

Perceived Levels Of Job Involvement As A Predictor Of Withdrawal Behaviours Of Public Service Employees In Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the possibility of predicting the withdrawal behaviours (defined in terms of absenteeism and lateness to work) as an outcome of job dissatisfaction resulting from the perceived low levels of job involvement of public service employees in Abia, Anambra and Imo states of Nigeria. While much research has been conducted on this variable separately, very little has been done in terms of understanding the relationships between job involvement and absenteeism and lateness. 1200 employees drawn from the population of 3600 workers participated in the study. Multiple regression and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were used to analyze the data. Results indicated that the perceived low levels of job involvement acted as predictors of absenteeism $F(3, 1196) = 235.62, p < .001$ and lateness $F(3, 1196) = 313.23, p < .001$ of public service employees in Nigerian work organizations. Results also revealed that the gender had significant influence on absenteeism and lateness with males being more absent than females. Imo state ranked highest both in absenteeism and lateness followed by Abia state and Anambra state came last. The implications of the study for employee orientation and interpersonal relations in the work behaviour were discussed.

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate the possibility of predicating the withdrawal behaviours (defined in terms of absenteeism and lateness to work) as an outcome of job dissatisfaction resulting from the perceived levels

of job involvement of public service employees in three states of Nigeria. The literature indicates that public service organizations globally have, or are in the process of implementing a number of major reforms aimed at emulating not only the practices but also the values of business enterprises. Therefore, Reichhelds (1996) statement that: “Loyalty is by no means dead, remains one of the great engines of business success” is very relevant from the context of the public service. Organizations value job involvement among their employees because it is typically assumed to reduce withdrawal behaviours, such as absenteeism and lateness. Therefore, there is no doubt that the perceived low levels of job involvement appear to have potentially serious consequences for overall organizational performance. Organizations whether public or private had four denominators common to all:- coordination of effort; a common goal; division of labour and the hierarchy of authority. Organizations are the chess board upon which the game of organizational behaviour is played, and this study investigated the behavioural attitudes and their possible predictions on organizational behaviour. The progress of any organization depends largely on the effectiveness and cohesion of its employees. Employees themselves are divided into two categories of high or low performers using social indicator (Brown, 2003). Low performers were defined as problem employees. High performers were defined as non-problem employees. Research in the field of Industrial/Organizational Psychology and Human Resource Management has demonstrated that the performance of problem employees significantly affect the morale, motivation, and the productive capacity of their co-workers, through their failure to apply themselves to statutory duties (Monday, 1998). However, failure to subject oneself to statutory duty is a trait noticeable not only in western world employees’ but also in many workers of many organizations in Nigeria (Odumosu, 1994, Keller, 1997).

Researches had indicated that, there are lots of employees that could be categorized as belonging to the cadre of problem employees, and they constitute over 65% of the work force (Gupia, 1999). The problem employee’s attitude and behaviour at work, significantly testify to their reluctance in the performance of their duties or to their non-performing status. Indeed, commentators on labour matters, researchers, industrial/organizational professionals and other behavioural scientists are of the opinion that absenteeism, loafing and lateness to work, and poor work and/or interference with the work of others may have become a cultural work value of many Nigeria employees’ (Robert 1994). Definitely, these negative attitudes to work significantly lead to poor work output, less commitment,

low job involvement and low performance. This lends support to the assertion that cultural attitudes and values often constitute obstacles to industrialization (Robin 1998). Loafing, gossiping, absenteeism and lateness to work, and other such negative to work attitude are yet to attract stiff penalties in Nigerian work setting, especially in Nigeria, a fact which has led many government employees to believe that there is no “do or die” affair in government work. All these vices do not only affect the performance of the workers engaged in the act but has also led to the lowering of the morale of the hardworking employees who are job involved. The behaviour disposition of the problem employees in their various work organization has been a subject of debate and discussion among the Industrial/Organizational Psychology professionals. Indeed, absenteeism and lateness as employee withdrawal behaviours have been conceptualized from different perspectives by various authors. Arai (2000) stated absenteeism might be due to higher sick-rates of problem employees or as consequence of pro-cyclical sick report incentives. Absenteeism is costly, and managers are constantly on the lookout for ways to reduce it. One recommendation has been to increase job satisfaction. If this is a valid recommendation, there should be a strong negative relationship (or negative correlation) between satisfaction and absenteeism. In other word, as satisfaction increases absenteeism should decrease Gary (1995). Hackett (1989) tracked this prediction by synthesizing three separate meta-analyses containing a total of 74 studies. Results revealed a strong negative relationship between satisfaction and absenteeism. It is likely, therefore, that managers will realize significant decrease in absenteeism by increasing job satisfaction.

Lateness on its own part is closely associated with employee withdrawal behaviour and attitude to work. In other words, those employees who are late to work are also seeking for ways to stay away from the work or the organization. Employees, who are always late to work, may have a negative effect on the organizational productivity and employees efficiency. This does not only affect the productive capacity of the employees in the public services but also the economy of the nation. Reports from national dailies, Nwino (1985) “THE GUARDIAN, May 29, p. 36-37. Ekpu (1980) Daily Champion, July 16, p. 5-6 (to mention but few) have shown that prominent authorities in Nigeria have fought against the enormous effect of absenteeism and lateness in both the federal and state public services. For example, in 1976, the then Military Governor of Anambra State, Brigadier John Atom Kpera conducted occasional checks on absentees and latecomers, many of whom he apprehended, reprimanded and even dismissed for

absenteeism and lateness. At the federal level, a prominent figure notable for this crusade was Brigadier Babatunde Idiagbon, (the then Chief of Staff, of blessed memory) who fired several workers in federal public service nationwide all because of absenteeism and lateness to work.

It is in an attempt to understand and explain the nature of relationship between absenteeism, lateness and job involvement, that the researcher investigated whether absenteeism and lateness could be a possible outcome of negative attitude to work, resulting from job dissatisfaction of employee's perceived levels of job involvement. The dependent variables are absenteeism and lateness while job involvement remains the independent variable.

Theoretical Framework

This section examined the literature of job involvement that contributed in making employees committed to their organization and those factors that predispose employees to engage in withdrawal behaviours in their work places. Job involvement is the degree to which a person identifies with his/her job, actively participates in it and considers his/her performance important to his/her self worth. It has been generally accepted that high level of job involvement would lead to fewer absences (Stephen, 1998). Also an involved employee usually strongly identifies with his job and cares about his job, Stephen (1998). Gould (1979) proposed an equity exchange model for organizational involvement that is relevant to this study. The model integrates several aspects of the literature including Adam's equity theory, and Etzionis typology of organizations is defined as "the willingness of a person to engage in activities which are consistent with, that support the organization's objectives (Hall & Schneider, 1972; Stein 1975) A high intensity of involvement may be characterized by (a) a desire to retain one's organizational membership (Buchanan, 1974) (b) high degree of involvement in ones work role is job involvement (Porter, Cranpton & Smith, 1976) and (c) a congruency between the organization's polices and goals and the individual's values (Hall and Schneider, 1972) job involvement is also defined as "the merging of a person's ego identity with his or her work (Mekelvey & Sekaran, 1979). This definition follows that Gurin, Veroff and Feld (1960) who spoke of the extent to which individual's seek some expressions and actualization of the self in their work, and that of Lodahl and Kejner (1965) who defined job involvement in terms of "the degree to which people are identified psychologically with their work and the importance of work in the individual's self image".

Job Involvement, Public Service Performance and Withdrawal Behaviour

With respect to the job involvement – low performers, some studies have found a substantial correlation (Gechaman & Wiener, 1975; Efraty & Sirgy, 1990; Paterson & O’Driscoll, 1990) for example, Wiener & Vandi, (1980) in a study designed to investigate the relationship between organizational job commitment and effort exerted in work and overall performance, found that job involvement was strongly associated with indices of effort and performance, and effectiveness. In another vein, a study carried out by Keller, (1997) to investigate the role of job involvement and organizational commitment in predicting job performance among scientists and engineers, revealed among other results, that job involvement was a strong predictor of job performance ratings.

Gender, Job Involvement and withdrawal Behaviour

A person’s sex appears to have no biological effect on job involvement (Hall & Rabinowitz, 1977) but subject females to many environmental pressures not placed on males. Researchers find sex-role conflict among working women with both traditional and non-traditional views (Terborg, 1977). They do not find the same conflict among working men, who appear to be much more comfortable and natural with their masculine role at work and at home (Hammer & Tosi, 1974; Mathew, Collins & Cobb, 1974). Sex role conflict also exists among single women, but it is reported to be not as strong as for married women and working mothers (Harman & Gyllstrom, 1977). A woman’s gender does present her with environmental stress not given to men (Hall & Rabinowitz, 1977) but it is likely that the situation itself affect the level of a worker’s job involvement rather than the personality or the sex of the individual.

Research Methodology

Participants for this study were 1200 employees (900 men and 300 woman) 400 each was drawn from the three states of the federation – Abia, Anambra and Imo respectively. Of the 400 (300 are men and 100 are women), so employees were cross-sectionally drawn from each of the five government ministries used for the study. The ministries of agriculture – 80, Health - 80, Finance - 80, Education - 80, Youth, Sports & Culture – 80 = 400.

The same ministries were used in the three states. The participants ages ranged from 21 to 45 years with a mean age of 33 years. The working experience on the job ranged from 4 to 18 years with a mean of 11 years.

Their salaries ranged from grade levels 01 to 06 consisting of public officers, occupying administrative grades of various job types in the five government organizations of each state. Educational qualification levels varied with 60% having school certificate or attempted, 20% with school certificate plus 2-years diploma, 15% with first school leaving certificate and 5% without any educational qualification.

A survey design was employed to get the means of cross-sectional random sampling technique in the selection of the participants.

Instrument

One instrument developed by Kanungo (1980), a 10-item questionnaire was used for measuring job involvement. He restricted job-involvement to the cognitive dimensions of attitude toward a job. He reviewed job involvement as a generalized cognitive style of involvement in a job which is primarily a function of how much the job can satisfy one's salient needs, and hence on this respect, job involvement is more situationally determined by Kanungo's 10-item scale. It is a self-scoring questionnaire. Responses to each of the 10-items were rated using a 5 point likert scale with codes labeled; 5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = undecided; 2 = disagree; and 1 = strongly disagree. The internal consistency and test-retest reliability of the scale are 0.87 and 0.85 respectively (Kanungo, 1982).

Daily attendance registers were used in collecting data for incidences of absenteeism and lateness.

Procedures

The approach the researcher used in conducting this study involved four steps. Firstly, the researcher met the state chairman of the public service commission to solicit for permission and cooperation. Secondly, the researcher met with the five heads of department, who in turn introduced the researcher to the participants, and the researcher had 40 to 60 minutes of discussion about the research. Research assistants were appointed for each department to monitor the register and rule off when it was 8am. The research assistant was also to record all absentees and latecomers on daily basis. The attendance registers were in the ministry for 3 months (April, May & June, 2005) at the end of the third month, all attendance registers were collected by the researcher. Thirdly, the researcher then administered the questionnaires at each departments employees. This was done by actually going to the location where employees worked and then administering the questionnaire in a training room or conference room. All incidences of

absenteeism and lateness of each participant were keyed in into the participant's questionnaire. For example, Kanungo's 10-item questionnaire now had 12 items. Nos 11 and 12 questions bearing the number of times the participant was absent in 3 months, and number of times for lateness. The questionnaire for job involvement along with the demographic form, were stapled together and presented as one questionnaire. Prior to administering the questionnaire, the researcher created codes for each department and used a carved stamper to pre-stamp the codes. This stamper placed the code names consecutively on each questionnaire for each department.

Fourthly, the employees used code numbers assigned to them, which enabled the researcher to make proper collection of data by cross –matching the incidences of absenteeism and lateness of each participant. Each department had their code numbers from the attendance register identified either as AB/MOA/001 to 080 for Abia state or IM/MOA/001 to 080 for Imo State and or AB/MOA/001 to 080 for Anambra state.

Data Analysis

First, the mean difference of the demographic data was analyzed. Second, descriptive statistics was used to examine the mean scores, standard deviation and other information about job involvement and their scores. Multiple regression analysis multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were used in analyzing the data.

Results

The results of the demographic data analysis revealed that 75% of the participants in the study were males, while 25% were females.

Testing the hypothesis

In testing the first of the three hypotheses, which stated that there would be statistically significant difference in the absenteeism and lateness behaviour of public service employees, who perceived self on the low levels of job involvement (See table 1 and 2).

Table 1: Table of means of incidences of absenteeism and lateness from the three states of federation. ABIA, IMO & ANAMBRA

DV.	State	Mean X	STD	N.
Absenteeism	ABIA	4.640	1.481	400
	IMO	4.727	1.990	400
	ANAMBRA	4.155	1.733	400
	Total	-	-	1200
Lateness	ABIA	8.950	5.135	400
	IMO	9.100	3.845	400
	ANAMBRA	7.960	3.568	400
	Total	-	-	1200

Table 2: Summary of analysis of MANOVA on the effect of statistically significant difference of employees who perceived low levels of job involvement on absenteeism and lateness from the three states of the federation under study

Source	DV	SS	df	Ms	F	sig.
State	Absenteeism	76.085	2	38.042	12.456	.001
	Lateness	306.960	2	153.480	8.543	.001
Error	Absenteeism	3655.848	1197	3.054		
	Lateness	21504.360	1197	17.965		
Total	Absenteeism	3731.932	1199			
	Lateness	21811.320	1199			

Results from table 1 summarized the differences in the behaviour of public service employees who perceived low levels of job involvement on absenteeism and lateness from the three states of the federation under study. It could be seen from it that Imo state ranked highest in both absenteeism (mean = 4.727) and lateness (Mean = 9.10) followed by Abia state (mean = 4.640) for absenteeism and (mean = 8.950) for lateness. Anambra state came last in both absenteeism (mean = 4.155) and lateness (mean = 7.960). Also results from table 2 on the analysis of MANOVA summarized the differences in the behaviour of employees who perceived low levels of job involvement

on absenteeism and lateness. The MANOVA (table 2) showed that there were statistically significant differences in the behaviours of employees on absenteeism $F(2,1197) = 8.54, p < .001$ and on lateness $F(2,1197) = 12.46, P < .001$. The results from the two tables have all confirmed the hypothesis tested. The second hypothesis states that the perceived levels of job involvement would not act as predictors of absenteeism and lateness of public service employees in the organization. In testing the hypothesis (see tables 3 and 4 below).

Table 3: Multiple regression analysis of data showing the predictive values of perceived levels of job involvement on absenteeism

Model	SS	df	ms	f	sig.
Regression	1386.297	3	462.099	235.617	.001
Residual	2345.635	1196	1.961		
		1199			

Results from above table showed that perceived low levels of job involvement statistically and significantly acted as a predictor of absenteeism $F(3,1196) = 235.62, P < .001$.

Table 4: Multiple regression analysis of data showing the predictive values of perceived low levels of job involvement on lateness

Model	SS	df	ms	f	sig
Regression	9596.834	3	3198.945	313.230	.001
Residual	12214.486	1196			
Total		1199			

Results from the table showed that perceived low levels of job involvement statistically and significantly acted as predictors of lateness $F(3,1196) = 313.320, P < .001$. From the results of table 3 & 4 it would seem that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative accepted, that perceived levels of job involvement acted as a predictors of absenteeism and lateness among the workers in the three states of the federation under study.

The third hypothesis states that there would be statistically significant influence of gender on absenteeism and lateness of the public service employees from the three states of the federation under study. In testing the hypothesis (see tables 5 and 6)

Table 5: Table of means on the influence of Gender on absenteeism and lateness of employees who perceived low levels of job involvement in organization

Factor (DV)	Gender	Mean X	STD	N
Absenteeism	Male	4.609	1.745	
	Female	4.216	1.788	
	Total			1200
Lateness	Male	8.902	4.398	
	Female	8.003	3.783	
	Total			1200

Table 6: Summary table of MANOVA on the influence of Gender on absenteeism & lateness

Source	DV	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig
Gender	Absenteeism	35.485	1	35.485	11.505	.001
	Lateness	185.828	1	185.828	10.294	.001
Error	Absenteeism	3695.447	1198	3.086		
	Lateness	21625.492	1198	18.051		
Total	Absenteeism	3731.932	1196			
	Lateness	21811.320	1199			

It could be seen from the above tables above that gender had statistically significant influence on absenteeism and lateness. Males were more absent ($M=4.61$) $F(1,1198) = 11.50$, $p<.001$) than females (Mean = 4.22) $F(1,1198) = 10.29$, $p<.001$ Males also score higher for lateness (Mean = 8.90) than females (Mean = 8.0) These results have all confirmed the third hypothesis.

Summary of the main findings

1. The public service employees (from the three states studied) who perceived low levels of job involvement in the organization recorded highest incidences of absenteeism and lateness. On the contrary, those employees who perceived high levels of job involvement has fewer incidences of absenteeism and lateness
2. There was statistically significant difference in the behaviour of public service employees on absenteeism and lateness from the three states of the federation. Imo state scored higher in both absenteeism (mean = 4.73) and lateness (Mean = 9.10) respectively, followed by results of MANOVA data indicate that the states differed statistically significantly in absenteeism $F(2,1197) = 8.54, p < .001$ and in lateness $F(2,1197) = 12.46, p < .001$
3. From the findings of the study it has been established that the perceived levels of job involvement statistically and significantly acted as predictors of absenteeism $F(3,1196) = 235.62, p < .001$ and lateness $F(3,1196) = 313.23, p < .001$ in the public service organization in Nigeria.
4. That gender has statistically significant influence on absenteeism and lateness with males scoring being more on absent behaviour (mean = 4.61) $F(1,1198) = 10.29, p < .001$ than females (mean = 4.22) $f(1,1198) = 11.50, p < .001$

Discussion

The results of the findings showed that the perceived levels of job involvement acted as predictors of withdrawal behaviours such as absenteeism and lateness of public service employees in the three states of the federation. The findings suggested that the strength of prediction of job involvement was stronger for absenteeism (Beta = - .065, $p < .01$) and for lateness (Beta = 0.-046, $p < .05$) those employees who perceived low levels of job involvement had higher rates of incidences of absenteeism and lateness. While employees who perceived high levels of job involvement had much few rates of incidences of absenteeism and lateness. These results corroborates with findings of Stephen, (1998), Keller (1997), Efraty & Sirgy, (1990), Paterson CO Driscoll, (1990) and Wiener & Vandi (1980).

The reason why Anambra state public service employees scored lowest in both absenteeism and lateness could not be far fetched. This research was conducted in April, May and June 2005, as at that time, the then Governor of the state did not only enhance their reward package but also paid them salaries as when due (as was opposite under the previous administration, in whose hands, all the workers emaciated terribly due to non-

reinforcement of rewards coupled with non-payment of salaries for over two years). As rewards were reinforced and salaries were promptly paid to workers (the emaciated necks and bodies started growing robust). Consequently, the workers reciprocated by being involved to the duties. Reinforcement of rewards coupled with prompt payment of salaries were believed to be the reason for unparalleled productivity and efficiency among the employees of Anambra state public service. The results were consistent with the academic views of Stephen 1998; Buchanan, 1974; Porter, Crampton & Smith, 1976.

Imo state, most of the public service employees whose opinions were sampled decried the ethnic conflicts being used in the deployment sectional heads; short circuiting the procedural justice (fairness of procedures used in the distribution of amenities). For instance, where you have an Mbaise man at the head of the organization, all the sectional heads will be appointed from Mbaise, even if they are lower in rank than the incumbent, others reacted through absenteeism and lateness in the organization there ethnic conflicts created divisions which closed their involvement need for enhanced productivity. This again corroborated with academic view of Greenberg (1990) who suggested that procedural justice could play a role in predicting employees work behaviour.

Abia state workers complained of government favouring some sections of its community, while abandoning others, this situation paved the way for unprecedented absenteeism and lateness which resulted in lowered productivity and organizational ineffectiveness. This again corroborates with academic view of Stephen (1982).

The implications of the findings

1. It will enable the employees of labour to know that employees who perceive high levels of job involvement were found to be highly satisfied and are fulfilled in their jobs (Meyer & Allen 1997).
2. Understanding the dynamics of these involvements are essential in the development of proactive and innovative public service organization.
3. It will enable the government and the educational systems in Nigeria to emphasize the importance and value of job involvements of employees in their work, because that would reduce absenteeism and lateness which have serious consequences for overall organizational performance
4. In addition, such education will assist the organizations to maintain a core of involved and committed individuals who are the source of organizational

life, who represent the “heart, brain and muscle” of the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

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