



JOB SECURITY AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN TEACHING HOSPITALS IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This research investigated the relationship between job security and employee engagement in teaching hospitals in South-South Nigeria, assessing the extent to which measures such as dedication, vigour and absorption are influenced or impacted by job security. The correlational design was adopted as the research design for the research, and data was obtained using the structured questionnaire from 124 staff in 7 teaching hospitals in South-south Nigeria. The Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient was utilized in the test for the hypotheses of the study, with all relationships observed to be significant and positive in nature. The findings showed that job security significantly contributes toward improving employee engagement, enhancing the extent to which workers are dedicated, vigorous and also absorbed in their roles and the organization. Going by the findings, it was concluded that the perceptions and assurance of job security positively drive the engagement of the employees. It was in this vein recommended that work arrangements and the structuring of such emphasize on the workers' significance and relevance to the organization.*

KEYWORDS: Job security, employee engagement, dedication, vigour, absorption, teaching hospitals in South-South Nigeria.



INTRODUCTION

Adifa (2022) noted that the Nigerian healthcare sector has increasingly become unstable and precarious owing to the growing number of employee exit and turnover from hospitals, absenteeism and the troubling disregard of workers for the quality of service of their relationship with patients, all of which demonstrate a poor level of engagement in the hospitals (Premium Times, 2021). The poor facilities and work systems within the health sector has, as Adifa (2022) observed, impacted on the workers' disposition toward roles and responsibilities, creating functional gaps and feelings of detachment and estrangement from obligations and functions, and contributing to poor performance outcomes in most hospitals within the Nigerian health sector.

Employees are an extremely valuable business asset, and employee engagement is undeniably a dominant source of competitive advantage at all organisational levels (Saks, 2006). Engaged employees also experience a heightened sense of meaningfulness in their work, associated with psychological safety and psychological availability (Werner, 2011). Engagement further enables employees to become absorbed in their work, to become dedicated to the organisation and its outcomes, while exhibiting vigour in their interactions and task performance (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma & Bakker, 2002). Important organisational outcomes are, therefore, derived from engaged employees, giving organisations a much-desired competitive advantage (Saks, 2006).

Job security, according to Anitha (2004), describes the workers' experience and the degree to which they experience some level of assurance and trust in their continuity with the organization. This, according to Anitha (2014) and supported by May et al. (2004) and Rich et al. (2010), impacts on their behaviour and disposition toward the organization. A study by Deci and Ryan (cited in Anitha, 2014) highlighted that a supportive approach from management, where care and concern is shown for employees, encourages a positive work experience and the assurance of role continuity which enriches workers' functionality (Steers, 2017). Employees with a positive experience at work benefit from being able to focus on their work and interpersonal development; as such, this factor was deemed highly significant in influencing employee engagement outcomes (Anitha, 2014).

Related research (Kimura, 2011; Fairlie, 2014) point to the significance of job security and its significance in advancing related outcomes of engagement. This follows the observation of Sethibe and Steyn (2018) that the perceptions held with regard to policies, work arrangement and other activities of the organization significantly impact on the effectiveness of employees and their desire to continue or stay with the organization. The lack of content addressing the relationship between job security and employee engagement in the Nigerian healthcare sector poses a major gap in employee engagement research. Knowledge of such would contribute toward advancing a more consistent position on the significance of job security and its actual role in stimulating preferred behavioural outcomes. This research thus focused on addressing the relationship between job security and employee engagement within the context of public teaching hospitals in South-South Nigeria.

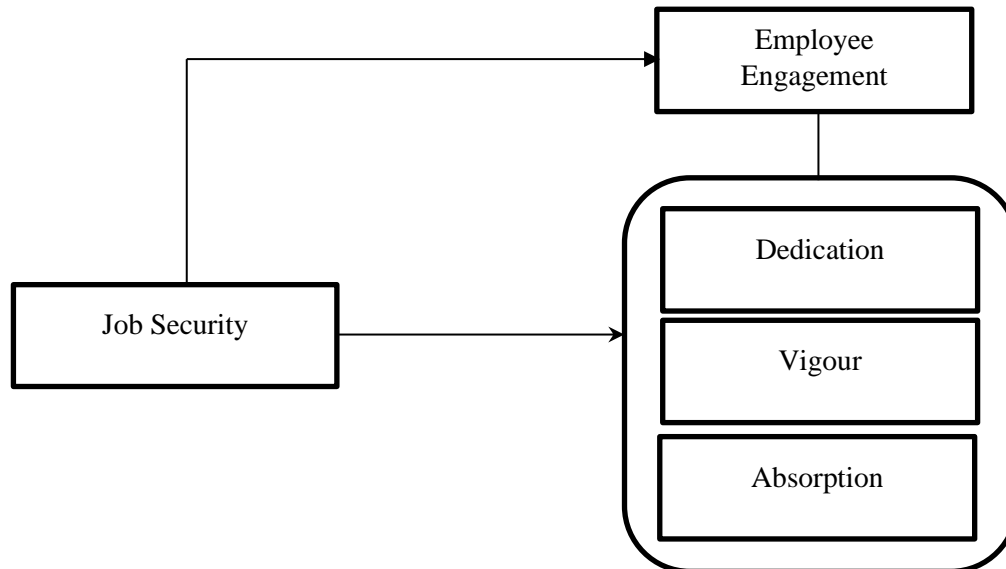


Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework for job security and employee engagement

Source: *Researcher's Desk (2023) with measures adapted from Schaufeli et al. (2002).*

Purpose and Objectives of the Paper

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between job security and employee engagement in teaching hospitals in the South-South of Nigeria. To this end, the objectives of this research are to:

- i. Examine the relationship between job security and employee dedication in teaching hospitals in the South-South of Nigeria
- ii. Examine the relationship between job security and employee vigour in teaching hospitals in the South-South of Nigeria
- iii. Examine the relationship between job security and employee absorption in teaching hospitals in the South-South of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The research questions for this research are put forward as follows:

- i. What is the relationship between job security and employee dedication in teaching hospitals in the South-South of Nigeria?
- ii. What is the relationship between job security and employee vigour in teaching hospitals in the South-South of Nigeria?
- iii. What is the relationship between job security and employee absorption in teaching hospitals in the South-South of Nigeria?



Statement of the Hypotheses

The following hypothetical statements are put forward in line with the purpose of the study. These are stated as follows:

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between job security and dedication in teaching hospitals in the South-South of Nigeria.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between job security and vigour in teaching hospitals in the South-South of Nigeria.

HO₃: There is no significant relationship between job security and absorption in teaching hospitals in the South-South of Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Exchange Theory

Blau (cited in Tetrick, Coyle-Shapiro, Chen & Shore, 2007) proposed the social exchange theory in 1964, defining a social exchange relationship as involving unspecified obligations in which there are favours that create diffuse future obligations, not precisely defined ones, and the nature of the return cannot be bargained about but must be left to the discretion of the one who makes it. The social exchange theory is grounded in an economic model of human behaviour whereby interactional processes between individuals are motivated by a desire to maximize rewards and minimize losses.

The importance of adopting a social exchange perspective is based on the rationale that job security influences the workers' disposition toward their roles and the organization (Narasimhan, Narayanan & Srinivasan, 2013). This is as the exchange theory explains the negotiated exchanges between employees for executing efficient and effective job-processes (Wu, Chuang & Hsu, 2014). Social exchange theory argues that individuals or groups adopt to form contact with others for the expectation of a reward (Yang, Wang, Wong & Lai, 2008).

Job Security

Job security has been defined and presented in many different ways by researchers and practitioners. This term is understood as the state of knowing that one's job is secure and that one is unlikely to be dismissed or made redundant. Adebayo and Lucky (2012) refer to job security as the assurance of long-term placement in the organization offered to the worker by the organization. Arabi (2000) defined job security as the probability that an individual will keep their job; a job with a high level of security is such that a person with the job would have a little chance of losing it. Barling and Kelloway (2016) posit that many factors threaten job security: globalization, outsourcing, downsizing, recession, and new technology, to name a few.

Subsequently, Witte (2019) narrates what typifies this subjective conceptualization of job insecurity is that it concerns insecurity about the future: insecure employees are uncertain about whether they will retain or lose their current job. They are groping in the dark as far as their future within the organization or company is concerned. De Witte and Näswall (2003) posit



that employees who feel uncertain cannot adequately prepare themselves for the future, since it is unclear to them whether actions should be undertaken or not.

Generally, certain types of jobs and industry jobs have been perceived to have high job security. For instance, government jobs, educational jobs, healthcare jobs and law enforcement jobs are deemed to be very secure while on the other hand, jobs in the private sector are widely perceived to offer lower job security, which may also be according to industry, location, occupation and other factors (Adebayo & Lucky, 2012). Weldegebriel, Ejigu, Weldegebriel and Woldie (2016) argue that the concept of job security can either be implied based on workers' perceptions of organizational stability and wellbeing or outrightly expressed in the organization's practices and policies (Diana *et al.*, 2020).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement can be taken into account in various dynamics. Employee engagement is often associated with the engagement of the business results of an organization; a higher involvement of employees in an organization is considered to improve the engagement of an organization. The concept of first engagement by Kazimoto (2016) explains that engagement is an expression and behaviour of a person who fully engages in work and in the team, as a manifestation of fulfilling his role in work, which is characterized by a personal presence physically, cognitively and emotionally. The cognitive aspects of employee engagement include beliefs held by employees regarding the organization, its leaders and working conditions.

Dedication

This describes the level of enthusiasm expressed by the workers in the engagement of their roles and responsibilities. Dedication is defined as a person's emotionally stable and positive attitude towards work with the aim of achieving personally significant results (professional demands and identity) (Sadovaya & Korchagina, 2016). Meanwhile, according to Van Scotter and Motowidlo (2016), job dedication refers to a person's disciplined behaviour at work, which includes compliance in following the rules, working hard, having resilience in carrying out tasks and being able to take the initiative in solving problems. Dedication refers to the strength of engagement in a job and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenges (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Dedication is one's sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge.

Vigour

This refers to the workers' physical exertion of energy, vitality and focus on their roles in the organization (Saks, 2006). Engaged workers are full with energy (vigour), strongly involved in their work (dedication), and often fully concentrated and happily engrossed in their work activities (absorption). Vigour is a high level of energy and mental resilience while working and dedication is described as being strongly involved in one's work with a sense of passion. Vigour is characterized by a high level of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work and persistence in the face of difficulty. Enthusiasm can be felt from the high level of energy and endurance of the mind while working, the willingness to give the best in a job, and perseverance when facing a problem (Schaufeli, 2017).



Absorption

This measure of workers' engagement refers to the extent to which the worker is engrossed in their work or roles. Absorption describes a condition in which workers spend considerable time and energy in their roles or functions (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2012; Sun, 2019). Absorption refers to the state in which one is highly concentrated and happily engrossed in the work so that he or she feels time passes quickly and it is difficult to detach from work. Absorption is being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work which makes workers to feel like time passes by quickly (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2012). It mirrors the extent to which the worker can be considered as having deep interest and physical involvement in the engagement of their functions or duties in the organization (Sun, 2019; Saks, 2006).

Job Security and Employee Engagement

Research works have shown that job security induces organizational commitment of workers. Davy, Kinicki and Scheck (2017) discovered that job security is significantly related to employee commitment. Lambert (2011) views job security as an extrinsic comfort that has a positive relation with workers' commitment and performance. Akpan (2013) reports that job security has a significant impact on organizational commitment. However, Rosenblatt *et al.* (2019) report in their study that organizational commitment and job engagement negatively correlated with job insecurity. This finding is in agreement with the research by Guest (2004) who discovered that low job security and working conditions had adverse effects on employee commitment and job satisfaction.

However, Khan, Nawaz, Aleem and Hamed (2012) in their study discovered that job safety/security is significantly related to commitment and performance. This finding was supported by the research findings of Abdullah and Ramay (cited in Akpan, 2012) who reported a significant positive relationship between job security and organizational commitment of employees. This certifies that job security induces employee commitment in any work situation. In other words, employees who perceive the threat of job security may become less committed to the organization they are working for and may decide to quit the job. Thus, satisfaction with job security is positively correlated with both organizational commitment and job engagement (Yousef, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted in this study is the correlational design. The correlational design is considered useful and suitable in this research as it offers a much more detailed and structured approach toward the measurement and assessment of the relationship between the variables (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The accessible population for this study is therefore 269 permanent staff operating within the 7 teaching hospitals registered and listed on the directory of the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN) in the South-South of Nigeria. The study also focuses on full-term workers which range from doctors, nurses, to laboratory attendants, emphasizing more on middle level staff; however, administrative and maintenance staff (cleaners, messengers and security staff) are not included in the study given concerns of their capacity to understand and apply themselves toward addressing the items of the research.



A sample size of one hundred and fifty-nine (159) constituted the sample size determined by utilizing the formula developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) for sample determination for a finite population. Hence, the sample for this research is 159 employees from the tertiary health institutions in South-South Nigeria. Data for this research anchored on the primary data which was sourced using the structured questionnaire instrument. Job security was measured using a 3-item instrument while employee engagement was measured using a 9-item instrument capturing measures, such as dedication, vigour and absorption (Anitha, 2014; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2012). The measurement of the instrument was based on the score outcome of 0.7. The result for the Cronbach alpha reliability test for this research is illustrated using Table 1 accordingly.

Table 1: Cronbach alpha reliability test

Variables	No. of Items	Alpha coefficients
Job security	3	0.912
Dedication	3	0.907
Vigour	3	0.918
Absorption	3	0.879

Source: *Research data, 2023*

Evidence from Table 1 affirms the substantiality of the instruments and their capacity in clearly addressing the operational qualities and properties for the variables of interest to the investigation.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

The field report shows that a total of 159 questionnaire copies were distributed to the target tertiary health institutions in South-South Nigeria. One hundred and twenty-four (124) copies of the questionnaire copies duly completed were retrieved from the firms within the specified time range for retrieval. All 124 copies were observed to be in good and admissible condition for the analysis. As such, only 35 copies were lost in the process of retrieving the data. The result shows that out of a total of 159 copies which comprised 100% of the sample size, 124 copies, which made up for 79% of the total amount, was utilized.

Univariate Data Analysis

Table 2: Distribution for the variables of the study

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Dedication	124	3.5054	.71313	-.544	.217	-.782	.431
Vigour	124	3.3522	.87658	.074	.217	-.949	.431
Absorption	124	3.4462	.83821	-.376	.217	-.431	.431
Job security	124	3.4597	.95858	-.361	.217	-1.153	.431
Valid N (listwise)	124						

Source: *Research data, 2023*



Table 2 describes the distribution for the summaries on the variables of the study. The result shows that all four variables (job security, dedication, vigour and absorption) are well evident within the tertiary health institutions in South-South Nigeria. The evidence shows that the workers within the target institutions of interest in this study express activities and behaviour which are considered as confidence in their continuity with the organization, and as being engaged cognitively or mentally in the organization and with their roles.

Bivariate Data Analysis

The hypotheses of the study are all tested at a 95% confidence interval using the 0.05 level of significance as threshold in the assessment of significant correlations between the variables. The Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient is adopted as the statistical tool in the assessment of the correlations between the variables. The Spearman is considered appropriate given its low emphasis on data parameters, such as normality of distribution and the homogeneity of variance, hence its applicability in most social and behavioural related studies.

Table 3: Job security and employee engagement

		Job Security	Dedication	Vigour	Absorption
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.215*	.692**	.621**
	Job Security Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.017	.000	.000
	N	124	124	124	124
	Correlation Coefficient	.215*	1.000	.420**	.321**
	Dedication Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	.	.000	.000
	N	124	124	124	124
	Correlation Coefficient	.692**	.420**	1.000	.636**
	Vigour Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	124	124	124	124
	Correlation Coefficient	.621**	.321**	.636**	1.000
	Absorption Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	124	124	124	124

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

Table 3 illustrates the relationship between job security and the measures of employee engagement. The result from the test show that job security has a significant impact on the three measures of dedication ($\rho = 0.215$, $P = 0.17$), vigour ($\rho = 0.692$, $P = 0.000$) and absorption ($\rho = 0.621$, $P = 0.000$). The results depict job security as contributing significantly as a predictor of the extent to which the public teaching hospitals in South-South Nigeria are able to achieve substantial levels of employee engagement, thus expressing dedication, vigour and absorption. Therefore, based on the evidence generated, all null hypothetical statements are rejected as the findings show that:

- i. There is a significant relationship between job security and dedication in teaching hospitals in the South-South of Nigeria.



- ii. There is a significant relationship between job security and vigour in teaching hospitals in the South-South of Nigeria.
- iii. There is a significant relationship between job security and absorption in teaching hospitals in the South-South of Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Adebayo and Lucky (2012) view job security as the possibility or probability of an individual keeping his or her job. Another component of quality of work life, as proposed by Lau and Bruce, is reward systems which have to do with procedures set up by an organization to reward and motivate her employees monetarily or otherwise. Training and development is also a component of quality of work life whereby employees learn specific knowledge and skills to improve performance in their roles. Training and development, according to Kenneth (2015), is the study of how structured experiences help employees gain work-related knowledge, skills and attitudes, while Gordon (2016) sees training and development as a type of activity which is planned systematically and which results in an enhanced level of skills, knowledge and competence that are necessary to perform work effectively and efficiently.

In fact, job security is one of the most influential means of motivating employees particularly in times of economic downturn. Employees' belief that they will not lose their jobs or they will be employed in the same organization as long as they want is a significant reason for motivation. Therefore, job security is one of the most significant variables of employee satisfaction which expresses the general attitude of the employee towards his/her job (Bakan & Büyükbeşe, 2004). Job security plays an important role in both social and working life because it helps individuals to not worry about their future, contributes to maintaining labor peace, increasing organizations' productivity and protecting social balance and values. For this very reason, in order not to cause an employee's prestige loss in society, employees should not be dismissed from the organizations without reasonable grounds, because job security has political and social dimensions.

Therefore, if a country's employees are dismissed without showing a reason, it is difficult to talk about social order, peace and stability (Güzel, 2001, p. 19; Taşkent, 1992, p. 38). Today, job security is perceived as an indispensable right of an employee which guarantees that the employee and his/her family will not be deprived of their income and it maintains an honorable life¹. Thus, employees consider the condition of job security just at the beginning of their careers so as to feel confident about the future. They oppose governments' privatization policies in order not to lose this warranty or prefer to work in the public sector though they may earn less as compared to those working in the private sector due to the offer of job security in public sectors.



CONCLUSION

The relationship between job security and employee engagement is such that, as revealed, drives the dedication, vigour and absorption of public teaching hospitals in South-South Nigeria. The findings support the positive role of job security in achieving substantial levels in the dedication, vigour and absorption within the organization, thus leading to its overall level of engagement in their behaviour. As such, it is affirmed that the evidence of job security impacts positively and enhances the extent to which the employees are dedicated, vigorous and absorbed in their roles and functions in public teaching hospitals in South-South Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATION

Following the evidence generated in the study, it is recommended that the leadership of public teaching hospitals in South-South Nigeria should focus on developing and designing work structures that emphasize the longevity and security of jobs. The management can drive or motivate workers more when work conditions are assuring of job continuity and security in the organization.

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