

**JOB SATISFACTION AS PREDICTOR OF CAREER ADVANCEMENT OF ACADEMIC
STAFF OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA.**

By

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Abstract

The study investigated job satisfaction as predictor of career advancement of academic staff of public universities in Southwestern Nigeria. Using descriptive survey, an instrument, “Questionnaire on Job Satisfaction as Predictor of Career Advancement” was used to collect data from 900 academic staff; and data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study concluded that job satisfaction contributes positively in influencing staff career advancement (even when it was at a moderate level), especially when implemented fully by institutions’ management. It is therefore recommended that implementing regular assessments of job satisfaction and career advancement needs, as well as counselling from professionals can help institutions identify areas for improvement. *Keywords: Career advancement, job satisfaction, academic staff, University, Southwest.*

Introduction

One of the major challenges that most organizations are facing is management and motivation of employees. It is very important to note that employees still remain very important in any organization, as they contribute to success and failure of the organization. Even in some cases, there could be some of these workers that volunteer to work beyond their level of job specification, just to move the organization forward as well as contributing significantly to the success of the organization and hasten its advancement. This could therefore, help the managers and other workers to achieve their goals at the appropriate time, as it also helps the organization to perform at an optimum level. Individuals’

willingness to contribute joint efforts to the organization is therefore indispensable to effective attainment of organisational goals, as well as individual goal (Sommet & Elliot, 2017). Ultimately, universities, which are seen as climax of knowledge acquisition, cannot be overlooked nor underestimated when it comes to making emphasis on very important organizations that mold lives. Thus, universities are the origin of human resources, which are equipped with the sole responsibility of grooming people. They are higher learning institutions that implement manpower needs for national development; institution that goes beyond ordinary study for a degree, but also entails research work. This implies that, the ability of any university to run effectively and attain its goals depends on its ability to attract, maintain and retain competent and satisfied staff (Payoda, Canque & Derasinc, 2021). To this effect, it is very paramount to look into the stand of academic staff, known as scholars and researchers, who strive towards adopting strategies that can effectively ensure their career advancement in the university system.

Academic staff in the university include personnel whose primary assignment is to instruct and carry out research. Since the university is charged with the responsibility to proffer solutions to human problems, through qualitative researches and instructions; this shows that the roles of academic staff are very essential and paramount in the university. It is therefore of the utmost importance for any university that values growth and development, as well as progress of their employees and the university as a whole, to create an enabling environment for career advancement of their academic staff. This will also help universities in achieving their goal and effectively carry out their important roles and responsibility in the society.

Career advancement is therefore the total constellation of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic and chance factors that combine to shape the career of any given individual over the life span (Adewoye, Abioro, Adekunle & Adele, 2017). It includes progressing from a low or entry level to a higher level. Thus, career advancement is said to have an effective impact on the employee motivation and organization effectiveness. Moreover, career advancement opportunities can give rise to employee turnover and employee retention; which in turn could increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the institution, as well as yielding high productivity. Generally, it is believed that career advancement also requires consistent promotion of employees based on proper appraisal schemes, increment in wages and salaries, and taking responsibility for total welfare of the employees; as well as providing opportunities for career advancement. This could therefore be seen as a driving force that stimulates the employee, especially an academic staff, into action, even to work towards achieving organizational goals (Teferi, Bekalu & Abebe, 2016). However, career advancement in the university system has become a bone of contention recently, as academic staff only enjoy fewer opportunities of career advancement. Even with the fewer opportunities, some academic staff could not have access to them, due to the limited access to the fewer opportunities.

Salary increment and bonuses are not really forthcoming like before. Although it should be noted that career advancement is no longer automatic, but strictly based on performance and recommendations from an influential person or superiors. Despite knowing fully well that, career advancement does not come effortlessly, some university lecturers (academic staff) that are supposed to develop a desire to advance further or climb the ladder of achieving higher goals, seem to be contented with their positions or status quo, and continue to work in those same positions for years. For instance, they (some lecturers) may be lagging behind in the areas of research, and this could be counterproductive because

it often results in redundancy, since it is known that any goal attained in a university is a product of research, being a tool needed to solve human problems. This could therefore minimize the level of career advancement (progress on a career ladder); and by implication, give rise to frustration and the hunt for greener pasture outside the system or country.

It should therefore be noted that, there are some factors that contribute to career advancement among the academic staff in the university system. To this effect, it is important to investigate those factors, in order to make recommendations that would go a long way in maximizing career advancement. This study will therefore examine how one of those factors, namely job satisfaction, predicts career advancement of academic staff in universities, especially in Southwestern Nigeria.

Job satisfaction could be seen as a factor that plays a crucial role in the institution's well-being. It may also be defined as a state of positive feeling of all aspects of one's job (Nweke, Okoye & Dike-Aghanya, 2021). It is a pleasurable or a positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job. It could also be seen as staff's observation of how accurately their work provides what is important to them, which could trigger the desire of staff to have interest in remaining a part of a particular institution. This therefore would enable them to demonstrate great levels of responsibility in favour of the institution, as well as advancing their own career too. Job satisfaction can be realized in an employee who sees his or her job as fulfilling and enjoyable, thus taking the job and his own advancement with the importance deserved'. The reverse is the case with an employee who does not give his commitment nor strive to move to the next level, since he or she feels dissatisfied (Lima & Allida, 2021).

In addition, job satisfaction amongst academic staff, is an imperative construct for their retention; and it is a significant determining factor of career advancement. This implies that to achieve the university set goal and advance in one's career, the academic staff need to be satisfied in their job so as to be affectively committed. Thus, job satisfaction could be measured in terms of the following multifaceted areas: number of wages one receives, hours of work, the level of job input, bonuses, availability of welfare packages, healthcare facilities, level of interference from management, institutional climate, time allocated for leisure and relaxation; and allowance for personal development (Nweke et. al., 2021).

In some instances, there could be some complaints by some academic staff, especially those who have the perception of being burdened and overloaded with work or being treated unfairly. Also, some could have financial issues, especially when it comes to carrying out research and publishing papers, which requires a huge amount of money. In the case where all these issues are attended to, it is more likely that the level of job satisfaction would be high, thus, contributing to higher level of career advancement. In sum, this indicates that the higher the level of job satisfaction, the higher the level of career advancement; while low level of job satisfaction also leads to low level of career advancement. It can therefore be said that academic staff with high level of job satisfaction is more likely to enjoy high level of career advancement.

Recently, career advancement has been a major concern among academic staff in the university system. Despite the desire of academic staff with positive attitude to work and move from one level to the other, the level of career advancement still seems to be very low. Therefore, when employees' expectation, especially academic staff, is not met, they are more likely to aspire and opt for greener

pasture elsewhere. This in turn results into brain drain of competent staff, low quality of education and low productivity of output of the universities (e.g. half-baked graduates).

Moreover, career advancement becomes increasingly stringent day by day, as strict conditions have been attached to different level of career advancement in different organizations. Specifically, the academic staff career advancement requirement (in terms of publications, foreign journals inclusive) is becoming more difficult and worrisome for the staff. Meanwhile, the staff are not funded nor given allowance for these expenses, while some may not even be given study leave to further their studies, which could prompt them to resign from their current job or position. Also, career advancement based on good performance and recommendations from superiors seems difficult to achieve recently; thus, contributing to low level of career advancement.

In addition, the socio-economic environment seems more stressful recently, as there has been more pressure on academic staff, in the area of financing and catering for the welfare of the family (food, shelter, children's school fees and career building). This could therefore arguably have adverse effect on their career advancement rate, since money meant for the input or preparation for career advancement (for instance, publications and conferences), may be used for the family needs. Also, the worrisome economic situation seems to have led academic staff into moonlighting (private practice), as well as working in different institutions at the same time (both private and public). In other words, in the bid of augmenting their sources of income, their level of career advancement is being compromised. Inevitably, this affects their level of commitment to their job, which in turn negatively affects their level of career advancement. By implication, this could lead to frustration, low self-

esteem, loss decreased job satisfaction and motivation, lower productivity and performance, higher turnover rates, decreased professional development, increased stress and burnout of the academic staff.

On the other hand, the university could also experience loss of talent, decreased research output, reduced student satisfaction, negative impact on institutional reputation, difficulty in attracting new talent and impaired strategic goals. However, despite enormous studies on career advancement in the foreign countries, limited researches have been carried out on this topic in Nigeria, especially in the universities. Also, very few of these limited works was carried out on job satisfaction as determinant of career advancement of academic staff in public universities in Southwestern Nigeria. It was therefore the focus of this study to examine the level of career advancement of the academic staff of public universities, as well as the predictive ability of job satisfaction on their career advancement.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate how job satisfaction could predict career advancement of academic staff. The specific objectives are to:

- (a) investigate the level of career advancement of university academic staff in Southwestern Nigeria; and
- (b) examine the predictive ability of the academic staff's job satisfaction on career advancement of university academic staff in the study area

Research Question

The following question will be answered in this study.

- (i) What is the level of career advancement of university academic staff in Southwest Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was tested in the study:

1. There is no significant predictive ability of the academic staff's job satisfaction on their career advancement.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design. Based on the fact that all academic staff cannot be possibly reached, the study was conducted using samples from the population of academic staff in the selected universities; and the results obtained from this was used to generalize for the entire population. The dependent variable of this study is career advancement, while the independent variable is job satisfaction.

Population

The population for this study were the academic staff of the public universities in Southwestern Nigeria totaling 10,868 as at the commencement of the 2023/2024 Harmattan semester (Researcher's Compilation from National University Commission (NUC) website). Southwestern Nigeria is one of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. The zone is made up of six states which are Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo States. Six federal universities, eight state universities and 30 private universities are in the Southwestern Nigeria as presently. The academic staff from the federal and state universities in the states will constitute the population for the study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample comprised 900 academic staff, which were selected using multi-stage sampling procedure. The sample size represented 8% of the population of university academic staff in Southwestern Nigeria. From the six states in Southwestern Nigeria, three states were selected using stratified sampling technique. Two public universities (Federal and State Universities) were purposively selected based on ownership, from each of the three states, totaling six universities in all. Five Faculties were selected from each university using simple random sampling technique, making a total of 30 Faculties. Furthermore, five Departments were selected from each of the faculties, using simple random sampling technique, giving a total of 150 departments. Therefore, six academic staff from each of the departments were selected using convenience sampling technique, making a total of 900 academic staff.

Research Instrument

In carrying out this study, an adapted instrument entitled “Questionnaire on Job Satisfaction as Predictor of Career Advancement” (OTJSCA) was used to collect data from the academic staff in the selected universities. The instrument is the combination of two adapted scales packaged together as one. Section A of the questionnaire elicited responses on the demographic variables of the respondents, such as the name of the school, religion, sex, year of experience, level of education and department. Section B comprised 24 item Likertscale adapted from the scales of Adewoye et. al., 2017), entitled “Functionality of Career Advancement and Organizational Effectiveness: Nigerian Deposit Money Banks Perspective”. An internal consistency of the original inventory was reported to be 0.84. The items were adapted to measure the level of career advancement among the staff, as some of the items were modified. The respondents were to give their responses on the basis of their agreement ranging from Never, Rarely, Occasionally to Frequently. Responses to these items were summed up and high level of career advancement was identified where the staff had highest rating and vice versa. Section

C comprised 20 items on job satisfaction adapted from Martins and Proenca (2012), entitled “Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire- Psychometric properties and validation in a population of Portuguese hospital workers”. The original version of the instrument contained 100 items with an internal consistency of 0.87. The respondents were to give their responses on the basis of their agreement ranging from SD=Strongly Dissatisfied, D=Dissatisfied, S=Satisfied to SS=Strongly Satisfied. The instrument was scored 4 for ‘Strongly Satisfied’, 3 for ‘Satisfied’, 2 for Dissatisfied, 1 for ‘Dissatisfied’ on items 1 to 20.

Procedure for Data Collection

The procedure for data collection for the study started with a visit by the researcher to the selected universities in Southwestern Nigeria to ascertain the faculties, departments and units to collect data from; and the process of data collection in each university. Before going, letter of introduction was collected from the researcher’s Head of Department (H. O. D.) and given to the Dean and H. O. D. in each selected Faculty, department and unit, explaining the purpose of the research and seeking permission to involve the academic staff in their faculties, departments and units. After the Deans and H. O. Ds. have given their consents, information was collected from the staff in their respective offices; as they give their consent to fill the questionnaire. Data was collected by the researcher with the help of a trained research assistant.

Techniques for Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The research question was analyzed using frequency counts, percentage and Relative Significance Index (RSI), while the hypothesis was tested using regression analysis.

Results

Research Question: What is the level of career advancement of university academic staff in Southwestern Nigeria?

To answer this research question, two approaches were adopted. In the first instance, the academic staff's responses were scored such that frequently response was allotted 4, Occasionally, 3, Rarely 2 and Never was allotted 1. These responses were subjected to a descriptive analysis of frequency and percentage. Also, to determine the level of career advancement of university academic staff, the responses were then scored and cumulated. The minimum and maximum scores obtainable from this inventory were 38 and 152 while the mean and standard deviation (SD) scores were 119.6 and 15.37. Since a high score indicates a high level of staff's career advancement, scores of 38 to one SD below the mean score (38-105) were adjudged as low level of career advancement, scores of 106 through 135 (106 to mean+1 SD) as a moderate level of career advancement while scores of 136 through 152 were adjudged as high level of career advancement. The result is presented in Table below.

Table 1: Level of career advancement of university academic staff in Southwestern Nigeria

Level of career advancement	Score range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Low	38-105	148	16.4
Moderate	106-135	664	73.8
High	136-152	88	9.8
Total		900	100.0

Table 1 shows the level of career advancement of university academic staff in Southwestern Nigeria. The result shows that 16.5% of the university academic staff in Southwestern Nigeria demonstrated a low level of career advancement, 71.5% demonstrated a moderate level of career advancement while 12.1% of the teachers demonstrated a high level of career advancement. As shown in the result, it can be observed that the majority of the university academic staff in Southwestern Nigeria demonstrated a moderate level of career advancement.

Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis One: There is no significant predictive ability of the academic staff's job satisfaction on career advancement.

To test this hypothesis, staff's responses to the items on staff's job satisfaction subscale of the questionnaire were scored such that Strongly Disagree response was allotted 1, Disagree response as

2, Agree response as 3 and Strongly Agree response was allotted 4. These responses were first subjected to a descriptive analysis of frequency and percentage and the result is presented in the Table below. Then, responses to each of the constituting items were cumulated to form a composite measure for staff's job satisfaction that can be used as a predictor for criterion variable of staff's career advancement. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Table 2: Regression analysis of the Predictive Ability of job satisfaction on the staff's career advancement

R= 0.366		Unstandardized		Standardized	
R ² = 0.134		Coefficients		Coefficients	
Adj. R ² = 0.134					
F = 34.05*		B	Std. Error	Beta	T Sig.
1	(Constant)	34.083	.710		47.987 .000
	job satisfaction	.216	.013	.366	16.528 .000

Dependent Variable: Staff's career advancement score

*Predictor: (Constant), Job satisfaction, * p<.05 (p =.000)*

The Model Summary as presented in Table 2 showed the multiple R and coefficient of determination (R²) for the regression model. The R² = 0.134 indicated that 13.4% of the variance in staff's career advancement score can be explained by the regression model. The significant F-value (F = 34.05, P<

0.05) as observed in the Table indicated that the model predicted the outcome accurately. The Table also showed the constant or intercept term and the regression coefficients (β) for each independent variable. The constant value (34.08) represents the intercept, which is the predicted staff's career advancement not accounted for by job satisfaction enjoyed by the staff. The unstandardized beta value ($\beta = 0.216$) showed that there is a significant predicted increase of 21.6% in staff's career advancement with a unit increase in their job satisfaction. The regression equation therefore is: Staff's career advancement = $34.08 + 0.216$ (Job satisfaction)

The result therefore showed a significant predictive ability of the academic staff's job satisfaction on career advancement.

Discussion of the Findings

Based on the first finding, it showed that the level of the academic staff's career advancement was moderate. This finding corroborates the study of Julius, Wakkala and Danjuma (2024) and that of Abramo, D'Angelo and Rosati (2014), which showed that the level of the staff's career advancement was moderate. This finding showed that more grounds still need to be covered, so that university academic staff can go beyond the moderate level of career advancement and attain the higher level. Moreover, as academics lead busy lives and are frequently juggling the demands of teaching, research, administration, personal life commitments and service to their wider community, they need support for their career advancement processes. This would therefore make the job easier, convenient and even make the academic staff more relevant to their discipline and work realities. Thus, they need to be exposed to new fields of inquiry, extensively discussing their career plans with senior academics as they feel motivated to advance in their professional career. As a result of this, they will feel

psychologically safe, as they discuss and reflect upon their teaching, share ideas and resources, and feel empowered to try different strategies in relation to their academic obligations, resulting into being highly efficient, effective and productive.

Another finding in this study revealed a significant predictive ability of the academic staff's job satisfaction on career advancement. This revelation offers valuable insights into the dynamics between workplace satisfaction and professional growth within academic institutions. Job satisfaction is a multifaceted concept encompassing various aspects such as work environment, relationships with colleagues and supervisors, workload, remuneration, and opportunities for professional development. When academic staff members experience high levels of job satisfaction, they are more likely to exhibit enhanced motivation, productivity, and commitment to their roles. These positive attributes can contribute significantly to their career advancement. Several mechanisms can explain how job satisfaction influences career advancement, such as: enhanced performance and productivity, increased engagement and commitment, positive workplace relationships and reduced turnover and stability.

Conclusion

The findings acknowledged the needs for career advancement and personal drive for achievement programmes for lecturers as being crucial for resolving the constant industrial actions in the Nigerian university. As career advancement would lead to employees' recognition and retention in the field, it is also important to note that this can only be successful in a well conducive work environment of high level of job satisfaction, where employees thrive to uplift the image of the institution through quality teaching, rich, publication, creativity, innovation and consultancy services. By implication, job

satisfaction contributes positively in influencing staff career advancement, especially when implemented fully by institutions' management.

Recommendations

According to the results and findings, practical suggestions are proposed as below:

1. The university management should provide opportunities for the academic staff to advance their careers. This will expose them to more knowledge, skills and experience to handle students' difficulties and improve the general academic performance of the institutions.
2. Institutions should prioritize initiatives aimed at improving job satisfaction. This can include offering competitive salaries, ensuring manageable workloads, providing opportunities for professional development, and fostering a supportive work culture.
3. Institutions should invest in professional development programs that align with the career aspirations of their staff. This can include workshops, mentoring programs, and opportunities for further education and training.
4. Academic leaders and administrators should cultivate a leadership style that supports and values staff contributions. Recognizing and rewarding achievements can significantly enhance job satisfaction and, consequently, career advancement.
5. Implementing regular assessments of job satisfaction and career development needs can help institutions identify areas for improvement. Providing constructive feedback and acting on employee concerns can create a more positive work environment.

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