

Affective Commitment and Employee Life Satisfaction: A Review on Gambian Public Institutions

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Abstract

Employee satisfaction on the job is a recipe for organisational affective commitment. No organisation can properly function without a satisfied workforce. With the introduction of contemporary human resource management practices, it is important for the conditions of workers to be improved. However, it seems efforts are still lagging at the Gambian public/civil service to improve conditions of workers, to be emotionally attached to their work or institution, leading to institutional citizenship. The paper assessed the effects of affective commitment on employee life satisfaction, with a focus on Gambian public institutions. Staff attrition has been a major concern in public institutions in The Gambia, which is affecting their performance as compared to the private sector. As this trajectory continues, the performance of the Gambian public institutions will continue to dwindle which may affect generations to come. The objective was to uncover the root cause of high attrition rate in the Gambian public service and to proffer recommendations. Results from both literature review and focus group discussions indicated strong correlations between employee commitment to the organisation and work satisfaction. Also, the findings revealed a narrow gap in terms of salary scale which, to a large extent, affects employee satisfaction and commitment to work. This assertion was supported by equity theory, which states that employees' performance increases and they (employees) commit themselves to an organisation when they are fairly compensated. The study concluded that poor remuneration of public/civil servants in The Gambia resulted in high attrition rate. Contemporary best human resources management practices such as mentoring, secondment and appraisal were found to be ineffective in the Gambian civil service.

Keywords: Affective, Continuance, Normative, Satisfaction, Commitment

Introduction

For an organisation to achieve its ultimate goal, employee commitment to the work and organisation is crucial. In a fast-changing work environment, Caruso (2017) presumed that firms securing competitive advantage position will always succeed, thus creating value for both employees and organisation. Thus, the need for an enabling work environment that puts workers at the center is fundamental. Suggestions from Aghina, De Smet, Lackey and Lurie (2018) and established by Gleeson (2017) all point to the fact that today's organisational survival depends on the energy, commitment and engagement of employees. Therefore, in obtaining the best from employees, the human resources management department is obliged to inculcate programs that includes training, organisational development and career development, to boost employee performance. By providing challenging and attractive job, they can enhance employee performance and productivity, which leads to employee satisfaction and an increase in organisational commitment.

Like many other countries around the globe, the Gambia is concerned about enhancing employer's commitment to the job and the organisation. According to Yousaf, Yang and Sanders (2015), organisational commitment has consequences for employers, organisations and society as a whole, due to the fact that employers need to go the extra mile in meeting the new challenges in human resource management practices, if they are to maintain their workers. They further adduced that the employee's level of commitment to the organisation makes them suitable to obtain extrinsic and psychological likes for that organization. Yousaf, et al., (2015) stressed ranges from developing innovative ideas, good decision-making skills, exceptional interpersonal conviction, and a sense of fairness in institutional justice system. For instance, fairness on how the rules and regulations are implemented without biasness, the right to pay rises and promotions, reward, benefit, life satisfaction or reward associated with membership in the organisation. In the opinion of Robbins and Judge (2017), organisational commitment as the extent to which an employee recognises him/herself with a particular organisation and its goal and strives to uphold his/her relationship with that organisation. In another word, it describes the psychological attachment of an individual employee to a particular organisation. It is therefore prudent for organisations to devise mechanisms that will help boost employee's morale and feelings about their work, in order to be more committed to the organisation. It is assumed that committed employees tend to demonstrate continuous loyalty to their organisation and are motivated towards fighting for organisational goals and decisions (Kinicki, Amp & Fugate, 2016).

According to Colquitt, Rodell, Cropanzano and Ambrose (2015), organisational citizenship is acquired through effective commitment of employees to their managers and not just a mere commitment. Mercurio (2015) asserted that affective commitment gives emotional organisational attachment to employees. They stressed this to be an integral part of organisational commitment. Findings from previous studies such as George, Amp and Jones (2012) indicated turnover intentions and absenteeism as factors that dissatisfies employees. George, Amp and Jones (2012) used these two variables as determinants to measure employee level of commitment. George, Amp and Jones (2012) claimed that affective commitment of employees demonstrates their passion to be associated with the organisation and commit themselves to the pursuance of its goals. Lower turnover intentions among employees are associated with higher affective commitment (Addae, Johns & Boies, 2013). Kim (2013) attributed lower turnover intentions to higher organisational citizenship behavior. Improved job performance by (Park, Amp and Rainey, 2007), lesser absenteeism was poised by (Garland, Hogan, Kelley, Kim & Lambert, 2013), while Glarino (2013) related it to solid employee engagement towards the organisation. In the opinion of Jeung, Yoon and Choi (2017), it creates a platform where employees are determined to share their knowledge for the success of organisation.

As the global workforce dynamics continue to evolve over time, with new human resource management practices, employers are obliged to accommodate these new challenges if they are to maintain their employees, which The Gambia is not an exception. The rate of staff turnover in The Gambia's public institutions has been a major concern. Personnel Management Office (PMO, 2010-2017) has revealed that on yearly average, the number of civil servants that left service in 2014 increased from 5% to 7.5%. Keeping or enhancing employee's behavior on the job and dedication to the organisation is becoming worrisome in The Gambia's public institutions. Kanteh and Gibba (2019) poised that low career development and insufficient compensation packages are the key driving forces for staff turnover in public institutions in The Gambia. This assertion was supported by the proposition that the public sector accounts for the largest employer of talented employees and thus their dissatisfaction leading to low commitment to the organization creates a problem in replacing them with much talented employees (Newman, Ye & Leep, 2014). Through globalisation and advent of technology, the entire work dynamics has transformed from manual based to technology-based applications, which require high level of

skills and experience. Thus, the emerging trend in technological enhancement and new human resources management practices have significantly raised employees' level of awareness and demands, making it difficult to maintaining workers on a particular job or organisation. In order to accommodate these changes, the application of new human resource management practices is worth considering. This will positively affect the life of workers. These widespread transformations have distinctly changed employee life pattern and attitude towards work and organisation.

The development of technology and the introduction of new human resource management practices have brought about mega changes in the nature of organisational setting and employee work conditions. It must be noted that these developments and the complementary changes in the nature of employee's work has brought along numerous benefits for workers including improvement in working conditions, higher income, quality of work life, commitment and creativity and so on, which is still a major challenge in The Gambia, most especially the public sector (Nkala & Sonko, 2021). They further revealed that gender discrimination against women in the Gambia's public institutions affect their level of commitment. Unequal employment and pay policy against women affect their level of commitment and satisfaction for their work. The Gambia Bureau of Statistic (GBoS, 2019) confirmed this assertion that The Gambia is a patrilineal society, thus women are portrayed negatively in certain activities.

This paper investigates affective commitment on workers' life satisfaction in public organizations in The Gambia as findings from Kanteh and Gibba (2019) revealed that most of the public sector institutions in The Gambia suffer from high staff attrition rate. The teachers and nurses account for high attrition rate because of the quest for higher education and search for better pay (Kanteh et al., 2019). This was supported by Human Resource for Health Country Profile, The Gambia (HRHCP, 2009) that 30% to 50% trained health personnel have left the public sector to either private or other countries for the past 12 years.

Affective commitment on worker's life satisfaction may vary from one institution to another, be it public or private but as far as this study is concerned, the focus is on public institutions in The Gambia. For efficient and effective service delivery, organizations must rely on its workers. It is therefore prudent for organisations to offer better work environment, attractive job and care, in order to gain employee commitment to the organisation. It is posited that when employees are dissatisfied with the organisation or work, they will develop less affective commitment. Less affective commitment is a sign of employee dissatisfaction and as a result, affect organisational performance. This is so because a dissatisfied worker may develop negative attitude, laziness and devalue tasks assigned. On the contrary, job satisfaction serves as a catalyst to developing high affective commitment. Therefore, employee satisfaction might positively influence affective commitment. In building employee affective commitment, it is prudent for managers to understand what key factors may lead to employee dissatisfaction and its solutions for improving on the job satisfaction variables. In achieving this objective, the role of human resource management department is crucial in increasing employee level of affective commitment.

The study unravels pertinent human resources management best practices that can enhance employee commitment towards an organisation. This will solve the problem of high employee turnover and reduce the cost of recruiting and training new batch of employees, majority of whom, on completion of training, only serve for a short while and move to another organisation. Doyle (2018) supported this assertion that on the average, an employee might change work between 10 to 15 times, before settling for one as life career. In order to minimize the risk of high employee turnover, reduction in the cost of training, the adoption of human resource management best practices is crucial to achieving affective commitment of employees towards an organisation.

Literature Review

Affective commitment and Employee Life Satisfaction

A missed opportunity, to an employee, could result to stress and decrease employee level of satisfaction and commitment (Robbins & Judge, 2017). In the opinion of Al-Hosam, Ahmed, Ahmda, and Joarder (2016), employee commitment to the organisation and increased work satisfaction can be achieved through attractive and lofty compensation packages, provision of suitable tools to accomplish task and as well as work flexibility and counselling. Similar assertions were advanced by Kanteh and Gibba (2019) who emphasised that organizations should be committed to continuous improvement of workers' benefits and provision of convenient working environment. They added that provision of appropriate working equipment would boost productivity and arousal on the job. Job satisfaction is one of the key pertinent issues in organizational behavior. It describes the manner or the way in which an employee perceives or feels about a particular job and this may vary from an individual employee to another in the same organization, department or unit regardless of what the offer surrounding that particular work might be. Bathena (2018) posited that human resource managers should focus on developing programs that will enhance employee satisfaction to boost productivity and employee commitment. A satisfied employee is just like a healthy individual with strength and stamina to withstand and overcome threats that might endanger good health.

The employee sentimental response surrounding a particular job in the context of its various facets describes job satisfaction (Kinicki & Fugate, 2016). That is to say that a particular job might have various traits to assess employee level of satisfaction on that particular job. From the definition of Colquitt et al. (2015), job satisfaction is a gratifying sense of positive feeling an employee develops from his/her own judgment of the work or experience from that particular job. It is an internal self-judgment of one's work. It is posited that when employees are highly satisfied with work, they demonstrate high confidence to do the work, and vice versa. That is to say that a positive feeling emanates from high job satisfaction and thus motivates employees to commit themselves to the objectives of the organization. On the contrary, employees are expected to underperform or show less interest to the job when they experience low job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction has of number of attributes that can positively affect it. Among some of these attributes, in the opinion of Robbins and Judge (2017) includes the circumstances surrounding the job, the remuneration, and personality trait of the employees in relation to the job. They stressed that the key driving force in building satisfaction is through the person's personality. They further emphasized that employees with positive essential value judgment of self are pleased with their work. This is so because they develop self-confidence and optimism that their contribution is significant to the organization. Other attributes may relate to intermittent staff training and enabling work environment where employees interact with each other. Good salary is to be positively correlate with job satisfaction but only in the short run, as enshrined in Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation. Furthermore, as an employee reaches a certain level of comfortable living standard, the effect of salary in relation to job satisfaction declines. It was confirmed that employee satisfaction in a particular organization or work can emanates from cooperate social responsibilities undertaken by that organization if such functions are in line with the person's own values. Agreed to by George and Jones (2012), the person's value serves as key determinant to his/her satisfaction on the job. They stressed that character of employees and condition of work, as well as individual value proposition and sensation, together with social interaction at work boost job satisfaction. Robust inherent work values enable employees to develop strong sensation for difficult tasks assigned with little remuneration. Numerous outcomes in an organization may result from Job satisfaction according to Robbins and Judge (2017). They identified organizational nationality conduct, low absenteeism, low turnover and high performance as some of the major outcomes when employees are satisfied with their job or organization.

In the opinion of Colquitt et al. (2015), employee satisfaction on a particular job serves as a performance measure and the level of commitment of that employee. Kinicki and Fugate (2016) established two major classifications of outcomes: attitudinal and behavioral. They attributed attitudinal consequences to factors such as self-motivation and job participation, while behavioral consequences connect to employee performance on the job and sense of institutional ownership by employees. Researchers like Kumar et al. (2018) reaffirmed this and identified employee engagement as a measure of outcomes to satisfaction. Bonenberger, Aikins, Akweongo and Wyss (2014) identified impetus as another outcome, Lambert et al. (2015) re-echoed high affective commitment as an outcome, while knowledge sharing among employees was emphasised by Cheema & Javed (2017).

From commitment theory by Allen and Meyer (1990) came up three elements such as affective, continuance and normative as commitment model. Commitment theory deals with the mental mindset of an individual employee regarding his/her sensation towards a particular organization or work. An employee in an organization might adopt any of these three elements as highlighted. In distinguishing the three, affective commitment relates to personal desire for the job or organization, consequences of losing the job or organization for another as continuance, while contentment relates to normative. However, recent studies by Mercurio (2015) identified affective among these three elements as the integral component of organizational commitment. The degree at which an employee has emotionally attached, identified and involved with an organization describes affective commitment (McShane, Von & Glinow, 2018), while George and Jones (2012) described it as a sense of belongingness and commitment to the organization. They further stressed that affective commitment exists when employees are pleased with the organization and therefore associate themselves to its core values. Thus, the possibility of an employee continuing to work with an organization could be determined by the level of sensational attachment to that organization. It is safe to suggest that the psychological attachment that connects an employee to the organization results to affective commitment. Employees become more self-determined, adopt responsible approach to upholding organizational values, and strive towards achieving its goals and take ownership.

As the saying goes, everyone wants to be associated with good things. Because of such level of attachment, certain offers from other organizations to entice an employee may be rejected. However, such positive relationship between an employee and the organization develops over years based on long positive work experience between the two parties. This assertion is in line with the theory of social exchange by Homan (1958). In the work of Cook, and Rice (2006), when an organization treats its employees very well, they will reciprocate the same gesture by working extra harder for the organization. Affective commitment often related to potential consequences such as organizational citizenship behavior, absenteeism, and turnover intention (George & 2012; Jones, 2012). McShane, Von and Glinow (2018) opined that employees with strong psychological connection with the organization are less likely to quit and be absent from work, have higher work motivation, organizational citizenship, and higher job performance as well. It is therefore prudent for organizations to build teams of workers with positive affective commitment. The adoption of human resource management best practices ranging from developing terms of reference for each task to avoiding role conflict and work stress, team building and excellent leadership, coaching, employee empowerment through training, job safety and security of employees and so on can boost workers' affective commitment to the organization.

The role of transformational leaders and the establishment of a vibrant organizational culture were found to be positively correlated to affective commitment (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). Saleem, and Qamar (2017) also make similar assertion as in the case of job satisfaction and involvement to affective commitment. There are several other factors that relate positively to

affective commitment, for instance Dirani (2009) identified job satisfaction as a key factor, institutional support by Wong and Wong (2017), capacity building and appraisal of performance by Hodgkinson, Hughes, Radnor and Glennon (2018), while Malik, Amp and Garg (2017) emphasized the culture of learning cure effect in an organization. Therefore, as workers become happy with what they do, they emotionally attach themselves to it without any duress or undue influence.

Mentoring and Social Networking

Mentoring and interaction among employees is one of the tools used by human resource management departments to boost employee's affective commitment in an organization (Morrow, 2011). This is agreed to by Payne and Huffman (2005) who stressed that the relationship that exist between the mentor and mentee enables the mentee to develop trust and confidence on the mentor thereby increasing his or her affective commitment for the job and organization. Three fundamental probabilities stand out to support their assertion. Among them is the fact that through mentoring, employees positively relate themselves to the organization, eliminate or manage stress level and boost positive relationship among employees, which in turn helps to boost team spirit and positive work attitude (Payne & Huffman, 2005). Payne and Huffman (2005) revealed that mentees rely on their supervisors as their role models, which, inspires them to develop lofty level of affective commitment for the organization or job. However, Ragins, Cotton and Miller (2000) suggested further investigation into the nature of the relationship that exist between parties in a more practical perspective as a measure of outcome. Mentoring helps employees develop a positive psychological mindset that internally motivates them to develop high level of affective commitment for the organization (Craig, et al., 2013). In relation to Social Exchange Theory, social interaction and network building strengthen affective commitment of employees and by extension, lead to peaceful coexistence in society (Morrison, 2002).

Training and Development

Training of employees is fundamental to the continuous survival of an organization. Investment in human capital should be top priority for sustainable growth and development. In the opinion of Vance (2006), investment in employee training and development to enhance their knowledge and skills makes them feel self-confident, with a sense of esteem and commitment to the organization. Mercurio (2015) confirmed affective commitment to be an “enduring, demonstrably indispensable, and central characteristic of organizational commitment”. It is therefore wise for human resource management departments to come up with strategies that will facilitate employee affective commitment in the organization. Studies by Bashir, Amp and Long (2015) and Kooij and Boon (2018) suggested that employees' perception that a firm will provide them with further training increases their affective commitment for that organization. Other researchers maintain that employee participation in training boosts their morale and commitment in the organization (Cao & Hamori, 2015).

Kampkötter and Marggraf (2015) suggested that training and development reduces the risk of employee turnover while Dietz and Zwick (2020) revealed that it results in employee retention in an organization. In addition, Chew and Chan (2008) stressed that employees develop commitment to the organization once they perceive that it has general training component whether they participate in it or not. However, Newman et al., (2014) argued that not all types of training result to employee commitment in organizations. Grund and Titz (2021) argued that firms should provide training to trainable employees based on cost-benefit proposition. That is to say that the selection of employees should be on the condition that after training, the expected result will generate more benefits for the organization than the cost spent on them. They further asserted that training helps to develop an employee to become more productive in an organization and gives competitive advantage to be absorbed in the labour market. This assertion makes them hold a different perspective as to whether certain levels of training might not expose employees to

secure better offers from other organizations other than the one that trained them. This suggested that the more training is accorded to employees in line with the organizational goals, the more they socially attach themselves to the organization. This phenomenon results in a significant correlation between affective organizational commitment and social identity (Meyer et al., 2006).

Some researchers like Kampkötter and Marggraf (2015) suggested that advanced training and development may result in employee turnover intention than commitment to the organization, while Dietz and Zwick (2020) held a contrary view that employees' affective commitment increases with further training opportunities. A study by Benson (2006) also supported this assertion that as employees receive further training, their commitment increases and access to opportunities widens. However, Hamori (2015) held a neutral position that training neither increases nor decreases organizational commitment. Besides et al., (2017) attributed employee retention in an organization to training as the primary factor.

Theoretical Review and Framework

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory is a combination of exchange and economic thoughts. The idea is about how socially people interact in an organization that motivate them to work for that organization. The pioneer of this concept, Homans (1958) stressed that the sustainability of any relationship between an employee and the organization has to yield mutual benefits for both. This was what Homans described as cost-benefit analysis. Kendra (2020) claimed that social conduct emanates from exchange procedures of cost minimization, resulting to benefits maximization for any sustainable relationship. For instance, Marcello et al (2021) and Emerson (1972) argued that sustainable relationships are built based on the notion that the benefits will always outweigh the cost. That is to say that an employee is committed to an organization if he/she realizes that the relationship with the organization is of cost advantage to him/her. They further stressed that employees incur cost by making sure that an organization achieves its goal, which must be reciprocated through reward in order to keep them happy on the job. Marcello et al (2021) and Nye (1978) suggested a number of attributes that creates benefits for employees and motivates them to be committed to the organization and added that maximizing employees' earnings and welfare is equivalent to reducing cost on them and thus increase commitment. They also stressed that where both the cost and benefit are at par, the route for greatest reward by employee is sought, and where the reward given are at par, the quest for the lowest cost is sought.

Based on the social exchange theory, Marcello et al., (2021) and Emerson (1976) argued that the financial involvement in such type of relationship as reward is only applicable in the short run and therefore not viable for sustainable relationship. This is in tandem with Herzberg (1968) theory of hygiene factor of motivation. However, Marcello et al., (2021) and Emerson (1976) emphasised that for a more sustainable relationship building between organization and its employees, the organization through human resource management department should make best use of socio emotional approaches such as employee recognition, respect for workers, and capacity building. Generally, many employees are more appreciative of these highlighted variables than financial compensation. According to Cropanzano et al., (2017), employees judiciously make decision while interacting with others, resulting to maximizing optimistic experiences, thus reducing undesirable practices. Mazza (2007) distinguishes social exchange from economic results, described it as an individual employee's perception of wants and value. Hesketh and Costa (1980) as cited in Lawler, Thye & Yoon (2000) stressed that self-actualization resulting to development of one's complete potential forms an integral part of the social exchange theory. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) adduced that the principle of reciprocation forms the basis for social exchange. That is to say that the management must acknowledge employee's effort towards the achievement of organizational goals and in return reciprocate the same gesture or even more. This serves as the

basis for measuring employee satisfaction. This happens is because an employee gains satisfaction when his/her efforts are rightfully compensated. It is presumed that an employee feels delighted when his/her efforts are compensated and dissatisfied when the efforts are not rightfully compensated.

Motivation Theory

Motivation is the key to encouraging employees while on the job, leading to high productivity and commitment to the organization (Honari, 2006). Honari emphasized the use of attractive wages, good employee welfare packages and improved working conditions as some of the factors the human resource management department should focus on in motivating workers. Motivation energises an individual to make extra effort in achieving a set goal. Studies by Amar (2004) suggested that employees are one of the most valuable assets of an organization and thus should be highly motivated to help organization achieve its goal. He stressed that when employees are motivated, their commitment towards work and organization increases, leading to high productivity. Thus, it is prudent for the human resources management department to provide good motivational packages that will encourage employees to be committed to their work and organization for sustainable organizational growth and success. Any means used by a manager to influence the behavior of workers to be committed to an organization describes motivation (Srivastava & Barmola, 2011).

It is generally agreed that, a highly motivated employee strives very hard to ensure that an organization succeeds. Thus, in ensuring that employees love what they do, the human resource management department should formulate policies and programmes that will empower employees to self-determination. One of the ways to motivating employees according to Perry, Paarlberg and Mesch (2000) is by setting them on more specific and challenging goals. Setting employees on the above assertion can result to a higher level of organizational commitment and increase productivity. The set goals assigned to workers with specific timeline will enable them to use their own strategic initiatives in achieving results within the set timeline, which is a means of enhancing their own professional advancement and satisfaction on the job (Srivastava & Barmola, 2011; Ambrose & Kulik, 1999). Srivastava and Barmola (2011) added that it is imperative to set challenging goals that are attainable otherwise, goals set in abstract may be confusing and undermine employee performance, morale and commitment to the organization. Working to accomplish goals that require employees to use their innovative technique to address problems has the propensity to boost employee confidence, satisfaction and commitment on the job than monetary compensation (Perry, Paarlberg & Mesch, 2006).

In motivating employees, setting goals that are challenging and ensuring that they are achievable is paramount. This serves as a learning curve experience for employees leading to perfection and desire in their work. Paying employees based on performance only has short lived effect while a number of researchers confirmed that assigning an achievable goal boosts curiosity and forces employees to use innovative skills in solving problems while earning experience on the job results in performance improvement (Srivastava & Barmola, 2011). Perry, Paarlberg and Mesch (2006) confirmed that employee's personal goals could be enhanced through institutional learning curve opportunities obtained from complex tasks assigned, using a wide range of personal expertise to solving them. However, Behn (2000) argued that experiencing learning curve effect reduces errors on the job, gives self-confidence and increases employee commitment and productivity. Behn (2000) further emphasised that attaching incentives to learning experiences is ideal to boost employee performance and job commitment. Rewarding an individual employee or a team based on learning experience will boost personal growth and encourage high team spirit. Conversely, Behn (2000) posited that providing incentives to individual employees or team may be discriminatory since others may feel being unfairly treated and thus develop hatred against others. Praising the performing employees will boost their

morale, commitment and inspire others.

Added to other motivating factors is the job design. Jobs designed in a more challenging manner improve employee performance and contribute to personal advancement in the work environment (Perry, Paarlberg, Mesch & amp, 2006). Added to their assertion is the use of positive reinforcement as key motivating tool to enhancing organizational commitment. Studies by Mason, et al. (2008) revealed that motivation leads to higher productivity and they concluded that when organizations are committed to motivating employees, its corresponding effect is increased productivity and affective commitment and vice versa. Ibadan and Obioha (2009) supported the assertion by (Mason, et al., 2008). Kuvaas and Dysvik (2009), revealing that an investment in employee advancement results in organizational citizenship especially for those in high positions. This assertion was supported by the notion that higher position holders in an organization are hardly moved because of the responsibilities assigned to them, mostly a supervisory position and the fear of losing benefits after serving that organization for long (Baek, et al., 2010). Srivastava and Barmola (2011) claimed that employees in the junior cadre are mostly unsatisfied and demotivated to work may be less committed unless they rise through the ranks to higher levels. This might be in contrast to the studies conducted by Saidykhan and Ceessay (2020) on University of The Gambia staff level of work life satisfaction in which lower qualified employees with few years of job experience tend to be more satisfied.

The study is anchored on the theory of motivation because it serves as the key determinant to employee retention and satisfaction on the job (Jehanzeb, Rasheed, Rasheed & Aamir , 2012, p.274).

Expectancy Theory

Victor Vroom propounded this theory in 1964. The theory states that workers become self-determined to work in activities that yield self-comfort. This implies that individuals make self-judgment over their own actions to gain self-confidence and determination. According to Carnes and Knotts (2018), valence, expectancy and instrumentality form the basis for expectancy theory. In their opinion, they stressed that every individual works with the expectation of a desired outcome, which serves as the foundation for commitment to that organization. This is what they described as valence. As the desire for the work and commitment to the organization increases, performance increases because of the self-confidence from the desired outcome. This, Carnes and Knotts (2018) described as instrumentality, while expectancy on the other hand is the assumption that the desired outcome is achieved when employees perform as expected. Thus, it is convenient to say that employees desire for a specific outcome is influenced by their performance outcome which attach them to the organization. Carter (2013) described the theory of expectancy as reward for high performance. That is to say that certain types of rewards stimulate or arouse employee's desire for the job and eventually boost their performance (Carter, 2013). Employee's expectation serves as a driving force to their level of commitment and affection for the organization (Baciu, 2017). Baciu (2017) added that expectations energize employees to strive very hard thus resulting in higher performance. This is the basis for affective commitment, thus making this theory relevant for this study.

Method and Materials

The paper adopted a qualitative research design which was based on review of relevant literature, focus group discussions and individual interviews at health and non-health related government-owned institutions located in the West Coast Region of The Gambia. The research design comprised two-staged sampling procedures. At the first stage, purposive sampling was used to select the staff of five (5) public institutions who were engaged in open discussions and individual interviews. The population of the study comprised staff of five (5) public institutions namely: (1) Tujereng Health Center, (2) Ministry of Health, (3) Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education,

(4) Ministry of Agriculture, and (5) Ministry of Transport, Works and Infrastructure. The sample size for the study is twenty-eight (28) which was selected using purposive sampling technique (see Black, 2010) and included public servants and beneficiaries of the above-mentioned public institutions.

At the second stage, convenient sampling was used for the distribution of the respondents which are as follows: Tujereng Health Centre (16); the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (5); Ministry of Transport, Works and Infrastructure (1); Ministry of Agriculture (2); and two (2) public health officers and two (2) Cleaners from the Ministry of Health. The sixteen (16) respondents were nurses from Tujereng Health Centre. Two focus group discussions were conducted at Tujereng Health Centre with each group comprising eight (8) members. In addition, individual interviews were held with five (5) employees from the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education; one from Ministry of Transport, Works and Infrastructure; two from the Ministry of Agriculture; two (2) public health officers from the Ministry of Health. All employees who participated in the study were civil or public servants. Added to that, respondents were conveniently selected for individual interviews and included in the study (see Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Some of the visitors were not patients but either accompanied patients or were on other personal errands and worked as public servants. The respondents from the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education were employed as teachers. Consequently, a total of twenty-eight (28) respondents were involved in the study.

Pertinent questions relating to sociodemographic variables such as marital status, family size, and level of education determine the pay expectation, while those relating to motivation include job security, capacity building which may result in retention and performance improvement. In the qualitative aspect of this review process, discussions were made with a number of respondents from different levels of the public service to gauge their opinions on some of the challenges faced and what their expectations are in order to keep them attached to their work. To gain deep understanding of the phenomenon, unstructured interviews, FGDs and documentary data were utilised to collect primary and secondary data. The questions drawn for the FGDs and interviews were in line with the research objectives. Discussions were held with participants in the form of face-to-face in-depth interviews. To ensure quality data collection, some participants were interviewed in their local languages for easy self-expression in which case, questions were translated into their local languages. All questions were similar despite the different works and ranks of respondents in their places of work. Codes were developed for the interviews and interview data were transcribed and analysed. The study used content analysis technique to analyse the data obtained from focus group discussions, interviews and documentary evidence. The essence of content analysis is to reveal and present in a systematic manner the meanings and relationships ingrained in the data obtained (Neuendorf, 2016; Demirbilek, Keser, & Akpolat, 2022). Quotations of respondents' opinions in the study were presented by coding the participants.

Results and Discussion of Findings

From the review and focus group discussion, a growing concern has been raised as per the rate of staff turnover in the Gambian public sector as highlighted in PMO (2010-2017) report on staff attrition rate. Out of the total number of twenty-eight (28) respondents, only two respondents, one from the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education and is a School Head and one from the Public Health Department under the Ministry of Health indicated their willingness to stay committed to their work regardless of poor incentives. The reason they advanced were similar, which was purely religious (reward) and natural passion for their jobs. This implied that most of the respondents showed their reluctance to commitment in their various jobs. Poor salary was the main factor that all the respondents highlighted, which serves as the main triggering factor to quit their work for institutions that may offer better pay to cope with the current economic realities and high dependency rate.

Most respondents stated that job security was found to be more in the public sector as well as opportunities for training than in the private sector. This serves as a determinant for most of them in maintaining their current work. But despite the low risk in job security and access to training opportunities in the public service, most of the participants were determined to leave their jobs for private organisations or parastatals upon acquisition of higher qualifications and vast experience. To this effect, the responses from the interviews and focus group discussions corroborated the findings of Doyle (2018) who found that as employees obtain higher qualifications, the propensity for them to quit for higher paying jobs is mostly eminent.

The study also found that there was lack of access to resources to facilitate operational efficiency as well as understaff workforce. According to the Head of a Health facility *"staff quarters were created to encourage staff to stay, but many are unwilling to stay, not because the environment is not conducive but because the staff to patient ratio is about 1:40 thus even when one is not on duty, so long the person is around, he/she could be called to duty at any time"*.

Besides, some basic equipment like hand gloves were found to be lacking, thus increasing health risks for nurses and patients.

Maintaining employees in the Gambian public service has been a major problem since independence in 1965. Almost all the participants agreed that most of the problems related to high attrition rate include poor salaries, frequent firing through executive directives, low pension scheme and lack of motivation, which the Civil Service Reform as enshrined in the National Development Plan (2018-2021) aimed to address. However with reference to the previous Civil Service Reforms (CSR) such as "CSR strategy 2008 – 2011 and the CSR programme 2012 – 2015" which aimed at addressing high attrition rate in the Gambian public sector, the results seem to be far from reality with the attrition rate increasing from 5% to 7.5% in 2014 alone (PMO, 2010-2017). Also, "the objectives of the various civil service reform programmes/strategies have gone beyond a simple focus on size and controlling the wage bill to include issues relating to capacity, improving public service delivery, and performance management" (Sawaneh, Fadera & Adesopo, 2022: 94). Equally, the above-mentioned CSR programmes "aimed at achieving improved remuneration for recruitment and retention of talent in the civil service, capacity building in the civil service, and performance management" (Sawaneh, Fadera & Adesopo, 2022: 94). However, the study of Sawaneh, Fadera and Adesopo (2022: 94) regarding the CSR (2008-2011) and CSR (2012-2015), found that "there has not been much progress in achieving this objective despite the conduct of staff or payroll verification exercise" and "despite the efforts, as review of performance indicate low pay and pensions".

Furthermore, it is clear that the reform is not only aimed at addressing the above highlighted challenges but rather improving employee commitment and satisfaction to boost the performance of the public sector through efficient and effective service delivery. A little improvement is registered in the area of frequent firing through executive order, since the advent of the new government of President Adama Barrow in 2017. Despite the 30% salary increment of July 2022 by National Assembly of The Gambia, yet the problem of poor salary scale and economic hardship increases due to high cost of living which triggers many to search for well paid jobs in other sectors. This claim is in line with the study of Sawaneh (2020) and the World Bank (WB, 2010) report indicating the unattractive pay scale of the Gambian civil service, making it difficult to attract highly skilled personnel or retain professionals in its service. Public Administration International (PAI, 2019) report confirmed that the search for highly rewarding jobs from other institutions incapacitated public sector institutions in The Gambia, resulting in low productivity. One of the areas affected is the Ministry of Justice where most of the highly trained and experienced lawyers prefer serving as private lawyers to state judges or lawyers.

Capacity building through training and development is essential to staff motivation and helps to enhance commitment to work. This review has revealed that despite high attrition rate in the public sector, it accounts for the largest in terms of staff recruitment and training yet performance improvement still remains a major challenge due to lack of competency. Some of the reasons attributed to this under performance includes nepotism, bias in selecting the right staff to be trained and lack of proper evaluation for promotion after training. These results supported the study of Adesopo, Sawaneh and Apeloko (2022: 695) who found that “the civil service has faced problems ranging from red-tapism, lethargy to corruption and other unethical practices in addition to weak manpower capacity, poor remuneration and incentives and growth in numbers and the wage bill that have outpaced fiscal capacity of government.” The denial of competent staff by either of these means may demotivate the person and thus cause employees to seek employment from private institutions where reward is based on merit (Newman, Ye & Leep, 2014). Actions such as mass recruitment and training without any quality checks in the public sector accounts for a high percentage of inexperienced and underperforming workforce in the Gambian public institutions. The quality of work life satisfaction is central to keeping employees on the job (PAI, 2019).

Finally, most of the respondents argued that there is a natural passion, religious belief in terms of reward expectations in the job. This serves as a key driving force that motivates some participants to be committed to the work that they do despite poor salary and their willingness to continue working with the central government because of job security and access to training opportunities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is need for a complete overhaul of the entire government pay policy. Policy makers should come up with a complete new pay policy scheme across all levels of government that will commensurate with the prevailing economic conditions in the country in consideration of the impact of Covid-19 on the global economy, and the high rate of inflation in The Gambia at 5.7 % as of 2021 African Economic Outlook (AEO, 2021). The sky rocketing prices of basic commodities have exponentially increased to the level that it has covered the 50% salary increment of 2017 when the Barrow government came to power. This has resulted in high level of wide spread corruption in government and according to Transparency International (TI, 2021) report that The Gambia is ranked 102 on corruption perception index in 2020, an increase from 96 in 2019. Low salaries and high cost of commodities were perceived to be the root causes of corruption in the country. Thus, the Government of The Gambia through the National Assembly should enact the anti-corruption Bill that will hold personnel accountable for corrupt practices. In addition, the formulation of a new pay scheme that will correspond to the economic realities of the global market be implemented. This will at least limit the endemic corruption in the public service. Workforce diversity is essential in building a strong team. When employees interact freely, they always have confidence to share their experiences and build trust among themselves. Employees' commitment and work satisfaction increase when they relate and cooperate among themselves (Saidykhan & Ceesay, 2020). In The Gambia, almost everyone is related, and cultures interlinked. Therefore, it would be prudent for the Personnel Management Office to incorporate some social activities into employees' work environment in which they will interact with one another most especially during break times. This will strengthen institutional ties among members of staff. As the saying goes “all work no play makes Jack a dull boy”.

Finally, since the Government of The Gambia spends a lot of money in training its personnel most of whom upon completion of their training may leave for better opportunities elsewhere as indicated in Public Administration International report (PAI, 2019), it will be wise for the Personnel Management Office to set up criteria in awarding training opportunities to employees. This might include provision of collateral as security to cover the cost of training, employee

tracking system, bond modification into number of years as per the cost equivalence of training. This could reduce the rate of staff attrition in the public sector. The paper recommends that the Government of The Gambia through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and Personnel Management Office should make a complete salary review and come up with new pay package or system that will reflect the economic realities of the market, considering the high rate of inflation in the country.

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