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## JOB ENLARGEMENT AND COMMITMENT OF EMPLOYEES OF INSURANCE COMPANIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examined the relationship between job enlargement and commitment of employee of insurance companies in Rivers State. The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study comprised employees of 36 insurance firms in Rivers State. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaire. The Spearman rank order correlation served as test statistic for the study. The study found positive and statistically significant relationship between job enlargement and commitment of employee of insurance companies in Rivers State. The study therefore concludes that job enlargement enhances employees' commitment in the insurance industry in Rivers State; and recommends that management of insurance companies that seek to enjoy the continued commitment of employees should consider job enlargement when evaluating employees' jobs and performance respectively.*

**Keyword:** Job enlargement, employee commitment, affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment.

### INTRODUCTION

Organizations often (re)design specification, methods, relationships and contents of jobs in order to satisfy organizational and technological requirements, as well as employees' personal and social requirements (Dessler, 2005; Armstrong, 2003). Owhorji (2021) holds that job (re)design is undertaken with a view to enlarging and contracting functions, task arrangement, responsibilities and duties in a work unit. In (re)designing jobs, Armstrong (2003) states that responsibility, autonomy, self-control and discretion as factors of motivation are considered after task requirements analysis. Decisions about job design mostly affect employees, as employees are the subject of decisions in the everyday life of organizations (Colquitt, 2001).

A daunting challenge managers of firms face today is hiring and retaining competent workers, as well as satisfying and eliciting their commitment. Only then can a firm benefit optimally workers and reduce employee turnover (Gok et al., 2017). High employee turnover affect service processes and carries other costs that erode firms' profitability and sustainability (Ateke & Akani, 2018). Nwulu and Ateke (2018) argue that firms strive to retain employees in view of their roles in building, maintaining and expanding relationship with customers and the cost of employee turnover. The cost of employee turnover includes cost of replacing lost employees, and loss of knowledge, experiences and relationships they have developed with customers. Employee

retention is thus a goal that attracts managers' attention; and the achievement of this goal hinges on securing employees' commitment.

Organizational commitment is the bond employees experience with their organization (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). Employees who are committed to their organization generally feel a connection with the organization, feel that they fit in it, feel they understand and are committed to the goals of the organization (Cohen, 2007). The added value of such employees is that they tend to be more determined in their work, show relatively high productivity and are more proactive in offering their support (Siruri & Muathe, 2014; Konovsky, 2000) which in turn leads to overall organizational performance. Employee performance is however subject to other organizational factors like corporate culture, reward systems, work environment etc. (Opiyo et al., 2014; Kytöharju, 2013).

Several studies have attempted to identify drivers of employee commitment. These attempts have such factors as employee empowerment (Okochi & Ateke, 2020), participation in decision making (Nwulu & Ateke, 2018), perceived organisational support (Ateke & Akani, 2018), workplace discrimination (Olori & Dan-Jumbo, 2017), personality traits (Osita-Ejikeme & Worlu (2017), reward practices (Okinyi, 2015), job enrichment (Neyshabor, 2013) among others. However, job enlargement also known as horizontal leading, wherein, firms increase tasks assigned to an employee by adding similar tasks; so that they do more, or different activities in their current job has been largely overlooked in efforts to determine drivers of employee commitment.

Hence, the purpose of this study was to probe the relationship between job enlargement and employee commitment, with a focus on employees of insurance companies in Rivers State.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Foundation

This study takes its bearing from the job characteristics model (Hackman & Lawler, 1971) which identified five structural characteristics of jobs: task variety, feedback, autonomy, identity and significance. The model suggests that these job characteristics births work motivation, job satisfaction and improved job performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Though weak relations were reported between job characteristics and job performance, Simonds and Orife (1975) argue that job perception influence job attitude, and leads to employee performance.

In line with job characteristics model, an employee will have high internal motivation if they find meaning in their work, have knowledge of job results and are responsible for work outcomes. In order to attain the three basic states of emotion, the job characteristics model supports that jobs must be designed to have variety of skill, identity of task, significance of task, feedback and autonomy. Of these, task identity, skill variety and task significance are chief contributors to work meaningfulness (Dodd, 2012).

It has been reported that it would be hard to find all three job characteristics at critical and high levels in a given job (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Nevertheless, levels that are high of any one of one characteristics can alone add to superior knowledgeable of work meaningfulness and result to job satisfaction (Mohr, 2011). The fourth job characteristic: autonomy, is vital to

experiences of accountability for job outcomes. Ganster (2012) states that job knowledge could merely satisfy an employee if there is a system of feedback between the worker and the job.

### **Concept of Job Enlargement**

Job enlargement describes the process of allocating additional identical activities to tasks performed by employees, which eventually increases the number of duties they perform (Dessler, 2005). Raza and Nawaz (2011) observed that the fundamental determinants of employee's behavior at work relates to job enlargement. Today's firms' initiatives towards job enlargement are meant to expand the scope of employees' roles and enhance their primary workload (Raza & Nawaz, 2011). Organizations enlarge jobs to increase organizational capacity to handle new customers, address labor shortages, or forestall effects of high employee turnover (Hellgren & Sverke, 2001).

Employees can positively adopt job enhancement at the beginning but as time goes by and the workload becomes heavier with no compensation forthcoming, may become demoralized and view the extra duties as a burden (Dessler, 2005). Raza and Nawaz (2011) argue that job enlargement is designed to meet lower level needs; and to enhance job satisfaction.

Job enlargement means increasing the range of tasks associated with a job by intensifying the variety of obligations and accountabilities. It results in workers performing diverse tasks on one singular item. Most managers continuously contemplate that competitive advantage is gained from result of enlarging work across units in the organization. In lieu of this, organizations are leaning towards employing multi-talented employees to perform more tasks effectively. It is supposed that repetitive work generate tediousness and low motivation. Thus, job enlargement has been employed as an effective tool for plummeting the rate of monotony at workplace and enhancing motivation of workers in a bid to influence their levels of job satisfaction.

### **Concept of Employee Commitment**

Employee commitment as a psychological state involving levels of employees' attachment to an organization; and has been an important feature in human resource management literature (Zangaro, 2001). It is also a state in which employees demonstrate loyalty to their organization and align themselves with goals and objectives of the organization. Organizational success is increasingly being tied to committed employees. Cohen (2007) argue that commitment towards an organization is more than just formal membership but encompasses attitude to the organization and a willingness to pursue all things for the sake of the organization.

Employee commitment helps managers in programming, improving job performances and in decreasing absenteeism (Meyer et al., 2013). A committed staff provides a background for organizational improvement and expansion, while personnel with little or no commitment remain indifferent towards the goals and overall success of their organization (Keiningham et al., 2015). Committed employees are more likely to be retained, perform tasks effectively, work compatibly, more productive and good organizational citizens (Saygan, 2011 as cited in Nwulu & Ateke, 2018).

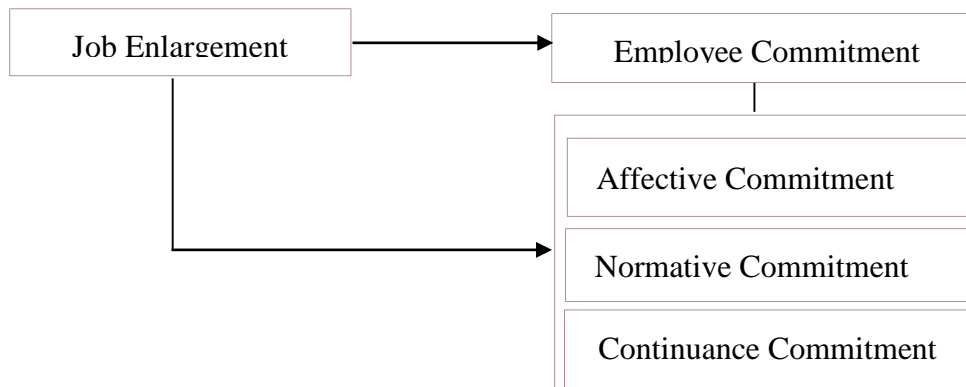
Employee commitment result from affective attachment, perceived costs of leaving, and felt obligation to stay with an organization (Meyer et al., 2013). Thus, Allen and Meyer (1996, as cited in Nwulu & Ateke, 2018) identified three kinds of commitment: affective, continuance and

normative commitment. However, Keiningham et al. (2015) extended the three-component model of commitment of Allen and Meyer (1990) to a five-component-model by breaking up continuance commitment into economic commitment (commitment based on high financial or economic sacrifice) and forced commitment (commitment based on a perception of low alternatives) and espoused habitual commitment. Ateke and Nwulu (2019) further extended the model of commitment by adding conformance commitment. In this study however, Allen and Meyer (1990) model comprising affective, continuance and normative commitment is adopted.

Affective commitment describes employees' sense of belonging and identification that enhances their involvement in a firm's activities, their willingness to pursue the firm's goals and their desire to remain with the firm (Mowday et al., 1983 as cited in Ateke & Nwulu, 2019). Continuance commitment represents employees' willingness to remain with the firm because of perceived high cost of quitting and the benefits of staying. It is the product of employees' efforts at balancing the perceived costs of leaving the organization with the perceived benefits of staying (Ateke & Akani, 2018). Normative commitment represents employees' sense of obligation to stay with the organization, based on personal ethical consideration (Sayğan, 2011).

Based on the foregoing, the following hypotheses are formulated to guide this study:

- Ho<sub>1</sub>: Job enlargement does not significantly relate to affective commitment of employees of insurance companies in Rivers State.  
 Ho<sub>2</sub>: Job enlargement does not significantly relate to normative commitment of employees of insurance companies in Rivers State.  
 Ho<sub>3</sub>: Job enlargement does not significantly relate to continuance commitment of employees of insurance companies in Rivers State.



**Fig.1:** Conceptual framework for job design practices and employee commitment

Source: Researchers' conceptualization from re view of literature (2023).

## METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on examining the relationship between job enlargement and employee commitment. The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study comprised employees of 36 insurance firms in Rivers State. A total of 131 employees were selected at random, from the 36 insurance firms, to participate in the study. A structured questionnaire served as instrument for primary data collection. Copies of the questionnaire were personally administered by the researchers. The questionnaire was designed following standard guidelines provided by Sekaran (2003). The first part of the questionnaire inquired demographic profiles of

respondents, while the second part comprised 24 item, structured in a 5-point Likert scale format. 131 copies of questionnaire were distributed to respondents. However, 126 representing 96.95% were retrieved. 4 copies representing 3.05 % were not retrieved. 2 copies of the retrieved questionnaire representing 1.53% were not suitable for analysis while 125 copies representing 95.42% were suitable for analysis. The data collected from respondents was analyzed using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation statistic.

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

**Table 1 Correlation Matrix of Job Enlargement and Measures of Employee Commitment**

			Job Enlargement	Affective Commitment	Normative Commitment	Continuance Commitment
Spearman's rho	Job Enlargement	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.760**	.881**	.888**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	125	125	125	125
	Affective Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.760**	1.000	.888**	.800**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	125	125	125	125
	Normative Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.881**	.888**	1.000	.900**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	125	125	125	125
	Continuance Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.888**	.800**	.900**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	125	125	125	125

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS version 23.0 output of data analyses (2023).

The results of correlation obtained between job enlargement and affective commitment is shown in Table 1. The Table show a correlation coefficient of 0.760 in the relationship between job enlargement and affective commitment. The coefficient represents a positive correlation between the variables. The tests also shows that the relationship is significant at  $p\ 0.000 < 0.01$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between job enlargement and affective commitment of employees of insurance companies in Rivers State.

Table 1 also displays show a correlation coefficient of 0.881 between job enlargement and normative commitment. This represents very strong positive correlation between the variables. The tests of significance shows that that the relationship between job enlargement and normative commitment is significant at  $p\ 0.000 < 0.01$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected. Thus, a significant relationship exists between job enlargement and normative commitment of employees of insurance companies in Rivers State.

Furthermore, Table 1 shows a correlation coefficient of 0.888 between job enlargement and continuance commitment. This correlation coefficient represent a very strong positive correlation between the variables. The tests also shows that the relationship is significant at  $p\ 0.000 < 0.01$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between job enlargement and continuance commitment of employees of insurance companies in Rivers State.

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## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study using descriptive and inferential statistical methods investigated the relationship between job enlargement and employee commitment. The findings revealed significant positive relationship between job enlargement and employee commitment. The findings confirmed that job enlargement relates positively on employee commitment. This reinforces position of scholars that job redesign when done with considerations of organizational and technological requirements, as well as employees' personal and social requirements leads to employee satisfaction and job commitment (Armstrong, 2003).

The findings also aligns with the view that job redesign influences not only interpersonal relations of employees but their psycho-social wellbeing and performance (Grant, 2007). Tanner (1998) argue that leaders of firms can motivate employees to follow a work design by enlarging their tasks, encouraging collaborative work and making workers to be more accountable for their work outcomes. Our findings also supports the view of Ali and Muhammad (2014) and Garg and Renu (2005) that job redesign that culminate into enlarged job roles enhance performance improvement by engendering job satisfaction performance improvement. The findings of the current study reinforces the views of Dessler (2005) that job is an essential predictor of individuals conducts at work. The findings further supports Lowe (2013) on the position that job enlargement impact on employee performance.

## CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATIONS

This study probed the association between job enlargement and commitment of employees of insurance firms in Rivers State. The statistical analyses conducted, reveals that job enlargement relates positively to effective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment of employees of insurance firms in Rivers State. Thus, the study concludes that job enlargement positively enhance commitment insurance companies' employees in Rivers State. The study recommends that management of insurance companies should enlarge job roles of employees when planning and evaluating employees' jobs and performance respectively.

The study also recommends that management of insurance companies in Rivers State should consider using the job enlargement to increase worker's scope of work and workload. This is necessary to increase skills in handling new customers, industry requirements or to manpower shortage occasioned by turnover. The study further recommends that management of insurance companies should take a proactive role in coming up with jobs that have task identity and to use the psychological approach to job designing so that when coming up with job descriptions, they consider the aspects in a given task that can motivate the workers.

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