

The Effect of Demographic Characteristics on Organisational Commitment: a Study of Salespersons in the Soft Drink Industry in Nigeria

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Abstract

Researchers have been interested in the concept of organizational commitment as it has been linked with employee performance and ultimately organizational performance. Previous studies have looked at the antecedents of organizational commitment and this study follows that same line of research. Specifically it looks at the role of age, education, job position and organizational tenure as predictors of commitment. A sample of 118 salesmen from selected firms in the soft drinks industry in Rivers and Bayelsa states were involved in the study. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses with the aid of SPSS 15. The findings show that age, education, job position and organizational tenure are positively correlated with organizational commitment.

Keywords: Organisational Commitment, Salespersons, Soft Drink Industry

1. Introduction

For slightly over three decades now, organization commitment has been an important construct in management, specifically in the area of organization behavior. The popularity of the construct is predicated upon its relationship with several employee behaviors. For instance, several studies have shown that organization commitment has a positive impact on job performance (Meyer and Allen, 1997; Lambert and Hogain, 2009). Since employee organization commitment is a predictor of employee satisfaction and hence performance it has become subject of intensive study as enhanced employee performance has become an important source of competitive advantage to organizations (Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran 2005). Organization commitment is very important. How important it is might be more appreciated if we look at the long list of benefits that result from increased employee commitment in the literature. Among such benefits are: Increased job satisfaction (Vandenberg & Lance 1992), increased job performance (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), decreased employee turnover (Cohen, 1991), decreased intention to leave (Balfour & Wechsler, 1996) and decreased absenteeism (Barber et al. 1998).

In view of its importance, researchers have not only been interested in understanding the impact of organizational commitment on factors like performance etc, but more importantly, have been trying to identify the factors that can either build or destroy such commitment. Previous works on the antecedents of organizational commitment (Steers, 1977; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990) have identified three basic categories of antecedents: personal characteristics and job related factors. In times past, some selected studies have attempted to assess the impact of certain demographic factors like age, gender, organizational tenure etc on organizational commitment. However, the findings have been mixed, some have even been noncommittal. Furthermore, some writers have even suggested that a linear relationship between some demographic factors and organizational commitment is itself dependent on other factors and cannot be considered to be certain outside such contexts hence the need to examine the interaction between demographic factors and organizational commitment.

The Nigerian soft drink industry caters to a population that is considered the largest in Africa. It is an industry constituted of quite a number of producers but is dominated by two key players – Nigerian Bottling Company (The Coca-Cola franchiser) and Seven-Up Bottling Company (The PepsiCo franchiser) according to ManufacturingToday (2011). The core products of this industry are carbonated drinks, juice and bottled water. Bottled water production is carried out by virtually all players in the industry since there is a strong need for portable and clean water in Nigeria and also because water is a major raw material in the production of their other products (ManufacturingToday,2011). While Nigerian Bottling Company (NBC) and Seven-Up Bottling Company are the key players in this industry, Coca-Cola Nigeria is the leading producer thanks to a well established name, strong distribution network and massive marketing expenditure (Euromonitor International, 2012). The market for soft drinks, especially carbonates which is the major product, is still a growing market as it is projected that per capita consumption of carbonates will grow from 5 litres in 2010 to about 7 litres in 2016 (Financial Intellingence,2013).

Research studies show that most research on employee organizational commitment are carried out in western and highly industrialized setting (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer and Smith, 2000; Lambert and Hogan, 2009. Other

studies come from China, South Korea and other developing economics such as Pakistan (Cheng and Stockdale, 2003; Ko, Price and Mueller, 1997; Lee, Allen, Meyer and Rhee, 2001). Very few studies have originated from a sub-Saharan context. The transferability of findings of research carried out in a purely western industrialized country context to an African or sub-Saharan context is very doubtful. In this regard the observation by Suleman and Iles (2000, p. 72) to the effect that “the models of commitment have been developed and tested in western countries. There is a need for more systematic research to determine whether these models apply elsewhere”. This therefore necessitates a study in a Nigerian context.

In the pages that follow, I first provide an overview of some important and relevant literature on commitment and demographic characteristics of employees. I then develop the hypotheses that would enable us to answer relevant research questions. I then describe the method used to carry out the study. Findings will be presented and discussed there after.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Organisational Commitment

This study, localized in the Rivers State of Nigeria, involves the integration of employee organizational commitment and demographic characteristics constructs. The Nigeria soft drink industry is dominated by two companies. These companies employed various grades of workers with varying levels of education, age, and gender as salesmen. The brief review here would discuss both constructs. The two construct will then be use to develop hypotheses for the study.

Organizational commitment has been integral to organizational research for over 25 years (Gautam, Van Dick, & Wagner, 2004, P. 301). As a construct, organizational commitment is a fundamental aspect of the employer-employee relationship (Mohammed, Taylor, & Hassan, 2006). Organizational commitment remains popular (Cullen, Parlobteeah, & Victor, 2003) and encompasses multiple dimensions and conceptual leitmotifs (Loi et al., 2006). Organizational commitment also relates to other variables as an antecedent, consequence, or correlate (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Contemporary research largely extends and environmentally contextualizes predictive aspects of organizational commitment.

The research area of commitment is marked by conceptual chaos. Work by Morrow (1993) has played an important role in helping to clarify the various domains to which twenty-five commitment related concepts and measures exist. She reviewed and compared the major forms of work commitment and explored the interrelationships between them. Morrow identified five major forms of work commitment in the literature: value focus, career focus, job focus, organization focus, and union focus. Further research by Morrow (1993) produced a model of work commitment that included effective organizational commitment, continuance organizational commitment, career commitment, ob involvement, and work ethic endorsement. One theme in the literature is clear. Progress in understanding organizational commitment will not be made until conceptual and empirical distinctions among various forms of work commitment are recognized and demonstrated (Mueller, Wallace, & Price, 1992)

The ambiguous nature of commitment has been noted by O'Reilly and Chatman (1996). Commitment has been used to refer to antecedents and consequences, the process of becoming attached, and the state attachment itself. The authors attribute the lack of consensus to a failure to differentiate among the antecedents and consequences of commitment and the basis for attachment. They also point out that some investigations have explored the processes through which one becomes committed (Salancik, 1977) or the impact of individual and organizational influences on this process (Angle & Perry, 1983; Steers, 1977). Others researchers have examined attitudinal or behavioral consequences of commitment such as positive affect and loyalty (Kanter, 1972), motivation and involvement (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982), and behaviors such as performance (Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf, 1994; Mowday et al., 1974) and organizational adaptability (Angle & Perry, 1981). This lack of agreement as to what constitutes organizational commitment has resulted in a multiplicity of definitions, a small sample of which is shown in table 1 below:

Table 1: Definition of Commitment

- "...an obliging force which requires that the person honor the commitment, even in the face of fluctuating attitudes and whims" (Brown, 1996)
- "... the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Mowday et al, 1979).
- "... the psychological attachment felt by the person for the organization, it will reflect the degree to which the individual internalizes or adopts characteristics or perspectives of the organization" (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).
- "... a psychological state that binds the individual to the organization" (Allen & Meyer, 1990).
- "... organizational commitment is defined as a psychological treaty signed between the person and

The most popular view and definitions of organizational commitment is provided by the works of Allen and Meyer (1990) who identified three dimensions or facets of organizational commitment. This is known as the three-component model of organizational commitment, made up of: affective, continuance and normative commitment. Each of these commitment was defined as "employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization." (Allen and Meyer, 1990) This means that employees who stay with the company are staying because they want to do so. Affective commitment is considered the dominant theme in the three-component model and also the most desirable (Tek-Yew, 2009). Continuance commitment refers to "commitment based on costs that employees associate with leaving the organization." It refers to the extent to which the employee perceives that leaving the company would be costly. In other words, continuance commitment is based on mental and thorough cost/benefit analysis on the part of the employee which leads him to conclude that staying is a better option than leaving. Continuance commitment is considered the lowest level of commitment and the least desirable. Normative commitment refers to the employee's feeling of obligation to the organization and the belief that staying is the moral thing to do. Such commitment is based on a moral sense and is therefore considered more important than continuance commitment.

2.2 Demographic Characteristics

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2001 p. 94) demographics is the study of human population in terms of size, density, location, age, gender, race, occupation and other statistics. Demographic are the quantifiable of the statistics of a given a population. Demographic is also used to identify the study of quantifiable sub-set within a given population which characterize that population over a specific point in time. In the study of the antecedents of employee organization commitment employees' demographic characteristics are some of the most commonly used variables in relation to organizational commitment and job satisfaction although some studies have found inconsistent results (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Al-Qarioti and Al-Enezi, 2004). Mottaz (1988) found that the influence of demographic variables were indirect through work reward and work values. Some studies have found that personal variables such as age, tenure, education, gender and marital status played a significant role in enhancing employees side bets (Becker, 1960; Hrebiniak and Aluto, 1972; Stevens et al., 1978) while other have not found a significant relationship between these variables and organizational commitment (Ritzer and Trice, 1969; Aven et al., 1993). These variables are discussed below as basis of development of hypotheses.

3. Development of Hypotheses

As listed above, previous studies have provided some empirical studies and theoretical backup that personal variables such as age tenure, education, gender and others have a relationship with employee commitment to an organization. The following hypotheses are developed and a research model grounded in pertinent theories, developed to enable testing.

3.1 Age and Organization Commitment

Of the range of demographics variables that have been found in previous studies to be related to employee commitment, age seems to occupy a prominent place. Mathieu and Zajac (1990) did a meta-analytic study involving 41 samples and 10335 subjects. The conclusion arrived at by the study was that there was a statistically significant positive correlation between age and employee commitment. Alle and Meyer (1990) also studied the link between age and affective commitment and found a positive correlation between the two variables. Karsh et al (2005) in their study of 6584 nursing home employee found that unlike younger employees, older employees displayed a higher continuance commitment.

The above notwithstanding, other researcher have failed to show a significant relationship between age and organizational commitment. For example, Hawkins (1998) in a study of the affective commitment levels of 396 high school principles found a statistically non-significant correlation ($r = -.004$) between age and affective commitment. Colbert and Kwon (2000) in a study of 497 college and university internal auditors, failed to show any reliable relationship between age and organizational commitment. On the basis of the studies referred to

here it may be concluded that while the relationship between age and organizational commitment seem to be inconsistent, the weight of evidence in literature tends to support a positive relationship between age and organizational commitment (Kaldenberg, Becker and Zvonkovic (1995) and Price and Mueller (1981) Hence:

H1: Age is positively correlated with organizational commitment.

3.2 Level of Education and Organization Commitment

Level of Education is a very important demographic factor. While a number of researchers have tried to establish a link between the level of education and organization commitment, the results generally seem to be inconsistent and inconclusive. For instance, some researchers have arrived at the conclusion that education is negatively related to organizational commitment, meaning that the higher the employees' level of education the lower the employee's commitment to the organization (Steers, 1977; Angle and Perry, 1981; Bateman and Strasser, 1984; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Eskildsen, Kristensen and Westlund, 2004). Other researchers seem however to have concluded otherwise. For example, Gallie and White (1993) found that higher educated employees have a higher task commitment. Also according to Mathieu and Zajac, (1990) Commitment levels and intentions to remain are likely to be lower for highly educated employees who have a greater number of job options. It would seem that most studies done in Europe and America linking level of education to employee organization commitment concludes that the relationship is negative. Perhaps that can be explained. In most industrialized countries where these studies are done, it will seem that the more educated employees get, the more opportunities are available for them elsewhere. However, a study done in Pakistan, Iqbal (2010) also concluded a negative correlation between education and organization commitment. Salami (2008) however in a study carried out in Nigeria concluded that there is a positive correlation between education and organization commitment. This is understandable because in Nigeria, as a result of our extremely low level of industrialization, more education does not necessarily translate into more opportunities outside of your current employment. In this context therefore, more education perhaps can only assist you to strengthen your position in the job you already have. In view of the above, it's safe to conclude that

H2: There is positive correlation between Level of Education and organizational commitment

3.3 Organizational Tenure and Commitment

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) reviewed 38 samples that included 12290 subjects and found a positive link between organizational tenure and affective commitment. They report an overall weighted mean correlation of $r=.17$ ($p<.01$). Kushman (1992) in his study of urban elementary and middle school teachers also found a positive correlation ($r=.17$; $p>.05$) between the number of years in teaching and organizational commitment. Meyer and Allen (1993) indicated that an analysis of organizational tenure showed a mild curvilinear relationship with organizational commitment. They showed that middle tenure employees exhibited less measured commitment than new or senior employees did. These findings are supported by Liou and Nyhan (1994), who found a negative relationship between tenure and affective commitment ($t = -3.482$). However, these two authors did not find significant correlations between continuance commitment and employee tenure

In a study of Japanese industrial workers, Tao, Takagi, Ishida and Masuda (1998) found that organizational tenure predicted internalization ($R^2 = .262$ $p < .05$). Consistent with other researchers, Hawkins (1998) found a statistically significant positive correlation ($r = .25$) between the organizational commitment and tenure of 202 high school principals. Colbert and Kwon (2000) found a significant relationship ($r = .11$, $p < .05$) between tenure and organizational commitment. Hence:

H3: Organizational Tenure is Positively correlated with Organizational Commitment.

3.4 Job Position and Organization Commitment

While the relationship between organization tenure and employee organization commitment has received extensive research attention (Becker, 1960; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; and Chen, 1993). Job tenure or positioned tenure has also received some attention. For instance Stevens et al; (1978) found that Job tenure was a positive predictor of organizational commitment while positional tenure was a negative predictor position tenure refer to the number of year spent in the same position while Job tenure (or organizational tenure) refer to years an employee has spent with an organization. In this study however, our attention is on Job position. In a study carried out in Pakistan, Buff (2009), found out that Job position among other demographic variables had a positive and significant relationship with organization commitment. Another study in India by Kanchana and Panchanatham (2012) it was also found that there was positive and significant association between job position and organizational commitment. Balay (2010) in his study of teachers in Turkey also came to a similar conclusion. Hence:

H4: Job Position is positively correlated with Organizational Commitment

As has been pointed out earlier, organization commitment, because it has a close link with positive employee behavioral outcome, is very important. In this study we will have to find the relationship of organizational commitment with the four important demographic variables: age, gender, organizational tenure and job position as shown in the research frame work. (Figure 1 below).

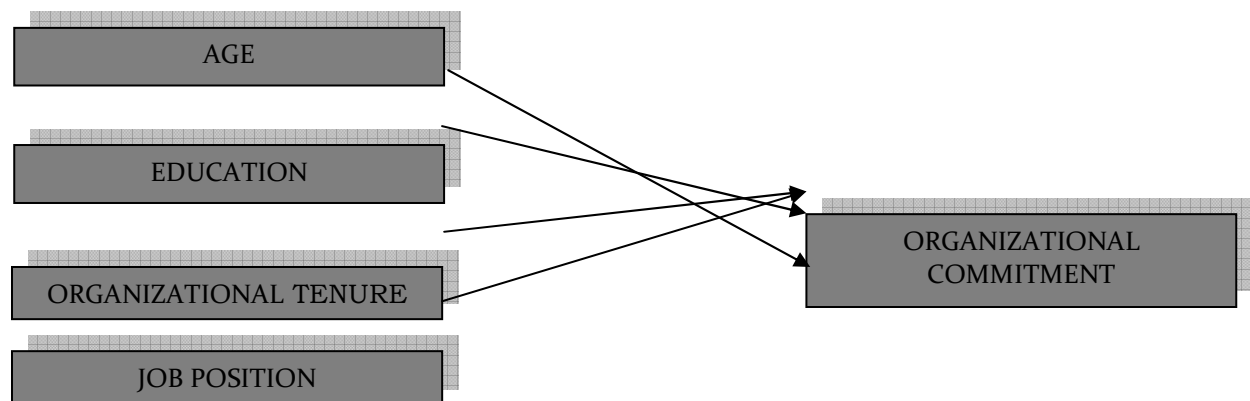


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of hypothesized relationships.

4. Methodology

4.1 Sample

The study focused on the Nigerian soft drink industry. This industry as a whole contributes immensely to the Gross Domestic product and is one area of manufacturing which seems to be doing well in an economy that is based not on manufacturing but on the natural resource oil. The sample was drawn from two of the largest players in the industry and constituted of the salesmen of these companies in Port Harcourt and Ahoada, both in Rivers State and Yenagoa in Bayelsa State. Companies desire commitment from all their staff irrespective of rank.

The sample therefore covered all categories of sales staff including the management cadre. Initially, the sales managers of the two companies were contacted through hand delivered letters which gave a brief description of the study and also invited them to permit their staff to participate in the study. Both companies willingly obliged. A sample size of a hundred and twenty five staff was chosen through convenience sampling.

Data was obtained using self-administered questionnaires which were distributed by hand over a two month period. In other to speed up the process, in cases where it was possible, the branch manager or a senior manager was given the questionnaires to distribute and retrieve. The retrieval of the completed questionnaires was also done by hand. At the end of the process a total of 118 responses were retrieved. 116 of these provided complete and therefore usable information.

4.2 Measure

Data was gathered in this study using a questionnaire that basically had two parts. The first part was designed to collect data relevant to the study such as gender, age, tenure and job position.

The second part of the questionnaire was a measurement of organization commitment. This study utilized a measure which was originally developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) and which was shortened with a 12 item scale by Meyer et al (1993). The items were scored on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree (i) to strongly agree (v). Examples of the scale items are: “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization”. “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me”. The coefficient alpha of the scale used for this study is 0.866.

4.3 Analysis of Data

The data was analyzed by using SPSS 15 (Statistical package for the social sciences). Correlation analysis was emphasized. The criterion variable or dependent variable was organizational commitment while the predictor variables are the demographic factors age, education, tenure and job position.

5. Findings

5.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic distribution of respondents

Items	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age		
20 – 29 yrs.	35	30.2
30 – 39 yrs.	52	44.8
40 yrs and above	29	25
Gender		
Male	90	77.6
Female	26	22.4
Job position		
Managerial	26	7
Non-managerial	90	93
Years in the organisation		
0 – 5 yrs.	12	10.3
6 – 10 yrs.	57	49.1
More than 10 yrs.	47	40.5
Educational Level		
Diploma	18	15.5
Degree	65	56.0
Postgraduate	33	28.4

According to table 1, approximately 77.6% of the respondents were male and 22.4% of the respondents were female. The table also shows that in respect of age, 30.2% of the respondents were between the ages of 20 – 29 years, 44.8% of the respondents were between 30 – 39 years and 25% were 40 years and above. In terms of job tenure, table 1 informs us that 10.3% of the respondents had been in the organization for up to five years or less, 49.1% had served in the organization for between 6 and 10 years while 40.5% of the respondents had served the organization for more than 10 years. The table under reference also gives us information with regard to the job positions of the respondents. Here there are two broad groups; approximately 7% belonging to the managerial cadre and 93% belonging to non managerial cadre. Finally, the table shows us the distribution of respondents in terms of educational level. 15.5% of the respondents had a diploma, 56% of the respondents had an undergraduate degree while 28.4% of respondents had a postgraduate degree.

5.2 Demographic Characteristics and Employee Organisational Commitment

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std.Error of the estimate
1	.885 ^a	.783	.756	.88339

a. predictors: (constant), years worked in the organization, educational level, current job position, age.

Table 2 above shows the correlation between the predictor variables (age, education level, current job position and years worked) and employee organizational commitment. It should be observed that the correlation between the demographic factors and employee organization commitment is very high ($r = .885$). In doing correlation analysis, the important factors to watch out for are both the magnitude of the linear relationship and the direction of the relationship. In this case, it can be seen that the relationship between the demographic variables under reference and organizational commitment is very important. A relationship of $r = .885$ is both positive and great. This observation is confirmed by the fact that as shown in table 2 the four demographic variables account for 78.3% or approximately 80% of the change or variance in organization commitment.

Table 3: ANOVA

model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	36.413	4	9.103	11.671	.000 ^a
	Residual	86.622	111	.780		
	Total	87.034	115			

a. predictors: (constant), years worked in the organization, educational level, current job position, age.

b. Dependent variable: Organizational Commitment.

Analysis of variance was carried out and the results in table 3 were elicited. The results show a fit between the hypothesized model and the obtained data ($F=11.671$, $P=0.000$).

Table 4: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	F	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	4.413	.525		8.404	.000
Age	.802	.062	.032	3.932	.004
Educational level	.901	.110	.012	4.122	.001
Current job position	.071	.050	.011	.113	.911
Years worked in the organization	6.077	.123	0.65	11.624	.000

a. Dependent variable: Organizational Commitment.

The standardized coefficient for each of the independent variables was age ($\beta=.032$, $P=.004$), Education ($\beta .012$, $P=.001$); current job position ($\beta=.011$, $P=.911$) and years worked in the organization ($\beta=.065$, $P=0.000$).

On the basis of the above analysis it can be concluded that:

- Age is positively associated with organization commitment. This provides support for hypothesis.
- Education also was found to be positively correlated with organization commitment H2 is therefore supported in their study.
- Job position was positively associated with organization commitment.
- Organization tenure was positively correlated with organizational commitment this finding provides support for H4.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study has investigated the relationship between specific demographic characteristics and employee organization commitment in Nigerian samples. All the predicted relationships were observed. An examination of table 4 shows that Age, Education, Job position and job tenure made significant separate contributions to the relationship between demographic factors and organization commitment. Some of the variables seem however to be more powerful players than others. For instance, table 4, shows that in the Nigerian context, years worked in the organization (i.e tenure) seem to have a rather overwhelming influence. Age comes a very poor second in influencing organization commitment; current job positive and level of education make a positive but very minor contribution to the relationship between demographic factors studied and organization commitment.

The positive correlation between age and organization commitment found in this study is consistent with studies done elsewhere that have shown a positive link between the two variables (e.g Mathieu and Zajac, 1990, Allen and Meyer (1993), Bala, Eker and Eker (2008) Salami (2008). The positive relationship between age and organizational commitment might apparently be easily explained. For instance, younger employees may not have invested much in the company, they have not had much time to imbibe the culture of the company and identity with its vision and mission. Moreover they may be involved mainly in routine jobs that lack excitement and promise and may not even participate in decision making. Putting all these together there is a strong link that the young employees may not hesitate to move if a more favorable opportunity presented itself. Older employees find it much more difficult to leave for a variety of reasons.

Table 4, shows that organizational tenure was the most powerful contributor to organization commitment of the demographic variables under study. The strong positive correlations between tenure and commitment are consistent with previous studies (Rousseau & parks 1993; Meyer, Allen and Gaellatly 1990; Kolbert and Kwon 2000 and Salami 2008). The finding is also consistent with Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972) study which concluded that tenure was the most important variable that impacted on organization commitment. This may be because the longer an employee stays in an organization the more opportunity the employee has, not only to gain more experience but also develop a sense of belonging (Joiner and Bakalis, 2006).

Concerning the relationship between job position and organization commitment, the study results suggest a position correlation between the two variables. This result which is as predicted is consistent with the findings of Butt (2009) in Pakistan, Kanchana and Pananchanatham (2012) in India and Balay (2010) in Turkey.

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