

**HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES AND
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: A STUDY ON
ACADEMIC STAFFS MEMBERS IN ETHIOPIAN PUBLIC
HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS**

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the correlation between human resource management (HRM) practices and organizational commitment of academic staff in public universities. Because, good management of recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, supervisory support, training and development, compensation and employment relationships are interpreted positively by employees and this in turn enhances organizational commitment. The study employed a cross-sectional survey research method to collect and analyze the data secured from the study participants. A multistage sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. Data was collected from instructors, head of department, deans, HR practitioners, and university top management. Besides, human resources (HR) policies, proclamations, reforms and education sector development were used as secondary sources of data. The study result showed that collectively the HR practices significantly predicted the level of employee commitment at universities. A stepwise regression analysis result showed that of the six HR practices treated in this study, recruitment and selection, training and development opportunities and employment relationships were significantly predicted the organizational commitment and the remaining three failed to influence organizational commitment. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that there is a

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variation among the HR practices in predicting power employee commitment. That is, all the HR practices are not equally important in impacting the organizational commitment. From this it is possible to suggest that although good HR practices are necessary to enhance employees', it is critical to identify which one works best and which do not.

Key Words: Academic Staff, Higher education, Employee commitment, HR practices

1. Introduction

Many research results in the areas of commitment repeatedly suggested that one of the primary tasks of a manager has to be due attention for proper management and implementation of human resource practices so as to increase employee commitment (Juhdi, 2009). The studies conducted by Ibid, (2009) disclosed that all of the human resource practices have a significant and positive influence on employees' organizational commitment. Pearson correlation test also shown that, organizational commitment was positively related to all human resource practices.

As to Allen and Meyer (1990), organizational commitments was conceptualized as individual's assessment of the organization as a whole, and include a strong conviction in and taking of the organization's goals and values, readiness to exert substantial effort to attain the goal of an organization, and a strong aspiration to preserve connection within the organization. A number of studies have been made in order to investigate whether different human resource practices could influence the employee's organizational commitment. Studies done by Khuong, Phuong and Nguyen (2013) tried to investigate the role of some human resource practices such as relationship with management, working environment and condition, career development, team work spirit and compensation on commitment of Bank employees. They accordingly came up with 59.8% of employees organizational commitment is determined by these human resource practices and test of significance also shown that these independent variables as whole influence the organizational commitment of its employees.

Furthermore, different scholars have stipulated a variety of factors that have the potential to determine the employee's organizational commitment. Liu (2004) conducted a study and disclosed that employees perception of human resource practices including pay level, career

development opportunities, work family support, and relationship with a leader resulted in higher employees' organizational commitment as a reciprocate to an organization. Employees' sense of obligation to reciprocate the organization with better job performance and an increased and stronger organizational commitment will reduce the turnover intentions.

Although there were many studies conducted on the relationship between organizational commitment and HR practices, none of them put a standard reason why employees leave. Particularly the study was limited in higher education institutions in general and in Ethiopian public universities in particular.

Second, the studies made to identify factors for enhancing commitment; there was no consistency in the findings. Third, most of the studies on organizational commitment were emphasized on industries and other non-education institutions. Therefore, this study aimed to fill these gaps by investigating the association between HR practices and organizational commitment among the academic staff in Ethiopian public universities.

2. Research Question

- What is the extent of HR practices in public universities?
- Is there a relationship between demographic factors and organizational commitment?
- Is there a relationship between HR practices and organizational commitment?
- What attempts have been made to enhance organizational commitment?

3. Objectives

The main purpose of this study was to assess the association between HR practices and its implication on organizational commitment. Specifically, the study was designed:

- To evaluate the status of HR practices in public universities
- To identify the extent to which HR practices influence organizational commitment
- To assess the roles of organizational commitment in public universities
- To identify the relationships between personal factors and organizational commitment

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Method

A cross-sectional survey research method with a descriptive nature was used for the very reason that it enable to assess the current practices of HRM and academic staff commitment in its natural setting.

4.2. Sources of Data

Primary data was collected from academic staff and office holders of the respective universities. Moreover, documents of various types were consulted as a secondary source of data to supplement the information obtained from the primary ones.

4.3. Sample and Sampling Technique

Multistage sampling technique was used to identify respondents from teachers and office bearers. The Ethiopian universities were grouped in to 3 namely as first, second and third generations. Hence, one university from each generation was taken using simple random sampling technique. Then stratified simple random sampling technique was used to select college and departments from each university. After that simple random sampling technique was used to select instructors from each department of the respective universities. Office bearers such as head of departments, deans, directors and top management of the universities were included purposely because of their key role in the management of human resources.

4.4. Data Collection Tools

To collect relevant data from respondents questionnaire, interview and document analysis were used. The questionnaire was a five point likert scale employed to obtain data from teachers, head of department, and deans. Interview was used to get detail information from human resource director and university top management.

4.5. Data Analysis Technique

In order to analyze the quantitative data received from respondents, SPSS version 20 was used. To see the relationship between HR practices and employee commitment correlation analysis was performed. To identify the out standing issues in HR practices spearman rank order correlation was used. To investigate the influence of facets of HR practices on employee commitment linear regression analysis was performed. To see the independent contribution of each of the HR practices on commitment stepwise regression analysis was performed.

2. Results and Discussion

2.1. Demographic characteristics of Respondents in public university

Table 1: Sex, Age and Qualification of respondents

Demographics	Responses (358)		
		Number (No)	Percent (%)
Sex of Respondents	Male	323	90.2
	Female	35	9.8
Age of Respondents	<20		-
	20-30	187	52.2
	31-40	130	36.4
	41-50	32	8.9
	>50	9	2.5
Qualification of Respondents	Bachelor Degree	72	20.1
	Masters' Degree	256	71.5
	Doctor of Philosophy	30	8.4

Source: **Field Survey**

As shown in Table 1, the demographic data collected from respondents revealed that majority 323 (90.2%) of the study participants were male and the remaining 35 (9.8 %) were female showing less number of female teachers in the academic staff mix of the public universities in Ethiopia, which is controversial with what was planned to be achieved by the government. Hence, despite the government's effort to increase the number of females both as an academic staff and on leadership positions, the ratio is still far below the target set by Ministry of Education.

Table 1 also revealed that the larger majority (52.2 %) of the respondents was between the age ranges 20 to 30 years, 36.6% were in between 31-40 years, 8.9% were in between 41-50, and the remaining 2.5 % of the respondents were above 50 years old. However, there was no respondent with the age below 20 years among the respondents.

It is widely accepted that good teaching demands an academic staff with appropriate qualification, professional competence (capacity and experience), motivation and commitment that is relevant to the level of the programs they are assigned/appointed (Mulu, 2010). Concerning the qualification of the academic staffs, Table 1 showed that 256 (71.5 %) of the respondents were Masters' degree holders while only 30 (8.4%) of the respondents were PhD holders. However, about 20.1% were with an academic status of bachelor degree. Therefore, despite the extensive training programs to meet the target set, there was still a lack of match between target set by government and the actual academic staff qualification mix in Ethiopian public Universities.

Table 2: Ranked Response on Variables of Employee Commitment

Factors	Mean Rank	Std. Deviation	
The irrelevance of performance evaluation practices	5.18	2.01	1
Lack of training and development program	4.93	2.14	2
Poor industrial relation existing in Universities	4.83	2.31	3
Absence of employee union to protect the right of workers	4.81	2.13	4
Unfair recruitment and selection practices existing in universities	4.80	2.50	5
Absence of proper support from top management	4.24	2.05	6

Source: Field Survey

On Table 2, the most influencing factor with highest mean value and ranked number 1 is the irrelevance of performance evaluation parameter which indicates variety of problems related to the evaluation criteria. The second most critical factor predicting the commitment in public universities according to the views of the respondent was the inadequacy of training and development opportunities. The poor industrial relation existing in universities was stood third followed by the absence of employee union to protect the right and interest of workers by maintaining a positive relationship in the organization as shown in Table 2. Unfair recruitment and selection practices existing in universities ranked fifth.

2.2. The Association between personal information and employee's organizational commitment

Table 3: Correlation Analysis of Demographic Characteristics with Commitment

Control Variables	Relationships	Sex of respondent	Age of respondent	Work experience	Qualification	Academic Rank
Commitment	Pearson Correlation	-.024	-.094	.006	-.051	-.084
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.656	.075	.913	.337	.112
	N	358	358	358	358	

According to the data presented in Table 3, correlation analysis carried out to investigate the relationship between demographic characteristics of respondents and the three components of organizational commitment showed the absence of statistically significant relationship between the socio demographic elements identified and all the commitment elements. Hence, the commitment of an academic staff was weakly correlated with demographic characteristics of respondents.

As shown in Table 3, although the relationship is very weak all the demographic variables (sex, age, qualification and education level) are negatively related to the organizational commitment of employees ($r = -.024$, $r = -.094$, $r = -.051$, $r = -.084$) respectively. Similar to this finding, a study made by Chughtai and Zafar (2006) showed age; Sonia and Bhama (2010) sex; Tella, Ayeni, and Popoola (2007) and Simons (2005) work experience; Harrison and Hubbard (1998) education level were not significantly related to organizational commitment.

2.3. Effect of Demographic Factors on Organizational Commitment

With regard to the predictive power of the demographic variable on organizational commitment regression analysis was conducted.

Table 4: Results of Regression Analysis between Organizational Commitment as and the Demographic Characteristics as Independent Variable

Model Summary										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	F
1	.158a	.025	.011	.55048	.025	1.797	5	352	.113	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Academic Rank, Sex of respondent, Work experience, Qualification, Age of respondent										

Source: **Field Survey**

The linear regression result in Table 4 showed that collectively there was no significant association between the demographic variables and organizational commitment of academic staff at public universities ($P > 0.05$). The sex, age, work experience and educational level all together explained 2.5% of the variation in organizational commitment. This result matches with previous research done by Simmons (2005) which uncovered that the personal variables failed to account for significant amount of variance in organizational commitment.

Generally, on the low regression value, one can say that demographic factors were not found to have a significant impact on organizational commitment. So when seen collectively, the significance (R Squared Change=0.025; F change = 0.113) where it is greater than 0.05 and hence there is no significant impact (see Table 4).

2.4. The Relationship between HR Practices and Organizational Commitment

Pearson product moment correlation (r) was used to determine the relation between the summated HR practices and the three components of organizational component.

Table 5: The collective Correlation between HR Practices and Commitment

Correlations			
		Commitment	HRM Practices
Commitment	Pearson Correlation	1	.609
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	358	358

HR Practices	Pearson Correlation	.609	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	358	358

Source: **Field Survey**

According to the results from Table 5 there is a statistically significant relationship between facets of HR practices and organizational commitment ($r = .609$, $P < 0.05$). This finding fits with the research study of Juhdi, Po'won and Hasaram (2013) who found out that all the HR practices collectively were significantly related to organizational commitment with positive relationship. Furthermore, Eisenberger et al (1990) also contended that HR practices that are well managed and implemented are able to increase organizational commitment and decrease intentions of resigning among employees because individuals tend to respond positively to top management commitment and support.

Therefore, this shows that good management of employee recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, supervisor support, training and development, compensation and industrial relation will be interpreted positively by employees and in turn, they will reciprocate with high commitment to the organization (Whitener, 2001).

2.5. The Effect of HR Practices on Organizational Commitment

The combination of HR practices implemented in public universities significantly predicted organizational commitment (adjusted $R^2 = .393$; $F = 39.59$; $P < 0.05$) with some variables significantly contributing to the prediction.

Table 6: Regression Analysis of HR Practices on Organizational Commitment

Model Summary										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	F
1	.635a	.404	.393	.43111	.404	39.590	6	351	.000	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Relation, Recruitment, Compensation, Training, Appraisal, supervision

Source: **Field Survey**

The bundle of HR practices showed in Table 6 significantly predicted organizational commitment (adjusted R square= 0.393; F= 39.59; P= 0.000) and the change in R square value was 0.404, P<0.05. This indicates that 40 % of the variance in organizational commitment was explained by the model. The research result is inline with the earlier propositions made by Hiltrop and Despres (1994) that HR practices have a strong impact on organizational commitment and they viewed organizational commitment as an important criterion to measure the HRM practices effectiveness. Study results from Yeung and Berman (1997) further stressed that HRM practices can directly influence organizational commitment of employees.

Table 7: Hierarchical Regression Analysis to See the Independent Effect of HR Practices on Organizational Commitment

Coefficients								
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part
(Constant)	1.330	.104		12.770	.000			
1 Recruitment and Selection	.143	.043	.208	3.343	.001	.517	.176	.138
Appraisal	.068	.036	.113	1.888	.060	.486	.100	.078
Supervision	-.043	.039	-.072	-1.109	.268	.433	-.059	-.046
Training	.104	.040	.162	2.610	.009	.506	.138	.108
Compensation	.069	.046	.087	1.499	.135	.456	.080	.062
Relation	.208	.044	.274	4.715	.000	.549	.244	.194

Source: **Field Survey**

In Table 7, the result depicted the independent contribution of each of the HR practices selected for this study. The Beta weights presented in Table 7 reflects how strongly and significantly the independent variables predicted the organizational commitment of employees as a dependent variable. According to the data in Table 7, extensive recruitment and careful selection, training

and development opportunities and labour relation were positively and significantly predicted organizational commitment of employees ($B= 0.208, P<0.05$; $B= 0.162, P<0.05$; $B= 0.274, P< 0.05$) respectively.

However, performance appraisal, supervisor support and compensation were not significantly influenced the organizational commitment of employees ($B= .113, P >0.05$; $B= -.072, P>.05$; $B= 0.087, P >0.05$). Juhdi, Po'wan, and Hansarama, (2013) made a study and found performance appraisal as the weakest predictor of organizational commitment.

This implies these three HR practices were failed to predict the change in organizational commitment. Similar studies done by Shore and Barksdale (1981 and 1998) reported that compensation was insignificantly related to organizational commitment.

The highest Beta indicates the independent variable is the most significant towards the dependent variables. Table 7 further revealed that workers interrelationship was the strongest predictor for organizational commitment ($B= 0.274, P= 0.000$), recruitment and selection ($B= 0.208, p= 0.001$) followed by training and development opportunities ($B= 0.162, P= 0.009$). On the other hand, supervisor support and compensation were found to be the weakest predictors of organizational commitment ($B= 0.268, P= -.072$; $B= 0.087, P= 0.135$) respectively. Various studies done so far have showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between training and development opportunities and organizational commitment since the provision of training and development opportunities sends a message to the employees that the organization cares about them and support them, and this is likely to lead to increased organizational commitment (Birdi, Allan and Warr, 1999).

As expected the supervisor support is although weak, negatively related to the organizational commitment of employees. Previous studies also showed a negative relation ship between organizational commitment and supervisor support (Juhdi, Po'wan, and Hansarama, 2013). When comparing the R Squared values in all the summary models, it was found out that the HR practices as a group explained the greatest proportion of variance in organizational commitment ($R\text{ Squared}= 40.4\%$; $\text{adjusted } R\text{ Squared}= 0.393$). Therefore, it is possible to propose that the

facets of HR practices as a group were most closely related to commitment of university employees.

2.6. Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the roles of HR practices in impacting the organizational commitment at universities. Similar to many other previous studies, the result showed that HR practices significantly predicted the level of organizational commitment at universities. There is also a variation among the practices of human resource management in predicting the organizational commitment. Some of the HR practices were more influential in determining the commitment of level of academicians at universities.

2.7. Recommendations

The study result revealed that there is a variation among the HR practices in their prediction power of organizational commitment. Although all the HR practices significantly predicted the level of employee organizational commitment, there is a variation among the aspects when seen independently. Therefore, the HR practitioners need to be well managed because employees would reciprocate this in the form of higher commitment to their organization.

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