Imperativeness of human resources practices and commitment of library personnel in libraries in Nigeria

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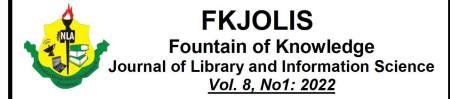+2347067327037

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Abstract

As organizations compete to get the most from their existing workforce in an environment characterized by skill shortages and brain drain, the role of human resource practices in fostering library engagement, Commitment is crucial to the survival and fulfillment of any academic library's mandate. This research specifically, reports on the conditional nature of the relationship between organizational, human resource practices, and commitment of library personnel in information centers. A qualitative research approach was adopted. This study was conducted through intensive reviewing of literature from past outcome of findings of HRM practices on commitment of library personnel. This study suggests that HRM practices are significantly correlated with organizational commitment of library workforce in Nigeria. It further indicates that staff training, development and motivation among others could have a positive impact on employee commitment. Therefore, policies and programs that will help maintain the affective commitment of its personnel and work towards improving normative commitment and continuance commitment should be put in place.
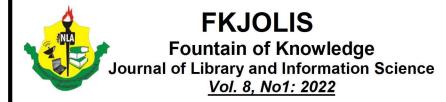
Keywords: Human resource practices, libraries, organizational commitment, librarians.

Introduction

The context in which libraries operate continues to evolve: rapid environmental change, globalization and competition to provide sustainable, accurate and innovative information resources services create new challenges and requirements. Libraries need to exploit all of their resources as a means of achieving competitive advantage. Also, as the world economy has turned into recession and millions have lost their jobs with the reality of COVID 19 pandemic hitting harder, organizations around the world are struggling for their survival; hence employees' commitment seems to be a key issue. Literature affirms that employees create an important source of organizational success and competitive advantage (Opeke & Adebara, 2020). As a result of this, it is important that libraries management adopt human resources management practices that assure the best use of its employees. Human manpower is adequately utilized in libraries so as to maximize available resources and providing quality services.
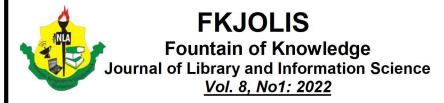
This paper analyzes the imperative aspects of the human resource practices that may enhance the organizational commitment among the library personnel (i.e. the Para- professionals and the professionals) working in the concept of the library. Human resource practices deviates from organization to organization and its workability in the present recent of the library. Every work place has its own set of rules, procedures and practices which makes employees to be reactive in a particular way in their employment environment. Over the past decade, organizations has battle to get the most from their existing people in an environment characterized by skill shortages and the role of human resource management in fostering employee commitment. The leadership of an establishment has a key influence on the commitment of an employee. A critical factor in personnel development in libraries is the head librarian. His/ Her approach affects a number of other people within the library. The library administrator's have various ways of impact on the library's staff development program. His ability to developing, stating a clear statement of policy on personnel development and continuing education a statement can't be underestimated. The library headship ability to

develop a strategy for the selection of highly motivated employees based on the institutional objectives to be achieved is also important.

According to the Armstrong (2006), the most valued asset for an organization is its people working there who individually and collectively contributes to the achievement of the objectives. All the management decision and practices in the organization are directly influenced by their people working in the organization. It is necessary to understand that the human capital within the library involves the acquisition and development of fellow librarians. "Human capital corresponds to any stock of knowledge or characteristics the worker has (either innate or acquired) that contributes to his or her productivity" (Garibaldi, 2006). "HR practices are the levers or mechanisms through which employee skills can be developed" (Park et al., 2003). Skills, attitudes, and behavior of individuals can be influenced and reshapes through HR practices and in this way there is no hurdle in achievement of organizational objective (Collins & Clark, 2003). The purpose of these HR practices is to enhance the retention of valuable employees by improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees; boost their motivation; minimize or eliminate loitering on the job. Further more, Human capital development (HCD) is defined by Hashim and Shariff (2016) as the process that involves training, education and other professional programmes aimed at increasing the level of knowledge, skills, abilities, values, and social capital of an employee which will lead to the employee's commitment, and eventually on an organization's performance. Hence, HCD remains an assured process of enabling librarian's commitment.

Many researchers have pointed out that human resources management practices impact on the outcomes such as employee satisfaction, employee commitment, employee retention, employee presence, social climate between workers and management, employee involvement, employee trust, employee loyalty, organizational fairness (Edger & Geare, 2005, Opeke & Adebara, 2020). Some of the authors have indicated that these outcomes and HRM practices can lead to organization performance such as profits, increase in sales, productivity, product service quality, customer satisfaction, development of products/services and future investments. In order
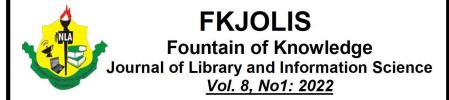
to make employees committed to their jobs in libraries, there is need for strong and effective HR practices at the various levels, departments, and sections of the library.

The main purpose of this study is to explore the imperativeness of human resource practices on commitment of library personnel. The first part of this study will focus on the concept of human resources management practices and specify H.R.M practices that can be adopted in libraries. In addition to this, a review of study centered round organizational commitment of employee. Finally, the relationship of H.R.M practices and commitment of employee was explored. This present study attempts to fill up the gap in the body of knowledge through reviewing of past literatures in the area of human resources practices and organizational commitment and linking it to main reality of librarian's expectations.

Human Resources Management as Strategy in libraries

The term 'human resources'' as used in organizations describe available workforce capacity devoted to achievement of their objectives. "Wikipedia (2014) defines HRM as "the strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization's most valued assets – the people working there, who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the business" hence, the importance of integrating human resource management developmental programs in libraries in Nigeria. In fact, the expectation of librarians and information managers in the 21st century forms the basis for the need to strategies on human resources training that will bring out the best of practices information resources development. Swan (2003) urges that the successful librarian of the 21st century must argue for the relevancy of the profession in a way none of his predecessors were required to do. Hereman (2000) cited in Swan (2003) thinks, that organisation and human resources strategy work together to fulfill a mission and accompany goals and objectives for the organisation. Human resource strategy focused and map out on decisions about how the work forces would be acquired, trained, managed, rewarded, and retained. Staffing strategy is an outgrowth of organisation and human resource strategy. It focuses on decisions regarding the acquisition and deployment of the workforces.
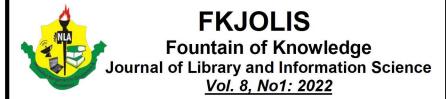
Likewise Oladele (2010) describes the need to set agenda for library quality assurance in the Nigerian university system. He is of the view that through the provision of general framework and guidelines, the Governing Council often makes explicit and implicit pronouncement on issues of standards or quality as they relate human resources, structure, funding and the general administrative mechanism of the university. In this statement human resources development definitely stands to play a crucial roles in the quality assurance. Human resources are set of tools to help organise, plan, and implement activities within an organisation.

Certainly, one of the cardinal points of best practices is recruitment of best hands in an organisation; library and information centre cannot but work with professionals. In other words, the library should be able to attract and recruit talents who have the creativity and innovative to push the library forward positively. The library of today is in a dynamic and challenging environment that offers many opportunities to new librarians (Burd, 2003). Omotunde & Alegbeleye (2021) affirms to the fact that the roles of higher institutions all over the world are changing in order to respond to the needs of the society. Likewise, the role of libraries is changing to provide a competitive advantage for the university. The activators of this change in libraries are library personnel. Jones, (2003) expressed this view that as "we hire librarians in the coming century; we must first remember that libraries are no longer contained within the physical walls of our library buildings. The present reality in this knowledge era needs potential librarian who will not only have the basic computer skills, but will know how to develop, improve and update those skills as needs rapidly change during the course of a career. The 21st century librarians are expected not only to know how to use technology, but will have a vision of how technology is likely to change-over the coming years and what influence those changes will have on current investments and decisions.

Human Resource Management Practices that can be adopted by libraries

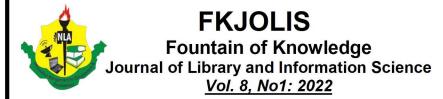**Recruitment & Selective hiring**

Dessler, (2009) views recruitment as a process of identifying potential individuals who is brought into an organization and encouraged to apply for existing or anticipated job openings. In other words, any process for which the library seeks applicants and attracts potential employees

is called recruitment; and the process of selection in the library entails identifying those applicants with the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics that will help it achieve its goals. Recruitment is the development of a pool of job candidates in accordance with a human resource plan. Further it can be explained as the process of locating, identifying and attracting capable applicants. Furthermore, it is the process of assessing candidates and appointing a post holder to ensure that the most appropriate candidates are hired. Successful employee hiring decisions are the foundation of any organization's success. According to Terpstra and Rozell (1993) cited in Seead et al, (2013), they stated that there is positive link between ranges of recruiting, selection test validation, and the use of formal selection procedures and firm profits. Information centers and libraries that are serious about providing maximum services to its users must first focus on recruiting the right people. Libraries should have significant applicant pool from which to select. Second, it must be clear about the critical skills and attributes that are needed in each job, as job previews need to be truthful and realistic. Studies show that inflated promises and unmet expectations, due to unrealistic job previews, result in higher levels of dissatisfaction and turnover providing the applicants with the negative aspects of the job as well, they are better able to determine whether the job fits their needs and can prepare themselves (Hiltrop, 1999). Research evidence shows that individuals who were well informed during the hiring process and freely chose to accept the position, are likely to be more committed to it and can be perceived as being more trustworthy and supportive (Meyer& Allen 1997).

Training & Development:

Training term is often used to describe almost any effort initiated randomly by an organization to promote learning among members. Training tends to be more strictly focused and performance oriented short-term concerns, and development, that tend to be oriented more towards widening of individual skills for future responsibilities (Snell S & Bohlander, 2007). Likewise, Ezeani & Oladele, (2013) are of the view that training is a planned action to develop employees' affective, cognitive and psychomotor skills through learning experience in order for employee to perform adequately in their job task. It can be expected that firm investments in technical and non- technical training will have a positive impact on the skills/knowledge of its
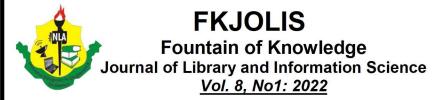
employees. (Saaed et, al 2013). It can be expected that the investments of libraries in both technical and non technical training will have a positive impact on the extent to which it actually succeeds in developing the skills/knowledge of its employees.

There is possibility that Libraries with superior training programs may also experience lower staff turnover than those libraries that neglect employees training and development. Training according to Brum (2010) will increase employees' commitment, which can further counter the numerous direct and indirect costs associated with employees' turnover. Uwem (2003) opined that the central aim of any professional training is not just head knowledge of management skills, but rather how this theoretical concept can be translated to meet users' needs in a practical way. Therefore to provide information services to its numerous users, the library and its work force will need to develop knowledge and competence of the emerging information media. Simmons-Welburn and Welburn (2003) investigated the organizational entry and sense-making of new librarians in academic libraries. Result revealed that nearly all libraries surveyed had a formal orientation for newcomers. Edoka (2000) in a similar study submitted that orientation enables new employees to start work smoothly in a library. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) articulated the issue of professional education and training required of practitioners is contentious in every profession. They stated that Libraries are embedded in the cultural process and are part of the foundation of a civilized life. Providing access to the records of civilization and culture requires well-educated librarians with appropriate knowledge. They stress the idea that modern technology has improved information handling, facilitated learning and research, and brought new perspectives on the librarian's role.

Assessment and recognition

Although the value of compensation in managing commitment cannot be overlooked, employees do also expect non-monetary forms of recognition (Chew& Girardi 2008). Studies have shown that employees who feel that their capabilities, efforts and performance contributions are recognized and appreciated are more likely to remain with the company (Davies 2001 in Chew & Girardi 2008). Walker (2001 in Chew & Girardi 2008) also agrees that recognition from managers, team members, peers and customers enhances commitment. Closely related to non-monetary forms of recognition is assessment of performance. Meyer and Allen

(1997) discuss promotion as a way of assessment and make interesting findings. They refer to Nollen (1989 in Meyer& Allen 1997), whose work shows commitment to be higher among employees who have been promoted. Those not promoted seemed to feel greater inequality in the decision-making process and were absent more frequently following the decision. This reaction may be due to the fact that the candidates all believed they were qualified for the position. In another study managerial candidates' commitment was measured in assessment centers. The results showed no significant changes in the candidates' commitment. On the basis of this knowledge, Meyer and Allen conclude that even though some are rejected and feel disappointed, their commitment might not decrease due to the support and appreciation shown by the organization, as they still are considered for promotion and treated fairly in the decision-making process. However, in order to succeed in assessing employees without dramatically decreasing commitment, libraries need to communicate decisions clearly and clarify why those, who did not receive a promotion, were passed over.

Employment security

Torrington et al (2005) comment that those employees who are prepared to do what the organization wants act accordingly in order to maintain employment security. Thus, according to this view, employment security is something that is earned by hard work and sacrifice. An organization engaged in a commitment HRM system should also proactively offer employment security for its employees. Pfeffer and Veiga (1999) argue that offering employment security is fundamental to "putting people first" thinking and to attaining organizational success. Commitment may also be more normative if the employee feels morally obligated to return the sense of loyalty. Continuance commitment increases if the librarians believe that leaving their workplace would result in a loss of a secure employment relationship, which may not exist in another organization. Pfeffer and Veiga (1999) continue that if an organization is willing to hold on its employees it will not lay off its employees too quickly during the first signs of downturn.
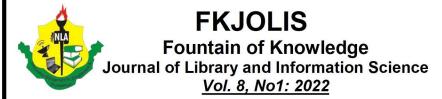
Motivation

Abraham Maslow who is a famous psychologist, talked about five hierarchical levels of needs i.e., physiological, safety and security, recognition, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Motivation of its various kinds is an essential HRM tools that can be employed to enable information personnel and librarians to be committed in their workplace. Motivation theory examines the process of motivation. It describes what organizations can do to encourage employees to exercise their maximum efforts and abilities for the achievement of an organization's goals as well as satisfying their own needs. Job satisfaction deals with how people feel (satisfied or dissatisfied) about different aspects of their jobs. Factors associated with the job, such as the organization, and policies and procedures, can positively influence job satisfaction while organizational constraints that interfere with job performance such as task preparation (whether or not the employee has the skills necessary for the job) can negatively influence job satisfaction.

The concept of organizational commitment

Commitment is a term in wide use in conversational English. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines it as 'engagement or involvement that restricts freedom of action' Akanbi & Itiola (2013), is of the view that commitment is the level to which employees recognize with their organisation and are dedicated to contribute immensely in order to achieve organizational goals and objectives. In addition to this view, Jaw and Liu (2004) assert that commitment is not only a human relation concept but also involves generating human energy and activating human mind. Purcell, Kinnie, Hutchinson, Rayton and Swart (2003) add that employees are also expecting career opportunities, performance, appraisals, communication on organizational performance and management leadership.
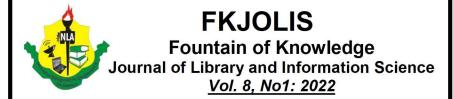
Organizational commitment of workers is not a new concept. This topic was examined as early as 1938 (Barnard) according to Adekola (2012), Kanter (1968) views organizational commitment as the willingness of workers to devote energy and loyalty to an organization. In general terms, organizational commitment is a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the

organization, and a definite desire to maintain organizational membership. Organizational commitment was characterized in Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982) according to (Scheible and Bastos, 2013) by three factors: a strong belief and acceptance of organizational goals and values; the wiliness to exert effort on behalf of it; and a strong desire to retain organizational membership. Organizational commitment is determined by a number of factors, including personal factors (e.g., age, tenure in the organization, disposition, internal or external control attributions); organizational factors (job design and the leadership style of one's supervisor); non-organizational factors (availability of alternatives). All these things affect subsequent commitment. Dornstein and Matalon (1998) describe eight variables that are relevant to organizational commitment. These are interesting work, coworker's attitudes towards the organization, organizational dependency, age, education, employment alternatives, attitude of family and friends. Ellemer, Gilder, and Heuvel (1998) found that background variables as gender, level of education, or team size were not clearly related to three forms of commitment. Adeyemo (2000) reported a positive correlation between education and organizational commitment. Irving, Coleman, and Cooper (1997) found that age was not related to organizational commitment.

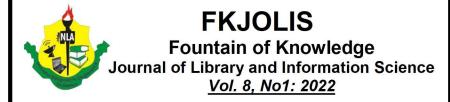**Importance of Commitment of Library Personnel**

The reason why commitment matters to an organization is in three fold according to past studies (Mayer & Allen, 1997; Mitchell, Holtom& Lee 2001; Chew& Girardi 2008) which are employee retention, performance at work, employee well-being. Meyer and Allen (1997) point out that the relation between organizational commitment and employee retention variables are well established. They continue that several reviews report consistent negative correlations between organizational commitment and both employee intention to leave the organization and actual turnover. However, not all components of commitment correlated similarly (Meyer & Herscovitch 2001). The strongest correlation was with affective commitment followed by normative. This in turn indicates the importance of understanding that not all commitment is the same. In order to get more than just a stable workforce, librarians need to ensure that people are well motivated and committed to maximize their performance. As performance at work is one of the key objective of HRM, knowledge on the nuance of assessing it are quite extensive. Meyer

and Allen (1997) identify; attendance at work, performance of assigned duties and organizational citizenship as the different aspects of assessing the link between different components of commitment (affective, normative and continuance) and performance at work. The link of commitment having a positive effect on well-being comes from literature dealing with employee stress. It can be assumed that when library personnel are affectively committed to where they work, the effect of stress on them is positive.
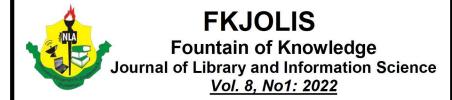
Conclusion/ Recommendation

The main purpose of the study was to emphasize the imperativeness of the human resource practice on the organizational commitment and by reviewing literatures on the impact of human resource determinants on organizational commitment for previous studies. The contribution of human resources and their management to the overall achievement of organizational objectives is increasingly acknowledged. Literatures reviewed have garnered much empirical evidence supporting that HRM enhance organizational commitment. A number of studies have been conducted to find the impact of various HR practices on organizational commitment of employees in corporate, public organizations, banks, universities etc. however, not much have been done in the perspectives of librarians personnel. This brings a wide gap of knowledge among this group of employees. It is proposed that future empirical research will be directed towards library personnel in Nigeria to probe into how HR practices at the library affect personnel organizational commitment. Library administrators must often assess how effectively functioning human resource activities in the academic library are been pursue. They need to assess their present needs, culture and the climate in their day to day operation. This study will be important bearing in mind that this group of employees determines a lot in meeting the needs of information seeking behavior of people. However, for people to offer such services to the people; they must be committed to their work and the library at large. The weaker the H.R practices in the library the weaker the commitment of library personnel to the goal and values of library. This study recommends that for libraries to effectively control the brain drain within the profession, library management must strive to put in place polices and procedures that deals with multi-skilling or engaging in succession planning to tackle the suggest to taking up senior roles when the need arise. An appropriate career plan aimed at providing the right competencies
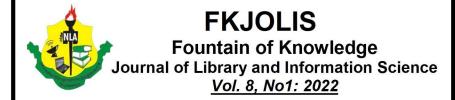
for each librarian current or future must be put in place by libraries in Nigeria. Finally, human resources management practices can be properly and effectively deployed in libraries in Nigeria for better repositioning and management of librarians so as to measure up to the best practice in the profession.
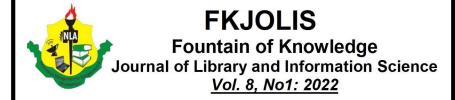
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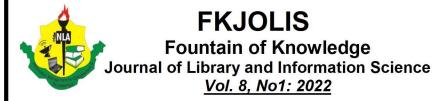
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