

WORKPLACE SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT:

A LITERATURE REVIEW

Joy Titi Agada¹ & Isaac Zeb-Obipi²

¹Post-Graduate Student, Department of Management, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

²Associate Professor, Department of Management, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This paper examined the relationship between workplace social infrastructure and employee commitment. The objective of the study was to examine how dimensions of workplace social infrastructure such as staff, guest house/club, housing scheme, and transportation facilities influence normative, affective, and continuance commitment. The method used for the study was a survey of literature. The following findings were made: state of the art staff guest house/club enhances normative commitment; well-planned housing scheme enhances commitment; transportation facilities also boost continuance commitment. The study concluded that adequate and functional workplace social infrastructure boost and sustains employees' commitment. Consequently, organizations should build, establish and equip staff guest houses and sporting clubs with state of the art facilities to cater for the recreational needs of their employees which will boost job satisfaction and intention to stay; management should provide well-furnished staff quarters, housing estates and subsidized residential houses with good pipe-borne water and electricity to lessen employees' financial stress associated with hiring or buying residential houses; and that management should issue car loans or provide official cars, staff buses and monitoring vehicles to ensure the safety and transit security of their staff as well as cater for their transportation costs to give them a sense of belonging. These will lead to organizational members' bonding with the organization; and thus, enhance employee commitment.

KEYWORDS: *Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, Employee Commitment, Housing Scheme, Normative Commitment, Staff club/guest house, Transportation Facilities, Workplace Social infrastructure*

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INTRODUCTION

The term infrastructure refers to fundamental facilities and systems serving a country, city, or other areas, including the services and facilities necessary for its economy to function (O'Sullivan and Sheffrin, 2003).

It typically defines technical structures such as roads, bridges, tunnels, water supply, sewers, electrical grids, telecommunications (including internet connectivity and broadband speeds), and physical components of interrelated systems providing commodities and service essential to enable, sustain, or enhance societal living conditions. Infrastructure

is instrumental to the successful operation of every business entity, including the welfare of its workforce. There are different kinds of infrastructures, but this work is interested in the type known as social infrastructure.

Aberdeen Asset Management (2017) defined social infrastructure as the construction and maintenance of facilities that support social services. The organization noted those social infrastructures include: healthcare (hospitals), education (schools and universities), public facilities (community housing and prisons) and transportation (railways and roads). For the purpose of this work, the researcher used the term social infrastructure to describe free or subsidized welfare facilities provided for employees in an organization to make life easier, fun, cut down on cost, and to enhance their socio-economic wellbeing. Variables of social infrastructure in this concept include transportation facilities, staff club/guest house, and housing scheme.

The availability of these facilities for members of staff of an organization does not only reduce the economic burden, but also goes a long way in making work life more convenient and enjoyable for employees. For instance, provision of free or subsidized transportation services, and official cars for staff makes their going and returning from official assignment much easier and more convenient. Provision of housing scheme within or close to the workplace makes it possible for employees to get to their office on time. These social infrastructures also provide some level of financial relief for employees. Depending on the type and size of the organization, housing scheme for employees might be free or given to employees at subsidized rate with certain small percentage of their salary being collected monthly or annually. Organizations also provide other social infrastructures such as staff clubs/guest house to help meet the needs of employees in terms of rejuvenation, relaxation, entertainment, sporting and exercises, lodging, and recreation. Adequate provision of social infrastructure for the staff of a corporate organization guarantees their social wellbeing and makes them feel appreciated and increases their job satisfaction. Like Zahedi and Inom (2015) rightly pointed out, the provision of social facilities can build employee bonds with an organization. It takes a happy employee to be committed.

Employee commitment basically refers to the bond and attachment an employee has for the organization. Meyer and Allen (1993) in Saba (2011) conceptualized three dimensions or measures of employee commitment, viz: affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment.

With the current harsh economic reality in the Nigerian states, employees need timely social infrastructure interventions such as housing scheme, staff club/guest house, and transportation facilities. However, many service firms are more interested in occupying their staff with more targets with little or no provision of basic social infrastructure. Google search could not reveal much on the relationship between social infrastructure and employee commitment. The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between social infrastructures and employee commitment. The objectives of the study were to examine how:

- Staff club/guest house influences employee commitment.
- Housing scheme influences employee commitment.
- Transportation facilities influence employee commitment.

DIMENSIONS OF WORKPLACE SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

O'Sullivan and Sheffrin, (2003) defined infrastructure as the fundamental facilities and systems serving a country, city, or other areas, including the services and facilities necessary for its economy to function. It has also been defined as

"the physical components of interrelated systems, providing commodities and services essential to enable, sustain, or enhance societal living conditions (Fulmer, 2009). The Online Business Dictionary (2017) defined infrastructure as the basic, underlying framework, features, and fundamental facilities serving a country, city, or particular area. From the above definitions, it can be deduced that infrastructure basically refers to those facilities used for the smooth running of a society, and it is possible to extend this argument to organization. There are different kinds of infrastructures. However, this discussion will be centered on social infrastructures.

In the view of John (2017), social infrastructures are foundational services and structures that support the quality of life of a given set of people. Employers are duty-bound to provide welfare facilities that will support and safeguard the wellbeing of its staff. In addition to commensurate remuneration and promotion of staff, employers put in place various social infrastructures to make work and life generally convenient and enjoyable for their workers. The researcher conceptualizes social infrastructure as the various facilities and services designed by an organization to attend to the social and general wellbeing of the workforce at no cost or less than the prevailing market rates.

New Zealand Social Infrastructure Fund Limited (2009) defines social infrastructure as a subset of the infrastructure sector and typically includes assets that accommodate social services. New Zealand Social Infrastructure Fund Limited (2009) also identified the following as examples of social infrastructure: medical facilities, ancillary infrastructure (e.g. offices, carparks, training facilities), schools (primary and secondary, tertiary facilities), residential accommodation and housing, community and sports facilities, water and wastewater treatment, transport, bus stations, park and rides. This study examined staff club/guest house, housing scheme and transportation facilities as three dimensions of social infrastructure.

Staff Club /Guest House

The Online Business Dictionary (2017) describes staff guest house as a type of inexpensive hotel-like lodging built, provided or sponsored by an organization for its members. Staff guest house provides lodging and eatery services and short term relaxation for the employees of an organization. The beautiful thing about staff guest houses is that workers use them free of charge or at low cost. While using such services, employees also have a sense of belonging.

Some organizations have a staff cafeteria where staff enjoy meals at subsidized rates. Workplace cafeterias provide a convenient way for employees to get the meals they want while at work. Employees do not always have time to prepare brown bag lunches at home so there is this desire to buy lunch quickly and efficiently while at work. Black (2017) reported that a 2010 study by Right Management showed that around 20 percent of employees either skip lunch or eat at their desks. Being able to buy lunch at work and eat in an on-site restaurant-style setting helps employees get the most out of their lunch hour. Workplace cafeterias also save employees gas money, especially those who must drive a distance to find what to eat or buy something to eat. Healthy eating trends have prompted workplaces to add extensive salad bars, fresh fruit and smoothies to cafeterias. Additionally, companies such as Google and Microsoft cater to their diverse staff by providing chef-inspired, international dishes from a variety of countries (Black, 2017). Employees generally want quality food that keeps them healthy and productive throughout the work day.

Another form of staff club\guest house services encouraged by the organization is the sporting club. Sport has been defined as "a human activity capable of achieving results that require physical skill and/or exertion, and which, by its organization and nature, is competitive" (Chalmers, 2002). Recognizing the importance of team sporting activities in the

workplace, organizational managers are incorporating sporting clubs into their organizational culture. Team exercises, football clubs, lawn tennis club, golf club, and basketball clubs are some of the staff club activities in the social hub of many organizations today. Some organizations have introduced formal organizational team sport activities, without knowing what effect it has on their employees (Bennett, 2009). An organizational team sport activity is an employee activity, specifically introduced in an organization to facilitate participation by the employees as well as the attainment of common goals. When an organization uses formally organized team sport to improve trust, respect, commitment, friendships and communication among its workforce, it seems to compel employees to focus on their similarities instead of their differences.

The fact that sports and social clubs can be used to foster employer-employee relationships cannot be overemphasized. Employers can demonstrate support for employees, and consequently engage them, by providing the facilities they require for their clubs. Clubs can also be an effective motivational tool as well as reducing employees' stress levels and boosting their overall health and wellbeing. Club membership gives staff an opportunity to interact with their peers and feel as a valued member of a supportive organization. It also gives them an extra reason to go in to work, thereby, reducing employee absence levels. From an engagement perspective, staff clubs give the feeling that an employer is interested in an employee's wellbeing; not just interested in them as a machine that comes to work and goes home again. It is a veritable platform for showing that the employer is concerned about the physical and social fitness of the workforce.

According to Bassett-Jones (2005), every employee needs to interact with other employees in their workplace because poor social network in the workplace can make work boring and dissatisfying. An organization that provides functional staff club and sporting activities for its members has likely succeeded in providing a healthy social working environment (Nieman and Bennett, 2002). Staff club activities such as sports deepen interpersonal relationships and reduce stereotyping and prejudices among participants. Simultaneously, mutual trust develops as organizational members work closely from time to time.

Housing Scheme

Word Reference (2017) defined housing scheme as the act of providing accommodation for a person or persons. The housing situation in Nigeria is a dire one, with demand dwarfing supply. As a result, the cost of renting an acceptable bungalow, duplex, apartment or house in the country can be high and well beyond the price range warranted by the average professional's salary. Three basic housing facilities often provided for organizational workers include staff quarters, housing estate, and subsidized residential provision.

One of the popular housing schemes used by organizations is staff quarters. Clement (2013) defined staff quarters as residential houses provided strictly for the workers of an organization within the business premises. The idea behind staff quarters is to provide housing facilities for workers of an establishment right within the place of work. It brings the workers physically and mentally closer to the organization. Staff quarters may not be available for every worker but those who meet certain criteria depending on the organization are given the privilege of occupying the staff quarters. Under this arrangement, it is pertinent to point out that in most cases, the housing allowance or a little percentage of the worker's salary is deducted from time to time.

Another housing scheme available for workers especially in multinational firms is housing estate. Housing estate as used in this work refers to enclosed set of buildings in a given geographical setting, owned by an entity and set aside

mainly to provide accommodation strictly for their staff. The organization owns the housing facility usually located outside the premises of the business. Under this arrangement, senior staff and other qualified staff are given comfortable flats with state of the art facilities at no cost or less than market rates. The company also ensures that constant power supply, portable water, good road network and shopping mall are made available within the estate for the comfort of the benefitting staff.

Subsidized residential house is another housing scheme often adopted by organizations as part of staff welfare packages. Under this arrangement, the organization pays part of the house rent for any facility occupied by the staff. The employee gets a rentable residential apartment or flat and the organization foots part of the cost for him. The welfare tune here is that the employee does not bear the whole cost of renting the residential house alone; the organization provides reasonable financial support.

Transportation Facilities

The term transportation facilities as used in this work refer to provisions made by organizations to cater for the movement of their staff from one place to another. Employees are one of the most important assets for an organization and providing them with transportation facilities such as official cars for senior colleagues, staff buses for junior staff, and monitoring or enforcement vehicles is very important.

One of the transportation facilities usually provided by organizations is staff bus. As a way of sharing the cost of transportation for junior staff, some organizations provide two or more staff buses specially for conveying junior staff from different parts of a city or town to and from work. Under this type of free transportation arrangement, designated corporate drivers go out to carry employees at an agreed location and time. The beneficiaries are expected to wake early and ensure that they get to the agreed take-off point in time. Depending on the arrangement, the driver picks the beneficiaries from one point to the other. At the close of work, the workers converge in the bus and they are carried to the nearest bus stop or the point where they boarded the staff bus in the morning. This transportation platform creates opportunity for junior staff to meet and associate with colleagues from different departments and even locations.

Organizations also provide official cars for senior staff. Official cars as used in this work captures only those cars purchased and given for the private use of an employee in an organization as part of the privileges attached to the office they occupy. These official cars help to ease the transportation stress of the staff. It is important to note here that official cars are not personal cars; they are vehicles that cannot be used by other people (Premium times, 2016). They represent non-monetary fringe benefits attached to the official position occupied by a staff in the organization. However, the staff has full right to drive or be driven in the car during and after official time (Premium times, 2016).

Another transportation facility often provided by organizations is operational vehicles. For the purpose of this work, the term operational vehicles are monitoring and enforcement vehicles which encompass patrol vans, and security vans that accompany company executives and other staff on special duties, and corporate monitoring vehicles. The essence of this set of transportation facilities is to guarantee security and adequate mobility of staff in the performance of their duty outside the office premises (Moneke 2012).

DIMENSIONS OF EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

The concept of employee commitment derives from an article entitled “The organization Man” written by Whyte in 1956 (Dixit and Bhati, 2012). It refers to the willingness of social actors to give their energy and loyalty to social

systems, the attachment of personality systems to social relations, which are seen as self-expressive (Dixit and Bhati, 2012). Brown (1969) defines commitment as (1) something of the notion of membership; (2) it reflects the current position of the individual; (3) it has a special predictive potential, providing predictions concerning certain aspects of performance, motivation to work, spontaneous contribution, and other related outcomes; and (4) it suggests the differential relevance of motivational factors (Ledum, 2016).

In his own view, Salancik (1977) described commitment as that state of being in which an individual becomes bound by his action and through these actions to beliefs that sustain the activities of his own involvement. Mowday (1979) in Dixit and Bhati (2012) defined commitment as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization”. Committed employees actually show high level of consistency in their participation and dedication to organizational activities. They do not give flimsy excuses why a task or goal cannot be accomplished. Employees who are usually absent from meetings, and ongoing projects cannot be said to be committed.

Allen and Mayer (1990) claimed that commitment is “a psychological state that binds the individual to the organization”. Committed employees have a sense of binding or link to the organization; an obligation to remain and contribute unsparingly to the success of the group they belong. Employee’s commitment in the view of Meyer and Allen (1997), is a psychological state that characterizes the employee’s relationship with the organization and has implication for the decision to continue membership in the organization.” A committed employee is perceived to be one who stays with the organization even in turbulent times, attends work regularly, protects company’s assets and expends his time and energy willing to help achieve group goal.

Daan (2013) described employee’s commitment in the following ways:

- The extent to which an employee is being bound to a goal or the determination in respect of a goal, regardless of the origin of the goal in his/her organization.
- The extent to which a staff believes in a goal and wants to it achieve it as long as it has to do with the organization
- A psychological state that binds an individual to the organization.
- Connection to a job: the probability that someone continues to work in that job and feels psychologically bound to it. This is regardless of whether it is fulfilling or not.
- Someone's attitude towards their work.

From the above definitions, employee’s commitment can be described as a sustainable binding force or mind-set that propels an individual to stay and work dedicatedly and wholeheartedly to achieve organizational or unit goals. Employee’s commitment is synonymous to employee’s bond to the organization. Employee’s commitment is of a critical importance for the success of an organization since it influence the key employee related variables such as absenteeism, low productivity, low morale, labour turn over and other negative tendencies. Meyer and Allen (1997) identified three components of employee commitment: (1) Affective, (2) Continuance and (3) Normative.

Affective Commitment

Affective commitment refers to the bond an employee has with an organization due to an affinity with or affection for the goals and values of the organization. Zeb-Obipi and Agada (2017) described affective commitment as how much an individual ‘wants’ to remain in the organization. It entails an affective orientation of the employees towards the

organization. Employees with affective commitment continue service with an organization because they want to do so and not to return a favor or for some benefits and opportunity costs. The development of affective commitment involves recognizing the organization's worth and internalizing its principles and standards (Beck and Wilson, 2000; Dixit and Bhati, 2012). Affective commitment can therefore be conceptualized as the degree to which an individual is psychologically attached to an employing organization through feeling such as loyalty, affection, worth, belongingness, pleasure and so on. Affective commitment typifies the emotional association of an employee with its organization and objectives. It is based on (1) "faith of the employees in the organization's objectives, (2) their readiness to put forth effort in order to achieve organizational objectives, and (3) a strong wish to be a part of the organization" (Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian, 1974).

Normative Commitment

Normative commitment is the attachment an employee feels for an organization to remain with the organization as a responsive appreciation of benefits enjoyed by the employee in the organization. This type of commitment typifies a feeling of indebtedness towards an organization considering what the organization has given to the employee. It can also be described as a reciprocal commitment. The researcher tenaciously agrees with the view of Chun-Chen and Ching-Sing (2011) that normative commitment may be rooted in feelings of indebtedness toward an organization for its supply of certain benefits, for example, tuition reimbursement or in-house training. The feelings of obligation may continue until the employees feel that they have "paid back" the debt (Meyer and Allen, 1991). The normatively committed employee feels thankful for the benefits offered by the organization such that he feels duty bound to continue working for the organization. To Zeb-Obipi and Agada 2017, normative commitment reflects a feeling of obligation to continue employment as employees feel they "ought" to remain with the organization.

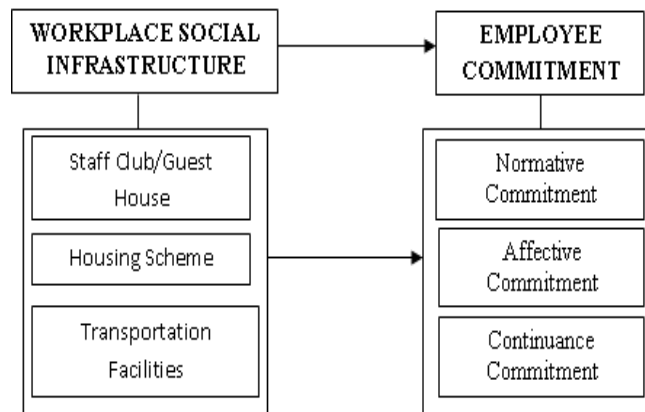
Continuance Commitment

Continuance commitment refers to the bond an employee has for an organization based on the calculated losses or consequence of leaving the organization considering the personal investment made so far by employee in the system. It typifies the willingness to remain in an organization because of personal investment in the form of nontransferable investments such as close working relationships with coworkers, retirement investments and career investments, acquired job skills which are unique to a particular organization, years of employment in a particular organization, involvement in the community in which the employer is located, and other benefits that make it too costly for one to leave and seek employment elsewhere (Umoh, Mann, and Wokocho, 2014). Compliance entails behaviors that are initiated and maintained in order to satisfy external constraints, such as obtaining a reward or avoiding a loss. It is succinctly defined by Meyer and Allen (1997) as an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the Organization. It is predicated on employees' perceptions regarding their alternative job prospects and the cost associated with leaving their current job. Thus, the employee feels he/she has no other choice than to just continue working with the organization (Zeb-Obipi and Agada, 2017).

WORKPLACE SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

This study set out to examine how workplace social infrastructures in terms staff club/guest house, housing scheme, and transportation facilities influence employee commitment. Employee commitment was operationalized using affective, normative and continuance commitment. These dimensions of the two study variables are laid out in the

conceptual framework in Figure 1. The findings from literature revealed relationships between the dimensions of social infrastructures and employee commitment. These will be discussed within the context of our research objectives.



Source: Desk Research, 2017

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Social Infrastructure and Employee Commitment

With respect to our first research objective as to how staff club/guest house influences employee commitment, an empirical study conducted by Australian Sports Commission (AIS) in Oam (2009) revealed that staff club activities such as team sporting breaks down ethnic, political and social barriers, and builds bonding at individual and organizational levels. Barton (2013) in his study on workplace facilities and employee job satisfaction found that workplace gym or exercise breaks during work hours, along with providing healthy food, could make for happier, healthier and ultimately more committed employee. The study also revealed that staff club and guest house activities foster general happiness, teamwork and corporate bonding. Zeb-Obipi (2017), at his inauguration as the President of the Senior Staff Club of the River State University, Port Harcourt, described the Club “as a relaxation hub capable of taking care of the general and peculiar socio-cultural network, entertainment, recreational and welfare interest of all members” (workers of the university). It takes a happy employee to be committed. Social infrastructure offers both economic and social relief for members of an organization and it makes them feel appreciated.

Our second research objective deals with how housing scheme influences employee commitment. A study conducted by Clement (2013) revealed that provision of subsidized accommodation, and staff quarters is an effective extrinsic motivational factor and makes employees feel appreciated. An empirical study conducted by Achinehutome (2014) revealed that subsidized accommodation scheme for teachers in private schools in Lagos State creates a sense of belonging and teachers’ emotional attachment to the school where they teach.

Our third research objective has to do with how transportation facilities influence employee commitment. Provision of transportation facilities such as free shuttles and monitoring vehicles, as found by Transloc (2014), makes it possible for employees to know one another better, including coworkers outside their normal work sphere, helping them feel more connected and fostering a sense of teamwork. Similarly, Clement (2013) in his study found that corporate transport facilities reduce the stress resulting from driving in peak hour traffic, reduce the cost of daily travel including fuel, car maintenance and parking; and bring about bonding amongst colleagues. This finding suggests that provision of transportation facilities positively influences continuance commitment.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The desire of every corporate entity is to attract and sustain a committed workforce. Employee commitment encapsulates a mindset or psychological state to remain in an organization, showing unwavering loyalty, involvement, dedication and affiliation to organizational goals. Such psychological disposition entails being duty-bound to the organization as a way of reciprocating the benefits enjoyed in the organization (normative commitment), practical love for the growth and ethics of the organization (affective commitment), and a willingness to carry on with the organization to avoid losing accruable benefit by leaving the organization (continuance commitment).

It is evident from this work that workplace social infrastructures such as staff club/guest house, housing scheme, and transportation facilities are veritable tools for creating and sustaining employee commitment. Social infrastructure offers both economic and social relief for members of an organization which makes them feel appreciated. Based on theoretical evidences and content analysis, this study concludes that adequate and functional workplace social infrastructures boost and sustain employees' commitment. By extension absence or shortage of functional workplace social infrastructures in a work environment is demoralizing and capable of jeopardizing employee commitment. These facilities do not only reduce physical and economic stress amongst employees, they also provide platform for bonding and social satisfaction. When employees feel appreciated and valued, the probability of being more committed is high.

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are appropriate:

- Organizations should build, establish and equip staff guest houses and sporting clubs with state of the art facilities to cater for the recreational needs of their employees which will boost job satisfaction and intention to stay.
- Management should provide well-furnished staff quarters, housing estates and subsidized residential houses with good pipe-borne water and electricity to lessen employees' financial stress associated with hiring or buying residential houses.
- Management should issue car loans or provide official cars, staff buses and monitoring vehicles to ensure the safety and transit security of their staff as well as cater for their transportation costs to give them a sense of belonging.

It is an indisputable fact that the recommendations stated above will go a long way in helping business organizations attract and sustain committed manpower. Employee bond or commitment is an indispensable tool for organizational productivity so managers are obliged to provide necessary social infrastructure to make them happy. Another research milestone derivable from this study is the theoretical proposition of the existence of a positive relationship between workplace social infrastructures and employee commitment. At this point, it is also reasonable to state that this work will serve as a precursor to empirical study that could explain the impact of each of the dimensions of workplace social infrastructure on the dimensions of employee commitment. Such a work will have solid theoretical and empirical framework for the collection of valid and reliable primary data from any public or private establishment to test stated hypotheses and possibly arrive at a theory. The researchers are therefore ready to extend this study to field work subsequently for empiricism within the context of theory building and validation.

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