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AUTONOMOUS AND CONTROLLED ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AS A PREDICTOR OF LECTURERS' JOB COMMITMENT IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
The study investigated autonomous and controlled organizational climate as a predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Correlation research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 2,585 lecturers in all the five public universities in Delta State, Nigeria. A sample size of 766 lecturers was drawn for the study using proportionate sampling technique. A researcher developed instruments titled ''Autonomous and Controlled Organizational Climate Scale (ACOCS)'' and ''Lecturers Job Commitment Scale (LJCS)'' were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by three experts, two from the Department of Educational Management and Policy, and one from the Department of Educational Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Cronbach alpha was used for a test of internal consistency of the instrument and it yielded overall reliability coefficients of, 0.80 and 0.77 for the clusters A and B of ACOCS respectively with the overall reliability index being 0.79, while coefficient value of 0.82 was obtained for LJCS. The researchers together with five research assistants collected data for the study using the direct approach method and 98% return was recorded. Simple regression was used to answer the research questions and test hypotheses 1 and 2. The findings of the study revealed among others that autonomous climate is a strong and significant predictor of lecturers' job commitment in universities in Delta State. Further results indicated that controlled climate is a low and significant predictor of lecturers' job commitment in universities in Delta State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that Directorate of Research, Innovation and Information Technology of National Universities Commission should develop hands and promote the publication of journals and books based on the findings of the study to serve as the blueprint for modifying the existing controlled climate to improve job commitment of lecturers.

Keywords: Autonomous, Controlled, Organization, Climate, Lecturers, Job Commitment

Introduction

Tertiary education is indispensable for economic, political and technological advancement. Tertiary education provides opportunities for students to acquire practical skills and sound knowledge to meet the manpower needs of the society. Nnebedum, Oshia, Nzewi and Nwanne (2023) maintained that tertiary institutions in Nigeria are Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Education among others. The apex of these tertiary institutions is university.

University is an institution of learning where teaching, learning, research and community service are provided to individuals to produced skilled manpower to contribute to the economic and technological growth of the nation. Omenyi and Chukwunonye (2023) opined that university education equips learners with relevant skills and sound knowledge for self-improvement and maximum contribution to development of the society. The collective behaviour, belief and job expectations from members of staff in universities are influenced by the organizational climate.

Organizational climate is the subjective feelings and perceptions of staff towards their work atmosphere. It is the set of features that influence the behaviour of members of staff within the workplace. Asikin, Suriansyah and Sulistiyana (2023) described organizational climate as the culture,

norms, and values prevailing in work environment. Organizational climate is collective perceptions and feelings about work procedure and activities in an establishment. Obionu, Ughamadu and Obiagwu (2024) described organizational climate as a set of attributes specific of a particular organization that may be deduced from the way the organization deals with its members and its environment. Organizational climate is the pattern of behaviour and beliefs that are widely shared within members of staff in an establishment. Contextually, organizational climate is the collective perception of work procedures, practices and values which are held in an organization over a long period.

Different forms of organizational climate exist in the workplace. Several scholars have identified the dimensions of organization climate as follows: open climate, closed climate, autonomous climate, controlled climate, familiar climate and paternal climate (Bentil, 2021; Odoh, 2021). The focus of this study is on autonomous and controlled dimensions of organizational climate to have opportunity to determine the precise dimensions that could have connection to the job commitment of lecturers.

Autonomous climate is the atmosphere that gives freedom to members of staff to perform their duties. Uba (2022) defined autonomous climate as a type of climate that portrays an atmosphere where members of staff have at their disposal a considerable degree of freedom to act in the workplace. There is no internal or external influence in the ways in which lecturers carry out their responsibilities in universities with autonomous climate. In this kind of organizational climate, there is irregular supervision and control of the activities of lecturers. The freedom granted to lecturers in organization with autonomous climate can enhance creativity and innovation in the universities. In the same vein, Ezinine and Ughamadu (2021) pointed out that autonomous climate provides opportunity for lecturers to use their ideas, initiative and creativity in carrying out their duties. In this kind of organizational climate, lecturers are encouraged to come up with innovative or better ways of doing things. Lecturers are allowed to carry out their duties in the best way they know and want. However, lecturers are denied the liberty to conduct their work activities in the manner they desired in universities with controlled climate.

Controlled climate is a work atmosphere which is characterized by high directive and much restrictive on the activities of members of staff. Oviawe (2020) noted that controlled school climate is a work environment where the school administrators are highly domineering and inconsiderate but lay emphasis on productivity. There is high negligent of psychological needs, interpersonal relationship and job satisfaction of lecturers in universities with controlled climate. In such a climate, lecturers are overloaded with many routine duties. Kaneez and Daimi (2019) noted that in controlled climate, the activities of members of staff are centered around work which gives them little time to speak with one another. Organizations with controlled climate are highly task-oriented. In controlled climate, lecturers are heavily engaged with the tasks which give little or no time for interaction with each other. Ephraim and Renthlei (2021) maintained that all members of staff are hard working to such an extent that there is neither time for friendly interactions with each other nor space for divergence from prescribed commands and directions. The authors added that staff must timely complete their task and they also expect to be told personally about the way to accomplish it.

Job commitment is the willingness of staff to engage in work activities in an organization. Onukwu (2021) described job commitment as the degree to which an individual executes his or her roles in an institution with reference to certain specified standard set by the institution. The author added that job commitment is exhibited through regularity at work, attendance at meetings, promptness in discharging assigned duties and responsibilities towards achieving set objectives. It is how members of staff feel attached and want to make the maximum contribution to attainment of the set goals of an organization. According to Okwuise and Ugherughe (2023), job commitment is the degree of engagement and pleasure among staff of an organization. Job commitment is the willingness of academic staff of universities to contribute to attainment of set objectives. It is a strong desire to remain in a organization and readiness to perform assigned tasks. Job commitment is associated with greater involvement and putting efforts towards carrying out work activities

A committed staff is loyal and dedicated to his or her responsibility to attain high productivity in the workplace. Lecturers who are committed to their job show loyalty and exert discretionary efforts towards achieving the values and set goals of universities. Ezechukwu and Obi (2023) noted that the commitment of lecturers to their jobs is reflected in completing the job in time/before deadline, willing to perform extra duties, executing assigned tasks without complaining and sincerely adhering to the college rules, willingness to make inputs and get involved in colleges' activities. Xiao and Wilkins

(2015) noted that lecturers who are committed with their job make effort to plan lecturers, spend more time to teach, supervise the projects of the students, develop and acquire learning resources, help students learn regardless of their academic difficulties, think about how to convey information and monitor student progress. Lecturers' job commitment could be measured with their genuine involvement in activities of university, regularity to work, early to deliver lectures, completion of course outlines, engagement in research and publications.

The negative attitude of some lecturers towards work tends to indicate low job commitment in public universities in Delta State. Some lecturers appear to miss their lectures, delay in supervising students' project and teach with out-dated lecture notes in public universities in Delta State. There seems to be some lecturers who fail to cover their course outlines but give out handouts for students to read and prepare for examination. Onukwu (2021) noted that the willingness to accept responsibilities of teaching and submitting students‟ examination scores, course outlines as at when due is no longer common. Furthermore, Onukwu noted that it seems not an offence for lecturers to miss their classes or come late to class and some even take months before feedbacks and corrections made on projects that are returned to supervisees. The undesirable work behaviour of lecturers could be attributed to the favourable organizational climate of some universities in Delta State. The atmosphere of some public universities in Delta State seems to make lecturers to feel reluctant to participate in making inputs and engaging activities that could bring success to the institutions. Consequently, some lecturers could feel dissatisfied and demoralized from putting substantial efforts and energy in teaching the students. Anho (2020) noted that inadequate essential staff support services and depressing social environment have contributed to increase stress, anger, frustration and job dissatisfaction of lecturers in universities in Delta State. These problems prompted the investigation into autonomous and controlled organizational climate as a predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate autonomous and controlled organizational climate as a predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to find out:

1. Autonomous climate as a predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.
2. Controlled climate as a predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the predictive value of autonomous climate on lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria?
2. What is the predictive value of controlled climate on lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Autonomous climate is not a significant predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.
2. Controlled climate is not a significant predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

Methods

Correlation research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 2,585 lecturers in all the five public universities in Delta State, Nigeria. A sample size of 766 lecturers was drawn for the study using proportionate sampling technique. A researcher developed instruments titled ''Autonomous and Controlled Organizational Climate Scale (ACOCS)'' and ''Lecturers Job Commitment Scale (LJCS)'' were used for data collection. The first instrument titled ACOCS had two clusters namely A and B. Cluster A which focused on autonomous climate had nine items and Cluster B had 10 items on controlled climate. ACOCS therefore contains 19 items structured on a four-point

rating of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The second instrument titled LJCS was designed to elicit information on job commitment of lecturers. LJCS contains 25 items structured on a four-point rating of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instruments were validated by three experts, two from the Department of Educational Management and Policy, and one from the Department of Educational Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Cronbach alpha was used for a test of internal consistency of the instrument and it yielded overall reliability coefficients of, 0.80 and 0.77 for the clusters A and B of ACOCS respectively with the overall reliability index being 0.79, while coefficient value of 0.82 was obtained for LJCS.

The researchers together with five research assistants collected data for the study using the direct approach method. A total of 766 copies of the instruments were distributed and 754 copies of questionnaires were properly filled and successfully retrieved, indicating 98 percent return rate. At the end of the exercise, duly completed and retrieved copies of the instruments were used for data analysis. Simple regression was used to answer the research questions and test hypotheses 1 and 2. For the research questions, the coefficient r and the size of the relationship was interpreted using the correlation coefficient recommended by Cohen, Manion and Morrison cited in Wubante (2020) as follows:

Coefficient	**Predictive Value**
.00- .10	Negligible
.11- .30	Very Low
.31- .50	Low
.51- .69	Moderate
.70- .90	High
.91- .99	Very High
1	Perfect

In taking decisions on the null hypotheses, if the exact p-value is equal to or greater than significant value of 0.05, the null hypothesis was accepted but if exact p-value is less than significant value of 0.05, the null hypotheses was rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the predictive value of autonomous climate on lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Simple Regression Analysis on Autonomous Climate as a Predictor of Lecturers' Job Commitment

As shown in Table 1, correlation coefficient between autonomous climate and lecturers' job commitment is 0.770 with a coefficient of determination of 0.593. This shows that 59.3% variation in

Model	N	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remarks
Autonomous Climate	754	.770	.593	.592	.36065	Strong

lecturers' job commitment could be connected to autonomous climate. The regression coefficient r of 0.770 indicated that autonomous climate is a strong predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis One: Autonomous climate will not be a significant predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Simple Regression Analysis on Autonomous Climate as a Significant Predictor of Lecturers' Job Commitment

Predictor	N	R	R^2	*F*	*P-value*	Remark
Open Climate	754	.770	.593	1093.491	.000	*S

*Significant

Table 2 indicated that the simple regression coefficient (R) is 0.770, while the R^2 is 0.593 showing that autonomous climate makes 59.3% contribution to the variance in lecturers' job commitment. The *F* (1/754) =1093.491 and the *p*-value of .000 is less than .05. Therefore, since the *p*-value is less than the stipulated .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, autonomous climate is

a significant predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.
Research Question 2: What is the predictive value of controlled climate on lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Simple Regression Analysis on Controlled Climate as a Predictor of Lecturers' Job Commitment

Model	N	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Remarks
Controlled Climate	754	.479	.229	.228	.49601	Low

As revealed in table 3 revealed that correlation coefficient between controlled climate and lecturers' job commitment is 0.479 with a coefficient of determination of 0.229. This shows that controlled climate can explain 22.9% changes in lecturers' job commitment. The regression coefficient r of 0.479, indicated that controlled climate is a low predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: Controlled climate will not be a significant predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

Table 4: Simple Regression Analysis on Controlled Climate as a Significant Predictor of Lecturers' Job Commitment

Predictor	N	R	R^2	*F*	*P-value*	Remark
Controlled Climate	754	.479	.229	223.660	.000	*S

*Significant

As shown in table 4, the simple regression coefficient (R) is 0.754, while the R^2 is 0.229 showing that 22.9% variance in lecturers' job commitment could be explained by controlled climate. The *F* (1/754) =223.660 and the *p*-value of .000 is less than .05. Therefore, since the *p*-value is less than the stipulated .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, controlled climate is a significant predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

Discussion of the Findings

It was revealed that autonomous climate is a strong predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria. This affirmed the finding of Ohiani, Adeosun, Adegbite and Adejare (2022) which showed that autonomous climate was a strong predictor of employees' job commitment. This is in disagreement with the finding of Uba (2022) which showed that there was a moderate relationship between autonomous climate and job commitment of teachers. The difference in geographical location, participants and institutions of the studies could be responsible for the disagreement with the findings. Autonomous climate is associated with freedom to use initiatives in performing tasks which could account for the strong prediction of lecturers' job commitment. Management of universities with autonomous climate praises lecturers for the use of the innovative ideas and ways of performing their duties which could be a source of motivation for higher job commitment. It was also found that autonomous climate is a significant predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria. This agreed with the finding of Tamunomiebi (2019) which revealed that there was a significant relationship between autonomous climate and job commitment of employees. Autonomous climate creates great atmosphere of trust which strengthen the job commitment of lecturers. The greater levels of self-confidence and self-esteem associated with autonomous climate perhaps can contribute to the significant predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

The finding of the study revealed that controlled climate is a low predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria. This is contrary to the finding of Odoh (2021) which showed that there was moderate positive relationship between controlled school climate and teachers' job commitment. Universities with controlled climate have hierarchical structure

(organization) that define authority and emphasize on strict adherence to work rules and procedures which limit innovation and creativity that could be responsible for low predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria. Constant implementation of formal policies and discipline of lecturers in universities with controlled climate instill fears in some lecturers that can prevent them from being expressive of innovative ways of improving their commitment. Controlled climate put pressure on lecturers to perform their duties at the expense of satisfying social needs with may be responsible for the low predictor of the job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria. It was also found that controlled climate is a significant predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria. This is in agreement with the finding of Abubakar, Tijjani, Sakir and Abbas (2018) which showed that controlled climate is a significant predictor of lecturers' organizational commitment. The agreement with the finding could be attributed to similarity in higher institutions in which the two studies were conducted. This finding is explained by the fact that exercise of authority and strict monitoring lecturers could make them committed with their job to avoid sanction. Universities with controlled climate is more concerned with performing tasks which may account for significant predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that autonomous and controlled organizational climate is positive and significant predictor of lecturers' job commitment in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria. Autonomous climate is that giving freedom to lecturers to find creative and innovative solutions to problems encountered while performing their duties can boost their morale and improve their job commitment. Controlled climate is that the application of rules and discipline require high degree of considerable flexibility to promote cooperative, supportive and receptive behaviour among lecturers. To this end, creating a controlled organizational climate by management is a catalyst for encouraging and stimulating high job commitment among lecturers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Directorate of Monitoring and Inspection of National Universities Commission should embark on routine visit to public universities and observe activities and emphasizes on needs to grant autonomy to lecturers for improving their job commitment.
2. Directorate of Research, Innovation and Information Technology of National Universities Commission should develop hands and promote the publication of journals and books based on the findings of the study to serve as the blueprint for modifying the existing controlled climate to improve job commitment of lecturers.

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