

An analysis of biographical factors related to affective organisational commitment of Secondary school teachers in Mashonaland Central Province of Zimbabwe

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Abstract: *Performance of secondary school pupils accelerated in a declining manner since 1984 to date. Although much has been done to improve conditions of the teacher since the teachers are at the helm of students learning, students' performance has continued to decline. Despite training obtained from teachers colleges, what is contributing to their effectiveness has not been well researched. Affective organisational commitment of secondary school teachers in Zimbabwe still remain an inadequately researched area. Whereas teachers could be motivated by employers, the gendered outcomes of their commitment to the organisation especially on their affective commitment has not been adequately investigated. This study makes a contribution to filling this gap or lacuna. The primary purpose of the study was to make a critical analysis of variables and factors contributing to affective organisational commitment using Stufflebeam(1971)'s Context Input Process and Product decision facilitation model of evaluation approach. The approach specified the imbalances in each phase of evaluation focusing on biographical factors, and how each factor contributed to affective organisational commitment of secondary school teachers. The study employed mixed methodology approach. Statistical tests of multiple regression analysis and step wise regression analysis on quantitative survey data obtained from Affective organisational commitment were used. The Quantitative data were gathered using two seven point Likert scales ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A statistical program SPSS was used to investigate the relationships among variables in the research model. Regardless of the types of dependent or independent variables, linear multiple step wise regression analyses were performed in order to find out the significance of the variables. This was supplemented by qualitative data gathered and addressing biographical factors. The qualitative data were collected using semi structured face to face interviews and focus group discussions in order to triangulate the evidence obtained from quantitative data. The qualitative data were analysed using NVivo to come up with themes. The study established that factors such as age, gender, professional qualifications, teaching experience, occupational status, were strong determinants of affective organisational commitment, related to secondary school teachers' affective organisational commitment hence impacting negatively on pupils' and schools' performance. The study recommended that Educational planners must stay abreast of the formal and informal impulse of teacher commitment by providing support, constant supervision, staff development workshops, chat platforms and continual refocusing of selection and recruitment policies in teachers' colleges. Future researchers might wish to expand on studies that indicate a connection between each of the biographical factors established and the degree of pupils' performance.*

I. Introduction

To study the organisation behaviour means to study the people who form the organisation. The success of an organisation rests on the characteristics of its people. Successful managers can observe the employees' behaviour to understand their individual characteristics, which helps to improve the employees' performance. Therefore performance of employees is directly related to their biographical characteristics and abilities Hoy (2004). These factors affect employees' interaction with others and reaction to various situations in the workplace like secondary schools. Then how do these characteristics affect organisational performance? Thus this study 'intention was to establish the relationship between biographical factors ('age gender, teachers' qualifications, position in the school, working experience, organisational tenure) and secondary school teachers' level of affective organisational commitment.

II. Background To The Study

Prior research indicate that biographical characteristics are personal characteristics such as age, gender, professional qualifications, academic qualifications and marital status that are objective and easily obtained from personnel records and the teachers themselves (McElroy 1987).

Influence of biographical factors on affective commitment of employees.

Employee Age and Affective Organisational Commitment.

The issue about age and performance is quite controversial McElroy (1987). Some view aged-old workers having lower level of performance. Is that true in the Zimbabwean context? In some work field, the answer is to some extent yes. People's physical condition is inevitably degenerating when they are aging old. They do not have as much energy as the young have in everyday time whilst experience is gained when one gets older. A study conducted by Angle and Perry (1981), on organisational commitment which involved 24 organisations which operated fixed route bus services in the United States indicate a positive correlation of age with commitment. The commitment was measured by an affective oriented instrument, known as (Porter, Steers, Mowday and Bouglain, 1974) Commitment Questionnaire. A study conducted by Morrow and McElroy (1987) involving a sample of 2,200 employees of which 78% were male, established the differences in the levels of organisational commitment based on career stages that were defined by employee age ranges. Their sample included a variety of employee groups which were: administrators, technical and professional employees, clerical and office workers, and service workers. Seven-point Likert scales were used to measure commitment in the study. The mean obtained for each age range or category were: trial employment period i.e. ages 30 and under, the mean rating was 4.13 (SD=1.01); stabilization employment period i.e. ages 31-44, the mean rating was 4.31 (SD =1.03; and maintenance employment period i.e. ages 44 and above, the mean rating was 4.76 (SD=0.92). Thus differences in the levels of organisational commitment based on career stages were defined by employees' age ranges. The F-ratio was significant 73.33 at the .01 level (Hawkins 1998). Similarly Allen and Meyer (1993)'s study on the relationship between age and affective organisational commitment, obtained a positive mean correlation between age and affective organisational commitment. Basing on the findings of Morrow and McElroy (1987), which included participants from transportation company, and Allen and Meyers' (1993)'s study involving teachers this study intended to determine whether age of secondary school teachers is affecting their level of affective organisational commitment in Zimbabwe.

In contrast to the findings of Majekodunmi, T.O. (2013) and Hawkins (1998), a curvilinear relationship between age and employee organisational commitment in their study involving 318 elementary and secondary school teachers and 395 professional nurses was obtained. Mean levels of employee commitment by age categories were: 26 years or less, 10.68; ages 27-44, **10.53**; and, ages 45 years and up, **10.94**. This reveals that as the age ranges changed there was no direct relationship to affective organisational commitment of employees. Shin and Reyes (1991) studied affective organisational commitment of public and private school Catholic administrators. In their study a positive correlation ($r=0.9$) was obtained between affective organisational commitment and age. This reveals that age had an influence on Catholic administrators as their ages increased their affective commitment also increased as indicated by a positive correlation. Similarly various researchers (Dorstein and Matalon, 1989; Kushman, 1992; Morrow & Wirth, 1989 in Majekodunmi, T.O. (2013), have established that age is related to affective organisational commitment of employees, meaning to say as employees grow older the degree of commitment also increases. However, Hawkins (1998) establish that there is no statistically significant correlation between age and affective organisational commitment of homogeneous narrow age range group of principals. With these contradicting findings in other countries, this study intended to find out whether Zimbabwean secondary teachers' age influence their affective organisational commitment considering that the country is a third world country, still struggling to develop with its crippling economy in which majority of school leavers are unemployed and education sector is mainly providing employment for the majority.

Gender and Affective Organizational Commitment

The study of gender and affective organisational commitment literature has been approached from both the gender-model and the job-model (McEvoy, Aven, & Parker, 1993). From the gender-model, Loscocco (1990) establish that women accept family roles as a chief source of their identity and fulfilment, leading to a different orientation to work for men. In contrast, proponents of the job-model view indicate that there is no difference in the work attitudes of women and men. Aven, Parker, and Mcevoy (1993), in their meta-analysis studies of the relationship between gender and organisational commitment identified both positive and negative correlations during the research process negating that there are gender differences with respect to organisational commitment. They conclude that commitment can be won from both males and females when organisations treat all employees fairly. On the other hand (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), in another meta-analytic study of 7420 employees, report a correlation that indicates stronger advantage for female employees with respect to affective organisational commitment. Whilst Aranya Kashmir, and Valency (1986), in their male dominated profession of Canadian Chartered Accountants study, establish that female accountants demonstrated less affective organisational commitment than their older male counterparts. Kushman (1992) used the job-model approach in a study involving urban elementary and middle schoolteachers and came out with no statistical significant relationship between gender and organizational commitment. Job-model research by (Aven, Parker, &

McEvoy,1993) indicates that men and women are similar with respect to affective organisational commitment. However a research by Hawkins (1998), concludes that gender did not enter the stepwise multiple regression equation as a factor that explains any of the variation in affective organisational commitment. Thus, motivated by contradictions of study undertaken elsewhere and none other than in Zimbabwe the study intended to find out whether in Zimbabwe gender has an effect on affective organisational commitment of secondary school teachers.

Organisational Tenure and Affective Organisational Commitment

Shoemaker, Snizek, and Bryant(1977 in Hawkins 1998), in an organisational tenure study that involved federal rangers and state rangers obtained a positive correlations between organisational tenure and affective commitment of federal rangers. However the correlation for state rangers was not statistically significant (Shoemaker, Snizek, and Bryant,1977 in Hawkins 1998) revealing some other factors could have been contributing to organisational commitment. Similar findings of positive correlations have been obtained by Kushman (1992), in a study on affective organisational commitment involving urban, elementary and middle school teachers. A positive insignificant correlation between the number of years in teaching and organisational commitment was established.

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) in a study of affective organisational commitment reviewed 38 samples and established that organisational tenure correlated positively with organisational commitment. There is general support in the literature for the notion that there is a positive correlation between affective organisational commitment and organisational tenure (Kushman, 1992; Mathieu& Zajac, 1990; Meyer &Allen, 1997; Sheldon, 1971), though in other studies the correlation though positive is insignificant. What this finding really means may be difficult to determine. Meyer and Allen (1993) in their study establish that analyses of organisational tenure generally showed a mild curvilinear relationship whereby middle tenure employees possess less measured commitment than new senior level employees. They conclude that employees need to acquire a certain amount of experience within an organisation to become strongly attached to it, and long –service employees retrospectively develop affective attachment to their organisation. In a study that included 290 non-management employees, clerks, nurses, secretaries, radiologists, and cardiopulmonary specialists, Gregersen (1993)in Nwibere, and Olu-Daniels (2014) measured affective organisational commitment to a sample of ninety(90%) female and ten (10%) male by Occupational Commitment Questionnaire and established a positive correlation between the length of service in the organization and affective organizational commitment. In this study, there was a statistically significant difference (Gregersen 1993). The mean score for medical professionals with less than two years of service and for medical professionals with more than eight years of service was not the same. A study conducted by Hawkins (1998) also indicates that there is a direct, positive relationship between organisational tenure and affective organisational commitment. Considering these findings not obtained from Zimbabwe and using professionals none other than secondary school teachers, the researcher intended to establish whether there would be relationship between organisational tenure and affective organisational commitment of secondary school teachers in Zimbabwe taking into cognizance the effects of ESAP, Inflation Sanctions, the Economic conditions, Brain Drain, that is prevailing in Zimbabwe, and the current Economic meltdown.

Professional qualifications and level of affective commitment

Level of education and professional qualifications in particular is expected to have a stronger negative relationship with affective organisational commitment. It is established that the rationale for this prediction is that people with low levels of education and qualifications generally have more difficulty in changing jobs because of lack of expertise and fear of the unknown (Chughtai and Zafar, 2006). On the other hand those with high qualifications have the ego of exploring greener pastures. Employees who fear changing jobs usually show greater commitment to their organisation(Chughtai and Zafar 2006; Steers, 1977; and Glisson and Durick,1988). Considering these findings this study intended to determine whether professional qualifications relate to affective organisational commitment of secondary school teachers in Zimbabwe.

Research problem

In Zimbabwe, secondary schools have been experiencing a decline in pass rates since 1984. This have raised concern amongst parents and stakeholders, who shelve the blame to teachers for their lack of affective commitment to their profession. Sentiments being raised, indicate that the teacher is the key player and is most valued. Teacher characteristics, quality and their affection to the organisation have been singled out to be the most important factors in determining variability in student attainment, within any single country. Therefore, the main key players are secondary teachers who are responsible to prepare students who will in turn produce future human capital needed by the nation. Teachers are expected to be committed, to improve teaching and learning methods so as to turn Zimbabwe, into leading economic development country(Atan, 2007).

Research Questions

In order to determine whether biographical factors are related to affective commitment the study was guided by the following research questions

1. Is there a relationship between teachers' age and several factors of affective organisational commitment of secondary school teachers
2. Is there a relationship between gender of teachers and several factors of affective commitment.
3. Is there relationship between organisational tenure and several factors of affective commitment?
4. Is there a relationship between professional qualifications and secondary school teachers affective commitment?
5. Is there a relationship between academic qualifications and teachers' level of affective commitment?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore to explore biographical characteristics such as teachers' age gender, Professional qualifications academic qualifications Organisational Tenure and how they are related to affective organisational commitment of secondary school teachers in Zimbabwean secondary schools. The findings of the study can be adopted, modified or improved for use by the Public Service Commission and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

III. Methodology

The study adopted mixed methodology, and descriptive survey design was used. Since the study used mixed methods, questionnaires were used to solicit data while, face to face interviews and focus group interviews, were used as research instruments to generate data from participants. A questionnaire involving seven point Likert scales ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used to collect data from teachers. The items contained in the questionnaires focused on independent variables concerning biographical factors, The dependant variable Affective commitment was measured using Affective Commitment Scale Appendices (A and F) adapted from Allen and Meyer (1997) involving a seven point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Concerning quantitative method, secondary schools were stratified according to categories. The categories included; Mission schools, Government schools and council schools. From each category Proportionate representation using the ratio 1; 2; 10 was made to ensure all the categories were well represented. Finally systematic random sampling was done from each stratum to obtain a representative sample of 230 teachers from all categories. On qualitative methods a semi structured interview guide and focus group discussions were used to collect data from 12 teachers 2 Deputy heads 3 heads of departments, 4 School heads, 4 Education officers and 1 Deputy Provincial Education Director who were purposively sampled. The key informants and teachers were selected from Mashonaland Central Province in Zimbabwe. A statistical program SPSS was used to investigate the relationships among variables in the research model. Regardless of the types of dependent or independent variables, linear multiple step wise regression analyses were performed in order to find out the significance of the variables. The qualitative data were analysed using NVivo to come up with themes.

Findings

Figure 1 below shows quantitative findings of biographical factors and how they are related to affective organisational commitment of secondary school teachers.

Biographical factors and affective commitment N =8

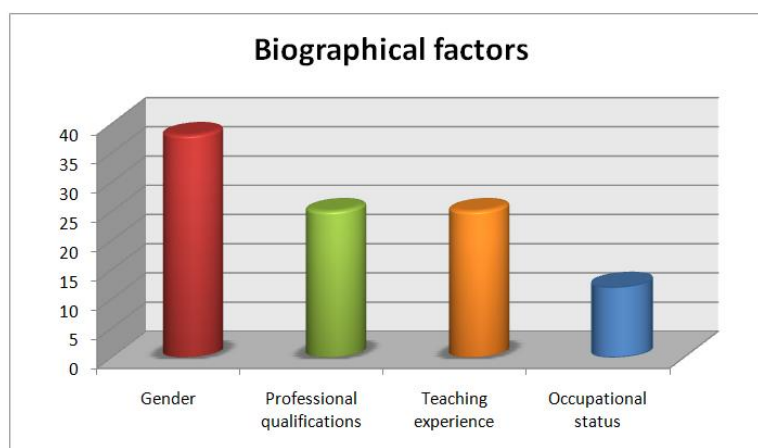


Figure 4.1: Biographical factors and their relationship to affective commitment

Figure.1 above shows all the biographical factors collectively and how they are related to teachers' affective commitment. Of the factors gender mostly explained the variation in affective commitment followed by professional qualifications and teaching experience and occupational status lastly. The following themes emerged from qualitative data

Theme 1 Gender, qualifications and affective commitment

Theme2. Economic performance and pupils' performance

Theme 3:Age and affective commitment

IV. Discussion

The study established that Biographical factors were linked and obtained through the Input evaluation of Stufflebeam's 1971 and revised in (2007)'s Context Input Process Product (CIPP) model of evaluation which according to prior research, serves structuring decisions by projecting and analyzing alternative procedural designs of employees (Boulmetis and Dutwin 2005).

Results of stepwise multiple regression revealed four biographical factors which are related to affective organisational commitment of teachers. Of the four gender came as the most significant variable associated to affective commitment of secondary school teachers. These findings confirm and concur with review of related literature concerning the gender –model Khalali and Asmawi (2012) and gender difference to organisational commitment Parker and McEvoy (1993). However, the findings contradict Kushman (1992) 's job model's research and Hawkins (1998) research findings discussed in review of related literature that gender does not explain any variation in affective organisational commitment. The situation in Zimbabwe could be necessitated by economic meltdown conditions leading to unemployment hence men and women are joining the education sector as a last resort because it is the main source of employment.

Secondly professional qualifications and teaching experience are associated with affective organisational commitment of secondary school teachers. Professional qualifications have emerged as a predictor of affective commitment in Zimbabwe because teachers who are highly qualified because of remuneration, opt to join greener pastures than those who are not highly qualified. The above findings concur with data obtained from interviews which reveals that there is a strong connection between age gender and, teachers' qualifications. Of the interviewed respondents, (7)-(2 female, 5 male) shared their opinion on this subject matter and concurred that there is a nexus between attributes of gender, age and their qualifications and their level of affective organisational commitment. The rationale for this prediction is that people with low qualifications generally have more difficulty in changing the profession and therefore show a greater commitment to the organisation. Chughtai and Zafar (2006) have reported findings consistent with this rationale.

Lastly of the biographical factors which galvanizes teachers' affective commitment in Zimbabwe is occupational status. Teachers who have greater responsibilities in the education sector tend to be satisfied with work because their capabilities are realized paving way for new status in the organisation. This implies that policies and practices concerning the movement of teachers' particularly upward movement contributes to teachers' status resulting in influencing teachers affective organisational commitment. Evidence from literature indicates that promotion and provision of high compensation lead to a higher organisational commitment because if teachers note an indication of how much an organisation values its workers they enhance their self-worth and feelings of importance McElroy (2001). Consistent with this is in agreement with literature discussed pertaining to Chughtai and Zafar (2006) findings that status afforded through promotional opportunities is positively related to affective organisational commitment of employees. Despite from quantitative findings, age is not significant predictor of affective commitment, responses from key informants reveals that age contributes to teachers' affective organisational commitment. It emerged from qualitative findings that there is determination to work and greater affective organisational commitment in teachers of the older cohort than in the younger generation which is not devoted. This commitment embedded in old teachers is said to emanate from strong motivation, value and passion for work.

On the issue of age group 20-50 years and its influence to affective commitment, interviewed respondents mooted that in most instances, the economic outlook is mostly a key factor to teachers' affective organisational commitment. Study participants from qualitative findings believe the economy has a lot to do, because of the meltdown, a number of young teachers who caught up in this economic meltdown era, considering their needs and demands are opting to look for alternative employment because things are tough for them. However study participants believe that older teachers' age ranges above 51 to 65 years are affectively committed to the organisation, because this category of teachers experienced better life before this economic meltdown era and their demands are less as compared to young teachers. Sentiments expressed reveal that young teachers are acting more like missionaries hence this is affecting their level of affective organisational commitment.

Thus on the aspect of age having a contribution on affective commitment of teachers in the organization, 12 participants from qualitative findings concurred whilst only a few 4 disagreed. It emerged that teacher's age has a lot of contribution because young teachers behave in a way which may not be expected whilst elderly teachers, are well behaved. It has been noted that young teachers do not perform well because their focus is on money unlike older teachers who are affectively committed, value their job, and perform much better than young teachers. These sentiments expressed are in agreement with what has been alluded in literature from Shin and Reyes, (1991) ; Allen and Meyer, (1993) that age has an influence on affective commitment, as age increases teachers' commitment increases and pupils performance is raised. However, findings from multiple regression analysis and related literature from Hawkins, (1998); Morrow and McElroy,(1987) depicts that as the age ranges changes there is no direct relationship to teachers affective commitment and their influence on pupils performance. However the researcher believes all the two categories of teachers are experiencing similar problems younger teachers in terms of needs and demands and older teachers in terms of responsibilities. Of the biographical factors, position experience and academic qualifications were not predicting teachers affective organisational commitment. This could have been attributed to economic meltdown being experienced in the country which has necessitated the employer to bunch salary grades of teachers hence salary differences is minimal.

V. Conclusion

The research found out that biographical characteristics are related to teachers affective organisational commitment though with varying degrees. This suffice to indicate that schools performance and pupils performance are being influenced by biographical factors of teachers in Zimbabwean secondary schools.

Recommendations

This study therefore recommends that;

- Educational planners must stay abreast of the formal and informal impulse of teacher commitment for continual refocusing of selection and recruitment in teachers' colleges to consider age in an effort to beef up teaching with elderly teachers so as to enhance learning outcomes for pupils as well as ensuring effectiveness of inputs and mechanisms that deliver education.
- Teacher retention need to be maintained with strong momentum taking into cognisance various long service certificates awards and also incorporating various methods in teaching.

Further research

Similar studies could be conducted to establish the relationship between each biographical factor and pupils performance.

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