of organizational commitment is the three-component model (Meyer & Allen, 1997), which upholds that there are three "mind-sets" which characterize

an employee's commitment to the organization namely; affective, continuance and normative commitment. Affective commitment refers to employee's perception of the emotional attachment or identification with the organization. Affective commitment has three factors: individual and organizational value congruence characterizing an employee's belief and in acceptance of organizational goals and values; an obsession for helping organization to achieve its goals; and a definite desire to maintain organizational membership out of choice (Arfat & Riyaz, 2013). Continuance commitment is an attachment to an organization based on an employee's awareness of the costs associated with discontinuing membership (Reza, Jandaghi, Matin, & Dastani, 2010). It is an employee's perception of the cost of leaving the organization to another place. Employees with strong continuance commitment stay with the organization out of self-interest (Alexander, Rani, & Wendy, 2010). Normative commitment may be defined as an obligation to remain with an organization (Buchko, Weinzimmer, & Sergeev, 1998). Normative commitment is the employee's perception of their normal obligation to the organization. It may be the consequence of an internalized norm, developed by the person prior to joining the organization through the values inherent or other socialization processes, that one should be loyal to one's organization (Arfat & Riyaz, 2013). Common to these three approaches is the view that commitment is a psychological state that characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization and has implications for the decision to continue membership of it.

There is divergence of views among researchers in

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Nigeria on organizational commitment of workers, especially those in the public sector (Salami, 2008). Extant literature showed that Nigerian workers in the public sector are not committed to their organizations (Olugbile, 1996), while others reported that the workers are committed to organizational goals but that at times it is the organizations that do not show commitment to the plight of the workers (Alarape & Akinlabi, 2000). This later finding is based on the belief that organizational commitment reflects one side of the reciprocal relationship between the employer and the employees; hence it requires the consideration of job design factors such as job characteristics in work behaviour. Studies (e.g., Al-Tit & Suifan, 2015; Feather & Rauter, 2004; Sadler-Smith, El-Kot, & Leat, 2003; Taghavi & Gholami, 2015; Thirunavukarasu & Sritharan, 2016) have suggested that job design influences attitude, beliefs, and feelings of organization employees. The interest of the researchers in the present study is to examine the contributions of job characteristics in organizational commitment in the Nigerian Police.

Job characteristics are those attributes of job, which have motivational functions for employees (Chiu & Chen, 2005). They are aspects of the individual employee's job and tasks that shape how the individual perceives his/her role in the organization (Oyewobi, Suleiman, & Jamil, 2012). According to Hackman and Oldham's (1976), job characteristics model, the way jobs are perceived tend to impact on three particular psychological states in employees which include: experienced meaningfulness of work (the extent that the work is seen as making a difference to other), felt responsibility (the extent that the worker assumes responsibility for his/her work), and knowledge of results (the extent to which the worker is aware of the quantity of his/her work). The basic model of job design involves job characteristics such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). According to Hackman and Oldham (1976), skill variety is the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work, involving the use of several different skills and talents of the person. It refers to the various skills and talents that are required for jobs to be completed (Kwon & Banks, 2004). Task identity is the degree to which the job requires completion of a whole identifiable piece of work; that is, doing a job from beginning to end with visible outcome. It measures the ability of an employee to perform a specific task that results in an identifiable outcome (Hadi & Adil, 2010).

Task significance is the degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives of other people, whether those people are in the immediate organization or in the world at large. It is employees' feelings toward the impact of a task on the lives of others in an organization or in society (Morris & Venkatesh, 2010). Autonomy is the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedure to be used in carrying it out. Task autonomy represents freedom and independence provided to the employee to make task-related decisions such as work scheduling and procedures selection (Na-Nan & Pukkeeree, 2013). Job feedback is the degree to which carrying out the work activity required by the job provides the individual with direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his/her performance. Skill variety, task identity and task significance shape the experienced meaningfulness; autonomy affects experienced responsibility, and feedback contributes to the knowledge of results (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Hackman and Lawler (1971) suggested that these job characteristics motivate employees in their commitment to the organization and are antecedents for organization to ensure a high level of employees' job satisfaction, hence the need for this study to determine whether job characteristics will predict organizational commitment among a sample of Nigerian Police officers.

Locke's (1976) affect theory is one of the most famous models linking job characteristics to organizational commitment. The main premise of this theory is that commitment is determined by a discrepancy between what one wants in a job and what one has in a job. The theory states that how much value a worker has for a given facet of work (for example, the degree of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback in a job) moderates how committed one becomes when expectations are/ or are not met. When a person values a facet of a job, his commitment is greatly impacted on, both positively (when expectations are met) and negatively (when expectations are not met), compared to one who does not value that facet.

Job characteristics and organizational commitment

Previous studies have demonstrated the link between job characteristics and organizational commitment. Recently, Ujoatuonu, Apex-Apeh and Onu, (2016) found that human factors in the organization such as spirit at work positively predicted organizational commitment. Other studies (e.g., Colarelli, Dean, & Konstans, 1987; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Obi-Nwosu, Joe-Akunne, & Oguebe, 2013; Amiri, Mihasheriu, & Parsamoein, 2013) have shown significant relationships between job characteristics and organizational commitment. For example, skill variety an aspect of job characteristics is ostensible variety and intricacy of skills and talents required by a job to perform it (Buys, Olckers, & Schaap, 2007). Employees who are proficient on the tasks demanded by the job, will perceive the job meaningfully and would be committed performing the job. Sneed and Herman (1990) found job characteristics for supervisory and non-supervisory staff were positively related with organizational commitment. Specifically, skill variety, dealing with others, feedback and autonomy were the significant job characteristics factors in organizational commitment. Steers (1977) also found task identity to be significantly related to organizational commitment.

Earlier Hackman and Lawler (1971) found that job characteristics such as skill variety, task identity, autonomy and feedback motivated employees in their job commitment. Amiri, Mirhashemi and Parsamoein (2013) found significant correlations between the components of job characteristics (autonomy, task identity, feedback and job challenge) and organizational commitment. Among hotel workers in Turkey, interaction, feedback, and autonomy had significant impacts on affective commitment (Ozturck, Hanser, & Im, 2014). Other studies (Bhuiyan, Al-Shammari, & Jefri, 1996; Durham, Grube, & Castaneda, 1994) found that only skill variety and feedback were the aspects of job characteristics that had significant relationships with organizational commitment. Some studies have shown organizational commitment and autonomy to be positively related (Colarelli, Dean, & Konstans, 1987; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

One study reported positive relationships between job characteristics and organizational commitment, such as among university teachers in China (Kang & Liu, 2018). In Nigeria, Obi-Nwosu, Joe-Akunne and Oguebe (2013) found that only two dimensions of job characteristics (dealing with others and task identity) predicted organizational commitment among private sector workers in Anambra state of Nigeria. Comparing organizational commitment and job characteristics among private and public sector managers, Flynn and Tannebaum (1993) found a stronger relationship between job characteristics and organizational commitment among private sector managers than their counterparts in the public sector. Findings have shown that all is not well with the present policing system in Nigeria (e.g., Akinawo, 1994, 1995; Aremu & Idowu, 2001; Aremu & Adeyoju, 2003; Aremu, 1996, 1998), and the overall effect of poor working conditions in the Nigerian police is that police

personnel in Nigeria seem frustrated and helpless, thereby making the citizens to hold the police profession in low esteem. The hypothesis for the present study is that job characteristics will positively predict organizational commitment.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants were 190 personnel of the Nigerian police comprising 125 males and 65 females between the ages of 20 to 59 years ($M = 36.83$; $SD = 6.07$). Using multi-stage sampling technique participants were drawn from three (3) police departments and ten (10) police formations in Enugu urban. Permission for the conduct of the study in Enugu state Police Command was obtained from the Commissioner of Police, Enugu State command. The researchers identified with the Heads of the three Departments and the Divisional Police Officers (DPOs) in each of the selected departments and formations in order to inform them of the study and get their co-operation. The researchers trained officers who served as research assistants in the departments and formations. Copies of the questionnaire were shared to the participants and instructions given. They could go home with the copies and returned them on a later date. Two hundred and eighteen (218) copies (87.2%) of the questionnaire were returned and 28 copies (11.2 %) were discarded due to errors in completion, hence, 190 (76%) copies of the questionnaire were scored and analyzed for hypothesis testing.

Measures

Three scales were used in this study. They include 21-item Job Characteristics Scale (Hackman & Oldham, 1975) and the 23-item Organizational Commitments Scale (Buchanan, 1974).

Job Characteristics Scale

Job characteristics were measured using 21-item Job Characteristics Scale (Hackman & Oldham, 1975) validated for Nigerian use by Omoluabi (2000). The scale has seven subscales measuring seven (7) principal job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, feedback from the job, feedback from agents and dealing with others). Sample items include: ‘The job requires me to use a number of complex or high-level skills’ (skill variety), ‘The job provides me the chance to completely finish the pieces of work I begin’ (task identity), ‘The outcomes of my work can affect other people in very important ways’ (task significance), ‘The job gives me almost complete responsibility for deciding how and when the work is done’ (autonomy), ‘The job is set up so that I get almost constant “feedback” as work, about how well I am doing’ (feedback from job), ‘People almost always let me know how well I am doing on the job’ (feedback from agents), and ‘Dealing with other people is an essential and crucial part of doing job’ (Dealing with others). There are both direct scoring and reverse scoring items. Each of the sub-scales could be scored separately. Ratings were made using 7-point scale, ranging from 1(very inaccurate) to 7 (very accurate) with internal consistency values of .71 (skill variety), .59 (task identity), .66 (task significance), .66 (autonomy), .71 (feedback from the job), .78 (feedback from agents) and .59 (dealing with others) or the seven subscales reported by Hackman and Oldham (1975). Obi-Nwosu, Joe-Akunne, and Oguegbe (2013) in a Nigerian sample reported The following Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients: .72 (skill variety), .50 (task identity) .48 (task significance), .40 (autonomy), .68 (feedback from job), .64 (feedback from agents) and .58 (dealing with others). Obodo, Okonkwo and Aboh (2019) reported Cronbach’s alpha of .54.

Organizational Commitment Scale

Organizational commitment was assessed using 23-item Organizational Commitment Scale (Buchanan, 1974). Sample item reads: ‘If I had my life to live over again, I would still choose to work for this organization’. There are both direct scoring and reverse scoring items. Ratings were made using 7-point scale, ranging from 1(strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) with internal consistency value of .94 (Buchanan, 1974). Using African sample, Gbadamosi (2006) obtained internal consistency alpha reliability coefficients of .73 (affective commitment), .74 (continuance commitment) and .66 (normative commitment). Obi-Nwosu, Joe-Akunne and Oguegbe (2013) in a Nigerian sample reported the following Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients: .65 (affective commitment), .70 (continuance commitment) and .50 (normative commitment). Similarly, Ujoatuonu, Apex-Apeh and Onu (2016) in another Nigerian sample obtained internal consistency Cronbach alpha of .71. The present researchers obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of .76 for the overall organizational commitment.

Results

Table 1: Multiple regression analysis predicting organizational commitment by job characteristics

Model	B	β	t	P
Skill variety	.20	.05	.65	.518
Task identity	.18	.09	1.23	.219
Task significance	.87	.21	2.55	.012
Autonomy	.50	.11	1.57	.114
Feedback from job	.42	.09	1.05	.297
Feedback from agents	.56	.15	1.94	.054
Dealing with others	-.07	-.02	-.22	.824

The Table showed the prediction of organizational commitment by each of the predictor variables (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, feedback from the job, feedback from agents and dealing with others). Task significance and feedback from agents independently and positively predicted organizational commitment with β values of .87 and .56, t values of = 2.55 and 1.94, respectively at $p < .05$. Skill variety, task identity, autonomy, feedback from the job and dealing with others, did not significantly predict organizational commitment. The R^2 value (.134) indicated that the predictor variables (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, feedback from the job, feedback from agents and dealing with others) accounted for 13.4 percent of the variance in organizational commitment, $F = 4.02$, $p < .001$.

Discussion

This study investigated the contributions of job characteristics in organizational commitment among police personnel in Enugu urban area of Enugu state, Nigeria. In partial confirmation of the hypothesis, the findings revealed that only task significance and feedback from agents independently and positively predicted organizational commitment. Police personnel’s commitment to their job was positively associated with the impact of task significance and feedback from agents. When employees were encouraged to perform on the job with the required incentives to achieve goals for both the organization and themselves (task significance) as well as received encouraging information about their performances (feedback from agents), commitment to their organizations increased thereby enhancing employees' sense of attachment to the organization. This shows

that creating conditions that increase both task significance and feedback from agents positively associates with commitment to the organization among Nigerian police officers. The present findings which indicate that task significance and feedback from agents positively predicted organizational commitment have given credence to previous findings (e.g. Herman, 1990; Durham, Grube, & Castenda, 1994) which found job characteristics especially feedback to be positively associated with organizational commitment. This study has made theoretical and practical contributions to existing literature.

First, positive prediction of organizational commitment by task significance and feedback from agents dimensions of job characteristics has to a certain degree given credence to the contributions of job characteristics theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), affect theory (Locke, 1976) and Herzberg (1959) theory to the understanding of the relationship between job characteristics and organizational commitment. Second, the study has paved way for the understanding of the attitude and behavior of personnel of Nigeria Police Force in terms of job characteristics and organizational commitment. These positive predictions of organizational commitment by job characteristics especially task significance and feedback from agents are clear indications of the need to enhance workers' attachment to the organization by designing the work environment in a way that workers will enjoy certain levels of feelings that their jobs positively influence other people's lives within and outside the organization, having clear, specific and detailed knowledge of results while doing the job. The workers will be less likely to voluntarily leave the organization; rather they will likely be loyal and attached to the organization. Considering these, the Nigeria Police Service Commission and other organizations saddled with management of human resources should design jobs to give workers task significance and feedback in order to enhance organizational commitment.

Limitations of the study and suggestions for further Study

Since the sample size represented only police officers in Enugu State Command, generalization of the findings should be done with caution. To this end, future studies in this area should cover other Police Commands in the other states of Nigeria in order to ensure geographical spread. The use of cross-sectional survey and self report could not allow cause-effect relationship. Longitudinal studies and experimentation are likely to provide better data and more robust findings.

Conclusion

Job characteristics especially task significance and feedback from agents positively predicted organizational commitment, hence the need to pay attention to job design in order to enhance organizational commitment among Nigerian Police officers. If the management of the Police Service Commission designs the job of police officers in a way that enhances task significance and feedback from agents, then the desired commitment will be triggered. And this among other factors will help to tackle the high level of crime which is ravaging Nigeria.

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