Assessing the Relationship Between Retention Factors and Organizational Commitment of University Faculty

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ABSTRACT

Retaining faculty at a university depends on a range of factors that have implications on the commitment of the faculty to that institution. In this study, one hundred and twenty faculty members were selected from a public university in Ghana to assess the relationship that exists between retention and commitment of faculty members. This quantitative study used cross-sectional design and convenience sampling techniques to gather data using subjects from the faculty of a university with population of 272. Results from this study disclosed that generally the commitment of the faculty members to their university was high. There was a positive and significant relationship between the level of organizational commitment and compensation received by the members of faculty but with a low effect size. The findings also revealed that the female faculty members were more satisfied with their compensation than their male counterparts and their normative commitment was also higher.

KEYWORDS

Attrition, Emotional Attachment, Ghana, Job Satisfaction, Supervisor Support, Work-Life

INTRODUCTION

The operational definition of faculty commitment in this study is faculty loyalty, degree of congruence of value and goal, desire to be associated with, and willingness to exert maximum effort on behalf of the university (Bateman & Strasser, 1984). Generally, commitment is associated with the intention to continuously remain within an organization or a profession and it provides information about retention (Womack, Lenty, & Bullock-Yowell, 2018). Commitment to a university is determined by the extent to which an individual appreciates and associates with the mission and values of the university and makes an effort to remain and move along with the strategic direction of that institution (Porter et al., Sholihin & Pike, 2010; Womack, Lenty, & Bullock-Yowell, 2018).

Retention factors within an institution include certain behavioral practices that determine the extent of the commitment of staff to their organizations. Time availability for research and continuous improvement in research seminars and workshops increase the satisfaction that the faculty members derive from their institutions (Lawrence, 2014). Managerial support with incentives that support teaching and learning, and avenues created for the faculty to make inputs on issues regarding their work-life at their universities provide job satisfaction. The incentives boost their morale to become committed to their institutions (Kelly, Gayle, & William, 2017).

Studies have shown that conflict with supervisors, incompatible work schedules, certain behavioral factors from the management of higher education institutions that lead to inadequate developmental opportunities of the faculty decrease their organizational commitment (Jo, 2008). The challenges
associated with balancing teaching, research, and rendering community service to enhance the development of university faculty that affect the intentions of the faculty to remain or leave have become problematic to many institutions of higher learning.

The outcome of some studies also indicates that working conditions and environmental factors affect faculty retention, commitment, and quality of education provided (Ashraf, 2019; Cheryl & Jay, 2006; Dick, 2011; Parsons, Kantt, & Coupe, 2011; Rusu, 2013; Sholihin & Pike, 2010). Investigations into faculty retention indicate some policies governing outside offers usually have a negative influence on organizational commitment (O’Meara, 2015). A study outcome has proved that the turnover rate of untenured faculty in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), based on research demand, is very high due to developmental challenges (Lawrence, 2014).

The intent of this study is to bridge the gap in the literature that exists between the study of the relationship between retention factors and organizational commitment in the business environment and that of higher education institutions. The specific objective is to examine how retention factors relate to commitment factors at higher education institutions. Retention factors that this study considered were the availability of training and development opportunities, compensation, gender, support from faculty supervisors, and balance of work-life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers and practitioners in the educational field attach great importance to the relationship between retention factors and commitment to institutions of higher learning because of high attrition rate and curriculum changes of many institutions of higher learning (Cheryl & Jay, 2006; Hausnecht, Rodda, & Howard, 2009). Social relations of faculty have proved to have a positive correlation between faculty retention and improvement in performance based on commitment (Ashraf, 2019). Retention of faculty plays a mediating role in the improvement of quality of education at institutions of higher learning (Jo, 2008; Mabaso & Dlamini, 2018).

Having foreknowledge to predict the intention of faculty to quit or retain when working for an institution is important for the formulation and implementation of retention strategies. The foreknowledge can aid the decision-making process for the commitment of resources for the development of academic staff (Ryan, 2012). Research into retention factors and how the factors are associated with organizational commitment have brought about an improvement in job performance. This aids how organizations adapt to change to bring about faculty job satisfaction (Hausnech, Rodda, & Howard, 2009). Polatci and Cindiloglu (2013) revealed that there is a positive relationship between organizational size and job satisfaction.

Cultural factors have also proved to have a direct relationship with job satisfaction and employee commitment (Xu, 2008). In a study in an Australian manufacturing firm on the relationship between organizational commitment and retention factors using 500 managers, the findings revealed positive relationship between retention and commitment factors (Su, Baird, & Blair, 2009). In a related study, findings proved that commitment factors moved the employees to remain working with an organization (Shaw, Delery, Jenkins, & Gupta, 1998). Organizational commitment relates to employee retention through knowledge sharing, performance improvement and identification as a citizen of the organization (Chughta & Zafari, 2006; Keskes, 2014). These research findings provide the impetus on faculty retention and commitment to universities.

Components of Organizational Commitment

Studies by Meyer and Allen revealed that there are three components of organizational commitment, which are affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Keskes, 2004; Meyer et al., 2002; Keskes, 2014; Xu & Bessham, 2010). Affective commitment is the aspect of commitment emanated from the desire of the individual to become committed to a job due to the construct of love and joy exhibited by the individual that may have either positive or negative
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