

Evaluation of Selection Practice and Employee Commitment in Yenagoa Local Government Council of Bayelsa State, Nigeria



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ABSTRACT: This study examined the relationship between selection practice and employee commitment in Yenagoa Local Government Council of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design using modified standardized structured questionnaire to elicit data. The population was obtained from Yenagoa Local Government Council (LGC) during field survey. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting the staff from among eight (8) local government Areas (LGCs) of the state. The sample size and number of units allocated to each department was determined using Taro Yamane and Bowley's Proportional Allocation Formulae respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was used to test the formulated hypothesis on the platform of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21.0. The finding revealed a positive significant relationship between selection practice and employee commitment in Yenagoa Local Government Council of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. We recommended that the council needs to foster an ideal selection practice to forestall counter-productive work behaviour.

KEYWORDS: selection practice, employee commitment, Bayelsa State.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Quality workforce is the soul of any organization and to set the tone is effective selection practice. This implies that the practice in the selection process can make or mar the organization. Prospective employees when properly selected are supposed to be skilled, knowledgeable, and experienced with the right values and attitudes to work in line with an organization's culture, policies and goals; more likely to breed employees' commitment. Employee commitment can be defined as a psychological state that binds an individual to the organization. It refers to the likelihood that an individual will stick to the organization, feel psychologically attached to it, whether the job is satisfying or not. The three forms of commitment (Affective, Continuance and Normative) according to Allen and Meyer (1991) coexist simultaneously, yet are distinguishable from each other; for this study, Affective Commitment is most significant. Individuals with affective commitment stay with the organizations because they want to (Chew, 2004)

Sadly, commitment of employees to work has been observed to be low in the Civil Service (Egumudo, 2012). It is, however, important to mention that this poor attitude to work is as old as man, as some are perceived to have inherent dislike for work and avoid it (Nnabuife, 2009). Instead of a transparent and objective selection of employees based on competition and merit, favoritism, nepotism, and job racketeering have been enthroned by political office holders, top government officials, political big wigs and 'godfathers', etc (Iroegbu and Omonhinmin, 2013). At best selection exams and interviews are conducted as mere institutional formalities, but in most cases, it is just "appointment". It depends largely on who you know.

Yenagoa Local Government Council (YELGC), the focus of this study hosts the capital of Bayelsa State. It was created in 1976 in the Old Rivers State by the Military Administration of General Olusegun Obasanjo with a view to taking development to the grassroots. Of One thousand, three hundred and sixty-three (1,363), only junior staff (grade levels 01 – 07) directly employed by the council through Junior Staff Management Committee of the Council as against senior staff engaged by the State Local Government Service Commission posted and routinely transferred from one local government council to the other was the focus of the study.

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The work reviewed several empirical studies carried out in different regions, public and private sector organizations of Australia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Vietnam, Pakistan, Uganda and Indonesia. Chew (2004) investigated “the influence of Human Resources Management (HRM) Practices and Retention of Core employees in Australian organizations” focused on public sector organizations. Terblanche (2009) worked on “Recruitment Outcomes: Contrasting Different Recruitment Methods, South Africa. Vo (2010) studied Selection Matters: Predicting Intrinsic Motivation and Employee Commitment in twenty (20) small Vietnamese Firms; carried out at Concordia University Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Bal, Bozkurt and Ertemsir (2014) researched on different companies in Sri Lankan public sector banks. Sabir, Irfanullah, Khan, Siddiqui, Nasrullah and Dad (n.d) investigated “HRM Practices: A Way for Improving Skills and Commitment of the Employees in Organization (A Case Study of Banking Sector in Pakistan” in more than 18 private sector banks).

Similarly, Isfianadewi and Anggraita (2018) sought to gain information whether there is any influence of HRM practices especially recruitment, selection, training, and performance appraisal toward employee’s organizational commitment in two (2) state-owned companies in Indonesia. Ibetu, Justine and Florence (2015) explored to know whether there is a relationship between recruitment policies in the Nigerian federal civil service and employees’ performance. Mugizi and Nuwatuhaire (2018) study investigated the “influence of recruitment and selection on employee commitment of university academic staff in a private University in Uganda”. Namiyingo (2018) explored “the relationship between human resource policies and employee commitment at Security Plus (U) Ltd, Uganda”. Specifically, the study objectives related to investigating the relationship between recruitment, training and reward policies on employee commitment at Security Plus (U) Ltd. Clearly, to the best of our ability, a majority of the empirical studies reviewed were done outside Nigeria. The only one carried out in Nigeria was not in Bayelsa State and not on Local Government Council subsector. Against the backdrop of the identified gaps, the study aims to fill these gaps in knowledge by carrying out an “Evaluation of Selection Practice and Employee Commitment in Yenagoa Local Government Council of Bayelsa State, Nigeria”.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Employee commitment is central to employee performance and achievement of organizational objectives. The use of standard selection practice enable organizations employ those that are more amenable to the organization’s set goals and objectives. Selection into the LGC seems not to be warranted by the need to fill job openings. One is also not sure if the vacancies are advertised to attract the necessary pool of suitable and qualified applicants, let alone job description and person specification, tests and interview. Suffice to say that the bane of hiring quality workforce is the popular “man-know-man” syndrome that has eaten deep into the fabrics of our society. Precisely, this syndrome is demonstrated in nepotism, favoritism, ‘godfatherism’, tribalism, and along social and political lines. Therefore, it suggests that selection process which spans from short-listing, test, interview, medical examination, reference checks and offer of appointment letters, is fraught with a lot of abuse.

It is reported that intermittently, unemployed persons pick up appointment letters for jobs they never sought for, with little or no interest or passion for, but to grab the ‘appointment’ to make ends meet. These unwholesome practices are perfected by the operators of the local government system who collude and merely include names of their kiths and kins, mistresses, friends and associates and those of their political ‘godfathers’ and other interest groups in the nominal roll and payroll, circumventing the standard selection practice which negatively influence the commitment of staff.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₁: There is no significant relationship between selection tests/interview and employee commitment.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Selection Practice

Selection is a critical aspect of the human resource management function which becomes necessary due to job openings in an organization upon commencement or growth of the organization resulting from promotions, demotions, transfers, deaths, accidents, resignation, ill health or turnover (Terblanche, 2009) and (Tabassum, 2011). This is because no organization is greater than its workforce as efficiency and quality of the products and/or services rendered by the employees depend largely upon the soundness of its selection system (Laxmikanth cited in Ejumodo, 2012; Amah, (2006), Nwibere, Emecheta & Chikwe, 2009). Rao (2010) noted that selection is the process of picking individuals who have relevant qualifications to fill job openings in an organization. Similarly, Dessler cited in Vo (2010) puts selection as the process of choosing individuals who have relevant qualifications to fill existing or projected job openings. Again, it is the process of choosing from among candidates, from within the organization or from outside, the most suitable person for the current position or for future positions (Wehrich and Koontz,

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2005). For Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1995) selection is the mutual process whereby the organization decides whether or not to make a job offer and the candidate decides whether or not to accept it.

Selection has to do with making decision about prospective employees after attracting a pool of candidates. Selection identifies qualified candidates through formal test and interview where they are persuaded to join the organization (Amah, 2006). No doubt, Mathis and Jackson cited in Tabassum (2011) pointed out that selection ensures the person-job and person-organization fit. This infers that a good employee selection system can add value to overall effectiveness of the organization. Significantly, the basic purpose is to choose the individual who can most successfully perform the job, from the pool of qualified candidates.

Stoner *et al* (1995), Weihrich and Koontz (2005), Nwibere *et al* (2009), Rao (2010) Hacket (1999) and Ezeani cited in Egumudo (2012) posit that every selection procedure has some of these principal elements: completed application forms or resumes; initial screening interview; tests or testing; checking education, background, experience and references; formal interviews; physical examination; medical examination and job offer.

Although there is no generally accepted step-by-step process in the selection of employees into the public and private service the sequencing of steps, time and emphasis placed on each step vary from job to job and organization to organization. It is important to emphasize that the Junior Staff Management Committee of the Council is legally responsible for recruitment and selection into Local Government Councils. Briefly as applicable hereunder are the most important elements of selection.

i). Short-listing- The first step is screening hand-written or typed application letters and/or Curriculum Vitae (Resume) or filled Application Blank and Reference Letters against job description and person specification for test following advertisement of openings in relevant media over a reasonable time.

ii). Tests - It is common practice in the civil service at this stage to invite short-listed applicants for a competitive written examination except for positions like cleaners, gardeners, etc. that do not require much formal educational abilities. Before commencement of test, original credentials are checked against earlier submitted photocopies by candidates to verify their claim. Selection tests include: aptitude, personality, intelligence, interest and preference, integrity, achievement tests, amongst others.

iii). Interview - Interview is the oral examination of candidates for employment. Successful applicants from the written test are invited for this stage of selection. This is yet another very essential step in the selection practice. In this stage, the interviewer(s) try(ies) to obtain and synthesize information about the abilities and attitude of the candidates and the requirements of the job.

iv). Job Offer - This is the final stage of the selection process. Those who scale through oral interview are invited and asked to present medical reports from designated public medical institutions. Verified fit for the job, they are offered job, on acceptance issued appointment letters and documentation done.

The above is not sacrosanct, as nature of job, terms of the work or coverage of activities may differ. Nonetheless, the practice in the system is a far-cry from what has been described.

2.2 Employee Commitment

Employee commitment can be described as the level of connection that employees feel towards the organization. They feel that they fit in the organization and are keen to carry on working for it. Fundamentally, the definition of commitment relies on the notion that committed employees have a desire to remain employed with the organization (Meyer and Allen cited in Chew, 2004). Thus, the most important method of measuring commitment is through an individual's attitudes and feelings towards his or her employer.

Meyer and Allen (1991) research showed that there are three characteristic components that preoccupy employee's commitment to the organization: Affective, Continuance and Normative Commitments. Affective commitment is defined as the employees positive emotional attachment to the organization, where employees 'want to' stay. It implies employees' identification, involvement and loyalty to their employer. Continuance commitment is explained as the "need" component or the gains versus losses of working in an organization. Whereas a feeling of obligation ('ought to' feeling) according to Normative commitment is what keeps an individual committed to and remain with an organization. The above indicates that among the three kinds of commitment examined, affective commitment (or loyalty) is considered the most desirable and appropriate, therefore is the proxy of employee commitment for this study.

2.3 Selection Tests/Interview and Affective Commitment

The primary aim of testing is to obtain data about applicants that help determine their likely success as they rise in the organizational hierarchy. The benefits from testing include: finding the best person for the job, obtaining a higher degree of job satisfaction for the applicant, and reducing turnover (Weihrich and Koontz, 2005 and Camara; Cronbach cited in Rao, 2010). It is

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important to note that tests can be carried out in written form, interview or practical demonstration. Some of the commonly used tests according to them are classified as follows:

- ❖ *Intelligence tests* are designed to measure mental capacity and to test memory, speed of thought, and ability to see relationships in complex problem situation.
- ❖ *Personality tests* are designed to reveal a candidate's personal characteristics and the way the candidate may interact with others, thereby giving a measure of leadership potential.
- ❖ *Aptitude tests* measure an individual's potential to learn certain skills – clerical, mechanical, mathematical, etc. These tests indicate whether or not an individual has the ability to learn a given job quickly and efficiently.
- ❖ *Achievement tests* are designed to measure what the applicant can do on the job currently, that is, whether the potential employee actually knows what he or she claims to know. For example, typing test, secretarial, motor or verbal tests.
- ❖ *Interest tests* are meant to find out how a person in tests compares with the interests of successful people in a specified job. These tests show the areas of work in which a person is most interested.
- ❖ *Integrity tests* are designed to measure employee's honesty and truthfulness to predict those who are more likely to cheat or defraud an employer or otherwise in a manner unacceptable to the organization.
- ❖ Simulation tests duplicates many of the activities and problems an employee faces while at work used to assess the potential of a candidate for managerial positions carried out at assessment centres.

Russoet *al* (1995) in their study cited in Terblanche (2009) remarked that self-initiated employees are generally more motivated and have better knowledge of the job, hence more committed to duty. Lack of employee commitment to the organization will be reflected in their intentions to stay or leave (Meyer and Allen cited in Chew, 2004) and Beck and Wilson cited in Mguqulwa, 2008). Employees who are committed at an affective level have goals, values and beliefs that match those of the organization, a willingness to exert effort for the organization and desire to stay with the organization (Mowday, Steers and Porter cited in Chew (2004) and Beck and Wilson cited in Mguqulwa (2008). Therefore, it becomes imperative to have employees who will affectionately identify, involve in all legal and assigned activities and display utmost loyalty and contribute to the organization. This remains central in the mind of human resource managers in the selection practice, as any or some of these will determine optimum input by the employee to the organization.

Screening of applicants is with a view to getting the best from the lot with the most desirable skills, knowledge, attitudes, and personality (Vo, 2010). Some research suggested that people who are employed through highly effective selection process are likely to see their positions are important and that the organization is seriously concerned about their qualifications for the job (Dyer and Reda, 2010 and Mayson and Barrett cited in Vo 2010). Cardon and Stevens (2004) and Deshpande and Golhar cited in (Vo 2010) organizations use information from resumes including educational background, experience, references for selection purpose. This tends to set the pace for any effective selection exercise into any organization.

Bartram, Lindley and Marshall(1995) added that selection is psychological test for assessing ability and personality, the application form, face-to-face interview, records of achievement, and other categories of tests. Vo (2010) expressed similar view while stressing the importance of medical test in recognized public health facility and evaluating their profiles on papers. Moreover, in selection practice, the use of selection tests such as filling out a job application form, taking a written personality test and taking written test of job related abilities is very important.

Dyer and Reda (2010) emphasized that the use of proper selection practice increases the knowledge, skills and abilities of new employees, and the extent to which they are a good fit with job requirements and the organizations' values. These factors will affect the new employees' motivation to stay or leave the firm. In all, the significance of adopting a realistic selection practice cannot be over emphasized as it will ultimately lead to committed workforce that will actualize the goals and objectives of any organization.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) Theory by Schneider (1987, 1995). Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) Theory portrays people seeking out situations (organizations) that are attractive to them, get selected and become a part of that situation and help to determine the fate of the situation (organization) by remaining in that (situation) organization. The theory emphasized that people (employers and employees) are particularly important in the organizational context and are responsible for the structure, processes and culture of the organization.

Attraction: People are differently attracted to careers as a function of their own interests and personality (Holland, 1985).

Selection: Organizations select people who they think are compatible with many different kinds of jobs. By that activity, organizations end up choosing people who share many common personal attributes, although they may not share common

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competencies. *Attrition*: The opposite side of attraction. When people do not fit into an environment, they tend to leave it. When people leave the environment a more homogenous team stays than those initially attracted to the organization. The relevance of this theory is to the effect that organizations are expected to adopt an ideal practice in selecting, hiring and keeping qualified employees that would be affectively committed and remain to help achieve the organization’s goals.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised one thousand, three hundred and sixty three (1,363) employees from the seven (7) departments in Yenagoa Local Government Council of Bayelsa State. The sample size of three hundred and nine (309) staff was determined using Taro Yamane’s 1967 sample determination formula. Random sampling method was used in selecting participants from among junior staff of between grade levels 01to 07. This method gave the target population equal chance of being included in the study. Primary data were collected, using a two-section structured, self-administered survey questionnaire. 309 copies of questionnaire were administered, 286 were returned and analyzed.

Section A comprised Personal Data while Section B comprised of selection practice and employee commitment. The response format was a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ format rated 1 and 0 while the latter was a 5-point Scale, weighted 1-5: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Undecided (U), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). Test-Re-test method of reliability coefficient was used to measure the internal consistency of the constructs. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data for the study. The data generated was retrieved, analyzed and the hypothesis tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) on the platform of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21.0. The PPMC coefficient (r) was used to measure the relationship between selection practice and employee commitment.

4.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1. Participants demographic information

Gender	Status of participants			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cummulative Percent
Valid Male	160	56	56	56
Female	126	44	44	100
Total	286	100	100	

Table 2. Pearson Product Moment Correlation of Selection Practice and Employee Commitment.

		Selection Practice	Employee Commitment
Selection Practice Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.545**
	P-Value	.000	
	N	286	286
	Pearson		
Employee Commitment Score	Correlation	.545**	1
	P-Value	.000	
	N	286	286

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

Source: Research Data, 2022.

As shown in Table 1, a proportion of 56 percent of the participants are male while 44 percent are female. Table 2 shows a positive significant relationship between the recruitment practice and employee commitment with an (r) value of 0.545. This indicates that there is 54.5 percent explanation of the relationship between both variables, while 45.5 percent are explained by other variables not considered in this relationship. However, this statement is true as the level of significance of 0.000 is less than 0.05 and 0.01, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and its alternative form accepted. P.value = 0.000 less than 0.05

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and 0.01 level of significance. This states that there is a significant positive relationship between selection practice and employee commitment in the studied local government council in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study found selection practice having positive and significant relationship with employee commitment in Yenagoa Local Government Council, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Based on the finding of this study, a specific recommendation is made in tandem with the objective of the study which states that Local government councils need to apply the hallmarks of due process in selection to fill vacant positions, even if only one exists; anchored on the principles of competitive, free, fair and transparent process that would promote meritocracy and commitment and not mediocrity and counter-productive work behaviour.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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