

Employee commitment and turnover intention: perspectives from the Nigerian Public Sector

Abstract

This study investigates the conceptualization of employee commitment and turnover intention in the Nigerian public sector using a qualitative approach. Findings suggest that (i) employees expressed a lack of sense of ownership and attached meaning to commitment based on (self-help) benefit gained from their organization, and (ii) the lack of scrutiny and accountability in the public sector resulted in low employee turnover intention. The study is novel for developing a framework underscoring how context may affect the conceptualisation of employee commitment and turnover intention.

Keywords

Contextual meaning, culture, employee commitment, Nigerian, perspectives, turnover intention

Introduction

Due to changes in the nature of work, employment relationship and organizations, life-long career is no longer the case in contemporary workplace (Klein & Park, 2016; van Rossenberg et al., 2018). Employee turnover has become a major challenge facing many organizations and industries (Oruh et al., 2020). Employee turnover refers to the proportion of employees (percentage of total workforce) who leave an organization in a given period (usually yearly) (Boon & Biron, 2016).

In employee turnover literature, employee turnover often begins with the intention to quit – turnover intention (Sun & Wang, 2016). Turnover intention refers to the withdrawal process in which an employee begins to think about leaving their job (Sun & Wang, 2016). Notably, it is not the act of leaving a job but a key predictor of leaving (Oruh et al., 2020). In principle, the intention to leave an organization will result in actual turnover if poorly managed. Being one of the key factors responsible for employee turnover – it is therefore imperative to understand the factors responsible for employee turnover intention in contemporary workplace (Sheridan et al., 2019). By understanding the reasons behind employee turnover intention, employers can devise hiring and retention initiatives that can increase employee retention and reduce turnover intention and thus turnover in modern workplace (Ali, 2017).

Existing studies suggest that employee commitment play a significant role in the reduction of turnover intention among employees (Cho & Park, 2011; Kalidass and Bahron, 2015). Drawing on the literature by Mabaso and Dlamini (2018), employee commitment may be defined as a psychological attachment to an organization that sees employees willingly put in more efforts to further their organizations' interests. According to Kalidass and Bahron (2015), employee commitment contributes to employee turnover intention. An employee with

lower experience of commitment will probably leave after a period of reflection on whether to remain or leave (Huselid, 1995).

This paper aims to investigate the contextual meaning of employee commitment and turnover intention in the Nigerian public sector. Findings from the study showed that in the empirical context, the meaning of commitment was illusive and turnover intention was due to the lack of scrutiny in public sector organizations. Participants expressed a lack of sense of ownership and attached meaning to commitment based on what they can get from the organization. The qualitative approach used provides a deeper understanding of determinants of employee turnover intention (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2011; Sun & Wang, 2016). Findings from this study are novel and addresses a significant gap in literature by providing insights into how contextual factors may influence the meaning of employee commitment and turnover intention (Cho & Park, 2011; Sheridan et al., 2019). Also, researching in Nigeria widens the empirical scope beyond Western countries that have dominated the framing of existing studies and highlight the significant role of context in framing employee commitment and turnover intention (Staelens & Louche, 2017).

Literature review

Employee commitment

The paper draws on the three-component model by Meyer and Allen (1991) and Allen and Meyer (1990) to define employee commitment. Employee commitment can be experienced by employees in three different ways such as the desire to remain with an organization (affective commitment), the perceived cost of leaving an organization (continuous commitment) and an obligation to remain with the organization (normative commitment). Traditionally, the different ways of experiencing commitment depend on a complex

combination of environmental factors such as economic conditions, human resource management practices and individual factors (Meyer et al., 2018). Of course, employees are more likely to commit to their employer if they are satisfied with human resource practices/offerings or if they hold strong collectivist values that may encourage commitment to one's employer (Davies & Gould-Williams, 2007).

At one level, institutional collective orientation may drive normative commitment as individual employees seek to express loyalty consistent with constitutional and societal values (Markovits et al., 2007). At another level, organization human resource offerings/practices such as reward, training, career development opportunities, greater autonomy instead of control and inclusive work environment drives employee affective commitment (Johnson et al., 2018; Markovits et al., 2007; Oruh et al., 2020).

Turnover intention

Some of the organization related factors associated with employee commitment and turnover intention include organization culture (Gregory et al., 2009) and human resource management practices (Oruh et al., 2020). In general, these studies found that unfavourable work conditions will likely have significant influence on commitment, turnover intention and thus turnover (Abubakar et al., 2014). At the individual factor level, Markovits et al. (2007) found that individual-level factors such as individual employee cultural values also played a significant role in influencing employee commitment and turnover intention. It emerged that employees from more collectivist culture are more likely to develop normative commitment (Markovits et al., 2007) towards their employer. While some of these studies (Oruh et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2018; Markovits et al., 2007) used public sector firms as the empirical setting for understanding employee commitment and turnover intention generally, an extensive literature search suggests that there are limited research (except, Rachid, 1995;

Goulet & Frank, 2002; Markovits et al., 2007) that has explored boundary conditions underpinning employee commitment and employee turnover intention in the public sector (Meyer et al., 2013; Mafukata & Mudau, 2016; Markovits et al., 2007).

Theoretical framing of employee commitment and turnover intention

Within the boundaries of social exchange (Goulet & Frank, 2002; Davies & Gould-Williams, 2007), employees satisfied with their organization's human resource offerings/practices create a sense of obligation towards the organization. They do so in expectation of future returns consistent with social exchange theory according to Blau (1964). By contrast, when an organization offers employees poor pay for performance, the best people may contemplate leaving because they perceive that their high performance will not be rewarded adequately (Azeez et al., 2016). Hence, employees having high experience of commitment in turn will display less intention to leave the organization (Kalidass & Bahron, 2015).

For employees to experience social exchange such that they remain committed and continue in employment, they consider how their needs are impacted in line with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Wilson et al., 2008). SDT as a theory of employee motivation explores how employees may satisfy their innate psychological needs (Wilson et al., 2008). While extant studies focus more on how interventions introduced by an organization may influence employees' intention to leave (Kowalczyk and Kucharska, 2020; Teo et al., 2020), SDT in this context explores employee turnover intention based on self-help. According to SDT, employees will be more likely to stay in an organization where their needs of competence, connection and autonomy are met.

The Nigerian context

The public sector in Nigeria is considered an appropriate setting for this study in that it has failed to achieve the goals it was constituted to achieve due to poor economic and social outcomes associated with the dynamics of management actions and practices in the sector (Oruh et al., 2020). Hence, there is need to examine and understand human resource practices suitable for this sector to facilitate the development of appropriate managerial practices relevant for recruiting, developing, retaining a committed workforce to drive socio-economic performance in the Nigerian public sector space (Budhwar & Boyne, 2004). The research deviates from the work of other researchers on employee commitment and turnover intention in Nigeria by investigating the dynamics of HRM in the public sector and how it impacts employees' commitment and turnover intention.

The focus on turnover intention is significant especially in the public sector (Nayak et al., 2018). While extant studies suggest that poor leadership and inadequate pay (challenges that are prevalent in the public sector) may influence employee decision to leave an organization (Mayfield & Mayfeild, 2011; Sun & Wang, 2016), this is not the case for public sector organizations, especially in the Nigerian context. Research evidence suggests that irrespective of the challenges facing employees in the public sector, job turnover was lower when compared to those in private sector organizations (Abolade, 2018). One of the reasons for this was that the public sector is more stable and assured of pay (Azeez et al., 2016). However, evidence exists to suggest that while employees may not be leaving the public sector, their turnover intention is high, and many are seeking greener pastures (Abolade, 2018). Notwithstanding this, research has not paid attention to the challenge of turnover intention. To fill the identified gaps in the literature, this paper sheds light on this challenge by attempting to explain the mechanism through which employee commitment may influence turnover intention.

Methodology

An interpretive perspective was used to examine and understand how employee commitment may influence turnover intention in public sector organizations in Nigeria. Saunders et al. (2009) posit that interpretive perspective is suitable for conducting human resource management research that is complex and unique. 47 employees working in different public sector organizations were involved in the study. The interviews were conducted in Abuja. Abuja was suitable for two reasons; first, Abuja is the capital city of Nigeria, hence most federal ministries and parastatals had their headquarters in the city and two, the cosmopolitan nature of the city made it possible to draw participants from the different states in Nigeria (Gberevbie, 2010). Participants were drawn from several different ministries and parastatals in the Federal Civil Service and are representative of a broad range of views of employees. Participants covered different positions and had worked in the civil service between 5 to 26 years, and were identified using snowballing and networking approach (Birkinshaw et al., 2011). See Table 1 for the description of participants. The interview questions were centred around the following broad areas in line with the research aim:

1. *How long have you have been working for your organization?*
2. *Describe how committed you are to your organization?*
3. *What influenced your decision to work for your organization?*
4. *What do you like about your organization?*
5. *Describe the circumstances that will make you want to leave your organization?*

Insert Table 1 about here

Interview sessions lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour. The interview sessions were recorded, transcribed and notes were taken. Efforts were made to reflect on the emerging themes and literature to develop theory (Khan et al., 2019). To ensure the attainment of theoretical saturation, the study applied grounded theory principles to establish the themes from the way that participants discursively construct commitment and turnover intention (Glaser, 1978). Saturation was attained as common themes identified continued to recur such that subsequent interviews validated the previous information (Saunders et al., 2018). To reduce bias, participants were interviewed individually and assured of theirs and their organizational anonymity (Saunders and Lewis, 2012).

Using a discursive analytical approach, data was arranged to understand participants views. This involved examining the patterns and emotions expressed in the language that participants used to describe commitment and turnover intention. In the context of this study, the discursive approach is particularly appropriate as it provides an in-depth understanding of how participants understand the social context (Fairclough, 1992). This enabled the investigation into how the orientation of a society may influence how participants construct commitment and turnover intention (Toffoletti & Starr, 2016). The analysis of the transcripts was systematic following the recommendation of Turner (1981). It involved seven stages including developing themes, checking for saturation of themes, developing abstracts, using definition, explaining themes, linking the themes, and evaluating the links. Themes generated from the analysis include the meaning of employee commitment, the dimensions of the three-component model and the role of culture on employees' conceptualization of commitment and turnover intention. The analysis of each was supplemented by iterative examination and explanation. The authors conducted initial analysis independently and held several meetings to compare results and resolve anomalies to further support the validity of the process. Part of the initial analysis was to identify if the views of participants differed due to demographic

differences. The authors found no differences in the responses provided; thus, case-by-case data analysis was not adopted (Saunders et al., 2018).

Findings

Meaning of employee commitment:

To understand how committed participants were to their organization, participants were asked if they were committed to their organization. The response was unanimous showing the level of employee commitment in the public sector in Nigeria:

'The word 'commitment' seems too elusive to use. I will not really like to use that term to describe my affiliation with this organization because there is absolutely nothing in place to indicate that this organization deserves that kind of engagement from me. Therefore, I would just like to say that I work for this organization and not committed please' (Health officer)

Participants responses to their level of commitment made it necessary to examine their understanding of the construct. Findings seemed completely different from the academic definitions of commitment (Machokoto, 2019; Meyer et al., 2018). Three subthemes were deduced to understand the rationale for participants' view of commitment.

Lacking a sense of ownership

Findings showed that participants had no sense of ownership of the organizations where they work:

'No one in this country is sincerely loyal to the organization that they work for, especially those in the public sectors like me because there is a strong belief in this

country (Nigeria) that public sector is actually no one's business and that whether we are committed or loyal or not, the public sectors will still survive' (Medical officer)

Under normal circumstances, the general perception out there is that government work ought to be respected and taken seriously. Support for this assertion can be drawn from the explanation provided by Habib et al. (2018) who stressed that due to the bureaucratic nature of government work (public service), it is hoped that those who have been saddled with the responsibilities of working in the public sector would take it to heart. However, within the Nigerian context, findings seemed to have challenged the general understanding and meaning of what working for government parastatals stand for as espoused in the explanation provided by (Habib et al., 2018).

Commitment based on rewards

Participants view of commitment relied mainly on the monetary value that they derived from the organization:

'Please let me tell you in a clean and clear term that I am not committed to my work but that I am only committed to what I can gain from working in the organization that I currently work at' (Tax officer)

The above explanation of commitment deviates from the conceptualisation in existing debates. Scholars such as Cheon and Reeve (2015) defined commitment as the level of enthusiasm an employee has towards his/her tasks. However, this assertion is different from the perception of commitment within the Nigerian public sector investigated.

Commitment based on self-help

Participants seem to suggest that the management of public sector organizations seemed not to care. Thus, employees in the Nigerian public sector seem to have developed what can best be described as 'self-help commitment'

'I am not committed because no one can get things done with commitment in this organization and even in Nigeria as a whole. The only thing that can make me to be committed is if there is a good structure in place that will secure my well-being. Unfortunately, public sectors in this country appear not to care for its employees'
(Admin officer)

Three model components of commitment

Normative commitment

Participants did not see their employment contract as a reason to be committed to their organization:

'Let me clarify issues here, the fact that I have worked in this organization for a long time does not necessarily mean that I am committed to the organization' (Tax officer)

This suggests that the length of service that employees put in the Nigeria public sector have nothing to do with their commitment level. Some existing literature seems to have suggested that employees would often remain in organizations for a longer period due to the commitment and loyalty that such employees may have developed with the organizations (Mullins, 2007). To understand why participants did not feel any sense of obligation to their organization, they were probed further, and findings showed that participants felt obligated to work to fulfil societal requirements and family obligations.

Commitment based on societal view

While participants did not feel any sense of obligation to their organization, their focus was more on how society views people who were not working. Some part of the society considers men that do not work or provide for their families as irresponsible, irrespective of why they are not working or unable to support their families.

'Working in the public sector is also a status thing in this country, there is a general understanding and belief that working in the public sector in Nigeria is a prestigious thing to do' (Tax officer)

Unlike the perceptions of employees in the public sector in Nigeria, the public sector in other parts of the world such as in the United Kingdom is a sector that people are usually happy to work for because it is considered a sector that helped to contribute to the development of the society and humanity (Mullins, 2007).

Commitment based on family needs

Participants also mentioned that their feeling of obligation to work was premised on the need to meet their family need:

'I prefer to work in the public sector as against working in the private sector because I have the opportunity to provide for members of my immediate family by sending my children to school and also being able to pay my house rent' (Admin officer)

The above responses suggest that employee moral obligation in the empirical context is placed on the family due to societal pressure (Makama, 2013).

Continuance commitment

Findings here suggest that participants commitment was hinged mainly on the gains that they benefit from their organization.

'Another reason that would make me cease to work in the public sector is if I won the lottery and then never have to ever work for the rest of my life, otherwise, nothing will make me stop because there are numerous benefits to be gained from working in the public sector in Nigeria' (Tax officer)

To understand the benefits gained, participants responses showed that there were benefits gained from regular business operation. These benefits were divided into two, organization level benefits and society level benefits. Organization level includes pay, position, pension, and job security.

Cost of leaving employment -pay

It was not surprising that pay was very important to the participants especially as they attributed commitment more to monetary reward.

'The belief that no matter what happens, at the end of the month, I will be paid some amount as salary is also another reason why I am working for this organization and it has nothing to do with my commitment to this organization' (Admin officer)

Cost of leaving employment -position

Findings also suggested that participants considered the cost of losing the position that they have attained in their organization

'I am proud to say, therefore, that my current position, as well as my job in the public sector in Nigeria, are what made me say that it is my pride, and these give me a feeling of obligation to continue to stay in the public sector in Nigeria' (Procurement officer)

The results of the findings are interesting. This is because it deviates from the assertions of existing debates. While extant studies found that employees position increased their feeling of obligation and commitment to their organization (Lemons & Jones, 2001), this was not the case here. Participants were interested in getting promoted because of the benefit it has for their family and their status in society.

'My current position has a lot to do with the feeling of obligation because as the head of the family, I must provide for my immediate family members. Therefore, I will not be true to you if I say otherwise' (Senior Admin officer)

'The fact that in the society, I am being respected and valued as an important member of the society also gives me a sense of obligation in my current position as an employee in the public sector in Nigeria' (Finance officer)

Existing Social Exchange Theory suggest that position will result in a dyadic exchange (Cook et al., 2013; Davies & Gould-Williams, 2007). Cook et al. (2013) achievement proposal suggested that when one discovers they are balanced for their activities; they tend to go over the activity. This line of argument was not the case for participants in this study. Participants were striving for a higher position because of the status and more money that comes with it. Society's view strongly influenced the behaviour of employees (Pepple, 2020).

Cost of leaving employment -job security

Here participants considered the unemployment crises in the country as a reason for remaining in employment. For them, public sector employment is more secure. There is a general notion that public sector jobs are for life and most of the respondents tend to ascribe to this idea.

'Furthermore, fear of sudden retrenchment makes commitment to be non-existence because in this country and most especially among private sectors employees, there are no legislations that seem to protect employees' rights. Thus, the fear of being suddenly made redundant is why employees are not commitment' (Records officer)

Cost of leaving employment -private practice

Majority of the participants mentioned that they had established their own business while working in the public sector. This has helped them to supplement their salaries. The challenge here was that the participants seemed to be more committed to their own business than their employment. However, having a business and working was important to them:

'I cannot foresee any reason that will make me give up working in this organization and it is not because of my commitment or loyalty to the organization but because I can run my own business and I can also make some extra money one way or the other from working in this organization' (Admin officer)

Cost of leaving employment -corrupt practices

Further findings on the continuance commitment highlighting the novelty of this research. The results showed that corrupt practices were not considered as wrongdoing. Participants considered the extra revenue generated from their workplace as a reason to remain in employment.

Corrupt practices- embezzlement

Here participants viewed the bribes received from the public as a fringe benefit. They also had no challenge explaining how funds meant for public programmes and project were embezzled and shared in the workplace. All the participants that took part in the data

collection or interview session expressed corruption as the norm within the public sectors in Nigeria.

'I am working for this organization is as a result of what I get to be shared from, like the monies that were meant to be used for infrastructural development which the senior level officers share among themselves and which subsequently trickle down to the lower cadre in this organization' (Tax officer)

Corrupt practices-embezzlement benefits as self-help

The participants appeared to have articulated the issue of inadequate minimum wages or non-implementation of minimum wages in the public sector as being of heightened sensitivity that has hindered employees' commitment.

'In the public sector, we (employees) are here to help ourselves because the government cares less about the employees in the public sector' (Admin officer)

Corrupt practices-bribes considered as generosity

Attempting to understand why participants were comfortable with taking bribes, they were asked why that was done. The findings here show that the culture of the country normalised bribery.

'I am loyal and committed to the money paid to me as an employee and the extra money that can be made while rendering service to members of the public that we are supposed to serve' (Procurement officer)

Based on the explanation provided by these participants, employees in the public sector in Nigeria seemed to have devised a strategy to replace inadequate minimum wages and the non-implementation of minimum wages that have been agreed upon by the employees in the

public sector in Nigeria with proceeds from bribes and other illegitimate means. The strategy that has been substituted for inadequate wages or non-implementation is 'preying on the members of the public' whom these employees are supposed to serve. What this translates to is that these employees have opted to demand 'money' from members of the public that they are supposed to serve diligently.

Corrupt practices-embezzlement considered a national cake

As a result of the wider corruption in the government, participants considered their actions normal and getting what belongs to them:

'As a matter of fact, everyone in the public sector sees his/her position in the public sector as an opportunity to have a share of what we have come to describe as 'share of the national cake'. (Records officer)

These findings showed that a significant number of the participants viewed the public sector organizations in Nigeria as an opportunity to enrich themselves without regards to the impact their actions have on the organization(s) as well as for the purpose for which the organization was set up.

Affective commitment

Findings here highlight the importance of workplace relationships on participants commitment and willingness to stay employed. Interestingly, the relationship mentioned were those that facilitated their corrupt practices in the workplace:

'Having access to some of the government's allocations for certain projects are usually embezzled by those at the top and in order not for the middle and junior officials not to whistle blow on them, we have a good relationship with the top and

when such allocation is made, that money is shared by everyone in our office' (Admin officer)

Participants have also established relationships with members of the public that make it easy for them to collect bribes

'I am currently working in an area that deals with members of the public and members of this public do give us money in order for them to get the services that this department provides, otherwise, such services, free though, may not be given to the members of the public' (Senior admin officer)

Following the findings, the normative, continuance and affective commitment, it was not surprising that participants in the context of this study did not consider salary an important aspect of motivation:

'I would like to tell you at this juncture that in our organization, we have not been paid for well over 9 months, almost a year and in situation where our salaries are not paid, how on this planet earth do you expect us to be impressed not to even talk of committed? No one has been paid for months and things are not easy at all in this country (Nigeria) But I still enjoy going to work because of the side deals' (Senior Admin officer)

Understanding employee commitment and turnover intention

Overall, participants expressed no intention to leave their organization because of the laissez affair culture that promoted a lack of scrutiny and accountability

'Furthermore, if I am not able to be making as much money that I am currently making at my present place of work. Maybe, if there is the restoration of accountability from those who are at the top in organizations that belong to the

government. Probably such may be the starting point that will make me not to want to work for this public sector organization'. (Tax officer)

Findings also showed that participants considered the benefits of working in the private sector and the public sector. Their choice to remain in the public sector was because of the fringe benefits and lack of scrutiny in the public sector

'... besides, the public sector is devoid of serious accountability that the private sector often does have regularly. I chose the public sector to the private sector because I may not go to work for days in a week and still get paid my monthly salary without any recourse whereas the private sector does not allow for such to happen due to the depth of scrutiny that takes place in the private sector' (Finance officer)

'Without any doubt, the fact that the public sector is not seriously scrutinised makes the public sector a good place to work' (Health officer)

Conclusions

The study investigated the contextual meaning of employee commitment and turnover intention within the context of the Nigerian public sector (Cho & Wang, 2011). Using Meyer and Allen's (1991) Three Model Commitment and SDT, the study found that the meaning of employee commitment is elusive in the empirical context and is based solely on material gains. Specifically, employees considered meaningful commitment to develop from rewards and benefits. Consequently, this study concludes that emotional attachment attributes of employee commitment alluded to in extant social exchange studies may not apply within the empirical context as participants displayed a lack of sense of ownership. With regards to turnover intention, extant studies found that the public sector employees had lower turnover rate but exhibited higher turnover intention due to low pay and working conditions (Adebayo

& Ilesanmi, 2020; Oyewobi et al., 2012). This is because in the context of this study, employees have resorted to self-help by taking advantage of the lack of control and scrutiny to engage in deviant actions aimed at enriching themselves. Consequently, the study concludes that public sector employees' turnover intention may continue to be low as long as employee can exploit the organizational structure and if the culture of corruption persists; a perspective that highlights the role of context in determining the behaviour of employees (Staelens & Louche, 2017).

By investigating the contextual factors that influence how employees view commitment and turnover intention, the study make significant contributions. First, the study provides a context specific conceptualisation of employee commitment by highlighting how commitment is formed in an organizational context with weak structures and how societal values may influence employees' attitude to probity. Thus, adding new meaning to Meyer and Allen (1990) conceptualization of commitment (normative, continuance and affective). For normative, employees in the empirical context focussed mainly on their obligation to their family and society, and their employment as a duty to care for themselves and maintain a good social image. For continuance, this study expands existing literature by introducing fringe benefits from corrupt practice and ability to work and manage private practice as costs that may influence turnover intention. While affective commitment has been linked with string emotions based on workplace relationships, this study takes conversation somewhat further (Meyer et al., 2013; Cohen, 2009). Participant's relationships were only meaningful within and outside their organization with people who connive with them to perpetuate corrupt activities and support their deviant behaviour. Consequently, in the context of this study, commitment is influenced only when it enhances personal gains.

To further understand the boundary conditions underpinning employee commitment and turnover intention, this study concludes that employees take a self-determination

approach to display their commitment. First, for competence, employees are willing to stay employed when the organization climate allows them to use their competence to set up private ventures. Second, autonomy in this study was meaningful due to weaknesses in the system that allowed employees the freedom to act without scrutiny. Third, the study asserts here that relatedness only focussed on maintaining relationships in the organization and service users to protect fringe benefits.

The theorisation of SDT significantly contributes to broader knowledge and theory by developing a framework that explains the mechanism through which employee commitment influence turnover intention. This framework provides a starting point for investigating the challenges of employee commitment in public sector organizations similar to those in the Nigerian context. See Figure 1. While there have been several literatures that have investigated the challenges of employee commitment in the public sector in Nigeria, the framework developed in this study makes it easy for practitioners to identify the challenges from employee, organizational and societal levels.

Insert Table 1 about here

Whereas this study arrives at similar conclusion on turnover intention with other studies (Abolade, 2018; Ogony & Majola, 2018). Turnover intention from other studies suggested that the organizational structure of public sector organizations made employees feel the need to stay (Shibiti, 2020). This study, however, differs in the rationale for employees' turnover intention. Consequently, the study posits that should the same generation of employees remain in employment, turnover intention in the public sector will be low if the organizational culture remains unchanged. The low turnover intention reported due to the lack of suitable alternative in the empirical context is similar to Sheridan et al.,

(2019) study. While Sheridan et al. (2019) found that staying employees exhibited deviant behaviours, it was limited in explaining the rationale. The qualitative approach provided deeper insights by underscoring how context (societal and organizational culture) may determine employees' deviant behaviours.

In practice, this study highlights the weaknesses of the control processes of public sector organizations in Nigeria. There is a need for improvement in the control systems. This may include rotating employees regularly and the improvement of internal auditing functions. There is also a need for public sector organizations to plan for recruiting new employees as the majority of participants suggested that they will leave the sector if there is an improvement in the internal control processes. It is worthwhile to consider developing a policy framework for regulating the setting up of private practices. This will help to reduce the challenge of conflict of interest.

The study presents the following limitations; first, data was collected in Nigeria. This means that the findings may not apply to other countries, especially within developed economies. However, Nigeria represents the developing economies and has a similar cultural orientation with other countries in similar context. Thus, the findings may be useful outside the country especially among developing countries. Second, qualitative approach was used in this study. This method has been criticised for lacking validity (Saunders et al., 2009). However, care was taken to ensure that bias was minimised. Participants were assured of their anonymity and themes generated using codes. There is also a challenge of generalisability especially because of the small sample size (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). However, qualitative studies allow for in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Additional, participants were drawn from different parts of Nigeria and from different public sector organization to get a broad view of the issues.

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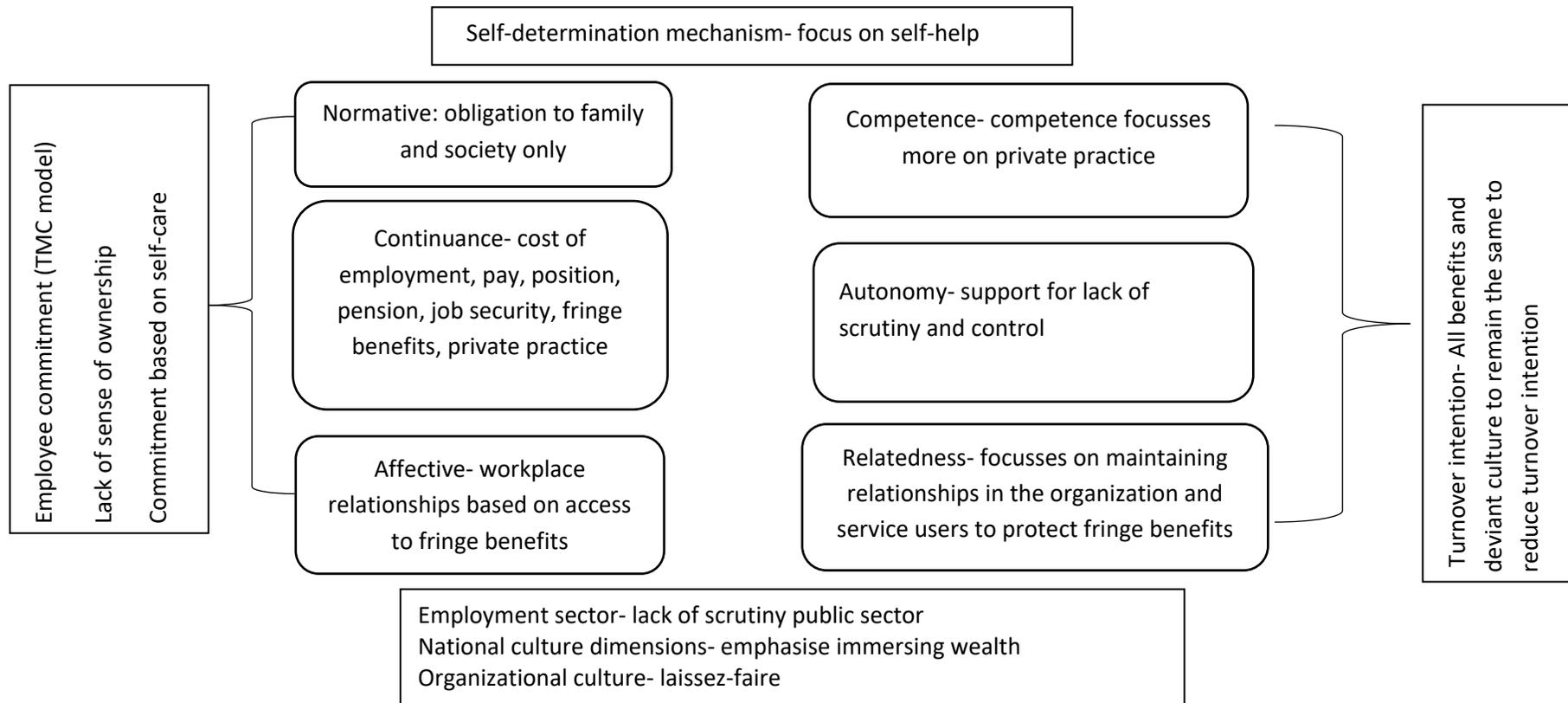
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Table 1: Participant's description

Participant	State of origin	Number of years in service	Position	Qualification
P1	Lagos State	20 years	Admin Officer	Bachelor
P2	Oyo State	20 years	Medical officer	Bachelor
P3	Kaduna State	20 years	Finance Officer	Bachelor
P4	Ogun State	20 years	Admin Officer	Bachelor
P5	Lagos State	10 years	Procurement officer	Bachelor
P6	Kogi State	10 years	Admin Officer	Higher National Diploma
P7	Kwara State	10 years	Admin Officer	Bachelor
P8	Sokoto State	5 years	Records officer	Higher National Diploma
P9	Adamawa State	5 years	Admin Officer	Bachelor
P10	Kano State	12 years	Health officer	Bachelor
P11	River State	18 years	Health officer	Bachelor
P12	Akwa Ibom	20 years	Senior Admin	Bachelor
P13	Ekiti State	12 years	Tax Officer	Higher National Diploma
P14	Lagos State	11 years	Tax Officer	Higher National Diploma
P15	Oyo State	18 years	Senior Admin	Bachelor
P16	Kaduna State	20 years	Senior Admin	Higher National Diploma
P17	Bayelsa State	17 years	Tax Officer	Higher National Diploma
P18	Kano State	12 years	Health officer	Bachelor
P19	River State	18 years	Health officer	Bachelor
P20	Akwa Ibom	20 years	Senior Admin	Bachelor
P21	Ekiti State	12 years	Tax Officer	Higher National Diploma
P22	Abuja	16 years	Director	Doctorate
P23	Abuja	15 years	Director	Doctorate
P24	Benue State	10 years	Senior Budget officer	Doctorate

P25	Jigawa State	5 years	Admin Officer	Bachelor
P26	Kaduna State	6 years	Admin Officer	Bachelor
P27	Platue State	5 years	Admin Officer	Higher National Diploma
P28	River State	20 years	Admin Officer	Higher National Diploma
P29	Cross Rivers State	26 years	Admin Officer	Bachelor
P30	Edo State	20 years	Admin Officer	Bachelor
P31	Imo State	20 years	Admin Officer	Bachelor
P32	Imo State	14 years	Admin Officer	Bachelor
P33	Nasarawa State	12 years	Admin Officer	Bachelor
P34	Abuja	7 years	Support officer	Ordinary National Diploma
P35	Yobe State	7 years	Support officer	Ordinary National Diploma
P36	Delta State	19 years	Records officer	High school
P37	Bayelsa State	10 years	Director	Doctorate
P38	Lagos State	11 years	Director	Doctorate
P39	Lagos State	15 years	Records officer	High school
P40	Ekiti State	10 years	Budget officer	Bachelor
P41	Kogi State	15 years	Accountant	Bachelor
P42	Kogi State	22 years	Project support officer	Bachelor
P43	Enugu State	14 years	Admin Officer	Ordinary National Diploma
P44	River State	12 years	Admin Officer	Ordinary National Diploma
P45	River State	6 years	Procurement officer	Ordinary National Diploma
P46	Abuja	9 years	Senior Admin officer	Bachelor
P47	Abuja	21 years	Admin Officer	High school

Figure 1-Framework for linking employee commitment to turnover intention in the Nigeria public sector



Source: Authors- 2020