

Does Training Impel Academic Staff Retention in Institutions of Higher Learning? A Multivariate Approach

*¹Urhibo Okiemute Belowe; ²Professor. Imhonopi, ³David;
⁴Dr. George, ⁵Tayo; Omi-Jaja, Soibim

^{1&5}Postgraduate Student, Department of Sociology, College of Management and Social Sciences, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria

^{2&3}Department of Sociology, College of Management and Social Sciences, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria.

*Corresponding Author: **Urhibo Okiemute Belowe**

Abstract

Predominantly in the literature are studies that established the role of training in improving the knowledge, abilities and skills of academic staff in institutions of higher learning in developed and developed nations. Amazingly, there is limited body of knowledge on whether training impels academic staff retention in institutions of higher learning in a developing nation like Nigeria. Drawing inferences from equity theory emphasizing workplace fairness, this study examined how training impels academic staff retention in two (2) institutions of higher learning: Covenant and Bells universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. Cross-sectional survey design was adopted and two hundred (200) questionnaires were administered on the academic staff of the two institutions of higher learning. Data obtained in the survey were analyzed via descriptive (frequency count, simple percentage, mean and standard deviation) and inferential (analysis of variance – ANOVA and multivariate-factor analysis). Foremost, the ANOVA result showed that academic staff perceived training and retention initiatives as significantly dissimilar in both institutions of higher learning. Most importantly, multivariate-factor analysis ranked on-the-job training, as the most influential training dynamics that impels academic staff retention in institutions of higher learning; this was accompanied by coaching, orientation and lastly, mentoring. It was suggested that institutions of higher learning should practically increase the rate at which academic staff are engaged on-the-job training, coaching and orientation. Additionally, as a starting point, academic-mentoring should be imbibed in the mission statement so as to enhance the retention rates of academic staff in institutions of higher learning.

Keywords: Academic staff training; Retention; On-the-job training; Coaching; Orientation; Academic-mentoring

JEL Classification: J31; Z19

1. Introduction

In recent times, academic staff training and the ability of institutions of higher learning to retain workforce is one of the most predominant contests facing management. Salami, Daniel, Muritala, Ibrahim and Nwoye (2022) described this problem to be linked with poor training programs by management, particularly in aspects of on-the-job training, coaching, orientation/induction, mentoring etc. The dire need of institutions of higher learning to retain highly experienced and skilled workforce coupled with intensified competition has

further complicated retention issue in institutions of higher learning (Choeni&Ngirande, 2018; Abdullahi, Gwadabe& Ibrahim, 2018; and Chepkosgey, Namusonge&Makokha, 2019).

More often than not, academic staff absorbed in institutions of higher learning are either semi-skilled or unskilled (Ozurumba&Amasuomo,2015). The fact is academic staff requirespecific skillsfor improved output; nevertheless, there is usually laughable training programme aimed at providing the required skills in institutions of higher learning (Onah&Anikwe, 2016; and Vasanthi&Basariya, 2019). Oginni, Ogunlusi and Faseyiku (2013); Korantwi-Barimah(2017) argued that academic staff lacks academic sponsorship towards enhancing their productivity; the few that are able to train themselves upon completion of their academic programme opt out for mouth-watering offer in other institutions, thus decreasing the retention rate of these institutions of higher learning, change in employees' strategies (Imhonopi, Urim, George &Egharevba, 2018), increased poverty (Olonade, George, Imhonopi, Egharevba&Kasa, 2022) and hence resulting to negative employees' behavioural outcomes (Waribo, Akintayo, Osinabjo, Imhonopi, Ibidunni&Fadeyi, 2020)

The above scenario is worse off for private institutions of higher learning because some may not have the financial capability to engage workforce in incessant training programmes; thus, are unable to retain academic staff followingthe completion of their academic programmes. While frantic efforts have been made by institutions of higher learning, particularly private universities to address the problem of academic staff training and retention, these efforts have not yielded better results, as more academic staff are still leaving.Conceivably, this may be orchestrated by the lack of use of training programmeslike on-the-job training, coaching, mentoring, induction, orientation, career development, etc. which have been considered as vital means of increasing employees' retention (see Aleem&Bowra, 2020; Alrazehi& Amirah, 2020; Murtiningsih, 2020; Ivana, 2020; Nguyen & Duong, 2020; Ume, Ume & Adnan, 2021; Amushila&Bussin, 2021; Bhawna, Samax& Vinod, 2021; and Dede &Oluoch, 2021).

Furthermore, regardless of the numerous empirical studies on academic staff training (Abdullahi, et al, 2018; Abba, 2018; Mbonu, Obayan, Oke, Amuta&Okwu, 2018; Ogbu&Udensi, 2017; Onah&Anikwe, 2016; Ozurumba&Amasuomo, 2015; Aibieyi&Oghoator, 2015;Oginni, *et al*, 2013; and Olusanya, Awotungase&Ohadebere, 2012), there seems to be a gap in literature as regards the most significanttraining dynamics (on-the-job training, coaching, orientation and mentoring) predicting academic staff retention, particularly in Covenant and Bells universities, Nigeria.Consequent upon the above, this paper examinedif training impels academic staff retention in two (2) private universities in Nigeria. The paper is sectioned as follows: Review of Related Literature, Research Methods; Results/Discussions; Conclusion and Recommendations.

2. Review of related literature

2.1 Academic Staff Training

Institutions of higher learning play a vital role in the on-going academic transformation, and as such, they present an interesting context for investigating matters of academic staff training and retention.Academic staff training and retention has been major concerns to management in the university system; however, staff retention seems to be the most challenging concern for private universities (Ng'ethe, Iravo&Namusonge, 2012), thus resulting to why qualified academic staff leave private institutions of higher learning to secure better paying job with job-security in public universities.

Ngirwa (2009) sees training as a learning process where employees acquire the required skills, knowledge and experience in order to effectively perform their job for achievement of organizational goals and purpose. Fajana, Owoyemi, Elegbede and Gbajumo-Sheriff (2011) defined training as an endless process of acquiring certain skills, knowledge, and attitude in order to stimulate efficiency on a specific job. Similarly, Ezeani and Oladele (2013) see training as an exercise aimed at developing employees' affective, cognitive and

psychomotor skills, thus assisting organization to have a vital means of developing employee towards enhancing their productivity. To Raza (2015), training is one of the foremost concerns for management, since it aids organizations in number of ways.

Training both mentally, physically and socially, are fundamentals in facilitating not only the level of organizational productivity, but also employee development in any given setting (Duah&Danso, 2017; Kosi, Opoku-Danso&Ofori, 2015; Bushe, 2012; Gupta, &Bostrom& Huber, 2010). In an organizational setting such as universities, training can take diverse forms as either on-the-job (e.g. academic seminar, workshop, and colloquium or working under senior academic colleague) or off-the-job training (acquiring academic qualifications like M.Sc. and PhD).

In literature, several factors have been identified as measures aimed at retaining employee in an organization; according to Onah and Anikwe (2016); and Korantwi-Barimah (2017), such factors among others encompass career development, attractive salary package, adequate training and development, provision of good learning and working environment, job flexibility, recognition, rewards and compensation, among others.

Consequently, it follows that academic staff will be able to function and make eloquent inputs to success of the university when equipped with relevant knowledge and skills. Prior studies had shown that training is a fundamental variable for employee retention (Snell &Youndt, 1995; Delaney &Huselid, 1996; Ichniowski, Shaw &Prennushi, 1997; Cappeli, 2000; Ng'ethe, *et al*, 2012; Oginni, *et al*, 2013; Hassan, *et al*, 2013; Ozurumba&Amasuomo, 2015; Onah&Anikwe, 2016; and Korantwi-Barimah, 2017).

2.2 Retention in Institutions of Higher Learning

Employee training and retention in the workplace has been widely discussed in the literature; however whether training impels academic staff retention in institutions of higher learning has been deeply under-researched in Nigeria. Noteworthy is the fact that while employee retention is a multi-dimensional concept, there is no universal method for retaining employees in institutions of higher learning or in an organizational setting. Towards addressing the multi-dimensional employee retention concept, Cascio(2003) defined employee retention as initiatives or strategies, which management takes in order to prevent employees from leaving organization.

Likewise, employee retention is a voluntary step made by institutions of higher learning to create an environment where employees are engaged on a long-term basis(Onah&Anikwe, 2016). Pienaar and Bester (2008); and Sinha and Sinha (2012) asserted that the most fundamental goal of employee retention is to devise means of averting talented or proficient employees from leaving the organization; as this could result to negative effects on organizational output and performance. Thus, the most valuable asset available to institutions of learning is the academic staff, thus retaining them is vital for growth and survival of the universities.

Prior studies have identified the possible factors affecting academic staff training and retention. For instance, Choeni and Ngirande (2018) examined the determinants of employees' retention among academic staff in Ghana and found a significant relationship between training and employees' retention. Similarly, Abdullahi, et al (2018) investigated the effects of training and development on academic staff productivity in public institutions of higher learning in Nigeria and found that training method, design and delivering styles positively and significantly affects academic staff productivity.

Furthermore, other empirical studies (Dede &Oluoch, 2021; Aleem&Bowra, 2020; Alrazehi& Amirah, 2020; Murtiningsih, 2020; Nguyen & Duong, 2020; Ogbu&Udensi, 2017; Korantwi-Barimah, 2017; Onah&Anikwe,

2016; Ozurumba&Amasuomo, 2015;Aibieyi&Oghoator, 2015; Selesho&Naile, 2014; and Oginni, et al, 2013) have revealed that academic staff training significantly affects retention of quality and attraction of talented workforce, and the survival of institutions of higher learning. Thus, there is ample evidence showing that relationship exists between training and the retention of employees.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on the 'equity theory' advocated by Adams in 1965; the theory is premised on the perception employees have about how they are treated in their workplace compared with others. In this regards, employees thus seek to maintain equity between the input they bring into the organization and output they receive from against perceived inputs and outputs of employees in other organizations (Ng'ethe, et al 2012). Input employees bring includes but not limited to education, experience, commitment and time while output they may receive are increased pay structure, promotion, training and development.

Consequently, due to the failure to ensure equity between the inputs and outputs, employees tend to leave the organization for another; hence the inability of most organizations to retain talented workforce. The relevance of the equity theory to this current study is that it recognises that employees (academic staff) inputs like education, experience, commitment, time among others should be matched with their outputs (pay, promotion, training and development) if institutions must be able to retain them. The theory provides a framework for understanding the factors influencing staff retention or reasons why staff leaves an institution or organization.

The major weakness of the theory is the subjectivity of comparison process. For instance, Beardwell and Claydon (2007) opined that there is tendency humans distort inputs, particularly with regards to commitment and time and hence becomes subjective when comparing. In spite of the weakness of the theory, it provides a basis for understanding input-output relationship linked with employee training and retention; hence, with equity theory, factors predicting staff retention can be established.

3. Research Methods

This study examined whether training impels academic staff retention in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. The cross-sectional survey design was used and primary data (questionnaire) was the main instrument of data collection. The survey comprised two (2) private universities in Nigeria (Covenant and Bells universities). The questionnaire was adapted and similar to those used in prior studies (Oginni, et al, 2013; Hassan, et al, 2013; Ozurumba&Amasuomo, 2015; Onah&Anikwe, 2016; Duah&Danso, 2017; and Korantwi-Barimah, 2017).

The study population covered all academic staff of Covenant and Bells universities; however, the purposive sampling method was employed in the sample size determination, thus resulting to a sample of two hundred (200) academic staff (full-time and part-time) in Bells and Covenant universities. The questionnaire takes a 5-point Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. The test re-tests method involving 20 percent of academic staff in two other private institutions was done; Cronbach Alpha coefficients were obtained as follows:

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficients for Training and Retention of Academic Staff

S/N	Variable(s)	Coefficient(s)
1	Retention	0.80
2	On-the-job training	0.83
3	Coaching	0.77
4	Orientation/Induction	0.69
5	Academic-Mentoring	0.63

Source: Compiled by the Researcher (2023)

Data obtained in the survey were analyzed via descriptive (frequency count, simple percentage, mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis) and inferential (analysis of variance – ANOVA & multivariate analysis – factor analysis). The ANOVA result was employed to determine the extent to which there is a variation in respondents’ perception on academic staff training and retention in Covenant and Bells universities while the multivariate-factor analysis was employed in assessing the most significant training dynamics (on-the-job training, coaching, orientation/ induction, and academic-mentoring) influencing retention most in private institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. A-priori expectation is that there will be significant variation in training and retention of academic staff in Covenant and Bells universities.

4. Results and discussions

Table 2: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents in Bells and Covenant Universities

S/N	Variables	Categories	Frequency (n=200)	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender	Male	99	49.50%
		Female	101	50.50%
		Total	200	100.0%
2.	Marital Status	Married	81	40.50%
		Single	46	23.00%
		Unmarried but living with a spouse	23	11.50%
		Divorced	37	18.50%
		Separated	8	4.00%
		Widowed	5	2.50%
		Total	200	100.0%
3.	Academic Qualification	B.Sc./HND	4	2.00%
		M.Sc./M.Ed.	119	59.50%
		PhD	77	38.50%
		Total	200	100.0%
4.	Religion	Christianity	141	70.50%
		Islam	55	27.50%
		African Traditional Religion	4	2.00%
		Others	-	-
		Total	200	100.0%
5.	Years of Experience	Less than 5years	30	15.00%
		5-10years	67	33.50%

6.	Institution	11-15years	75	37.50%
		16years and above	28	14.00%
		Total	200	100.0%
		Covenant University	100	50.00%
		Bells University	100	50.00%
		Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

In Table 2, the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents on academic staff training and retention in Covenant and Bells Universities were presented. The result showed that 99(49.5%) and 101(50.5%) of the respondents were male and female academic staff respectively. On the basis of marital status, it was shown that 81(40.5%) and 46(23.0%) are married and single respectively while 23(11.5%) and 37(18.5%) are either unmarried but living with a spouse or divorced; the remaining respondents 8(4%) and 5(2.5%) are separated and widowed respectively.

Furthermore, on academic qualification, it was found that majority of the academic staff in both universities of Covenant and Bells had Masters degrees (M.Sc./M.Ed.), representing 119 (59.5%) while 77(38.5%) had obtained a PhD; impliedly, when academic staff possess their final academic degree, they tend to opt out for other institutions that they consider suitable in meeting their financial needs while the insignificant portion representing 4(2.0%) reflects academic staff who are graduate assistants of the understudied universities.

More so, academic staff of universities is a mix of both Christians 141(70.5%) and Muslims 55(27.5%); however, with the years of experience, there are clear indications that majority of the respondents, 5-10years(67, 33.5%) and 11-15years(75, 37.5%) may have vital knowledge on academic staff training and retention in both universities, since they must have spent numerous number of years with their respective institutions.

Table 3: Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Items	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min Value	Max Value
Retention	200	4.36	1.14	1	5
On-the-Job Training	200	4.44	1.09	1	5
Coaching	200	4.37	1.16	1	5
Orientation/Induction	200	4.14	1.34	1	5
Academic-Mentoring	200	3.73	1.35	1	5

Source: Field Survey, 2023

In Table 3, the summary of descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) of questionnaire items on academic staff training and retention were presented. The result revealed that all the items on academic training (on-the-job training, coaching, orientation/induction and academic-mentoring) and retention scored above the mean cut-off benchmark of 2.50.

More so, the standard deviation values are clear indications that the respondents' perception of academic staff training and retention in institutions of higher learning are not too dispersed from each other. Impliedly, the questionnaire items are good metrics for assessing staff training and retention in institutions of higher learning.

Table 4: Multivariate-Factor Analysis of Training Dynamics Predicting Retention of Academic Staff in Institutions of Higher Learning

Factor	Eigenvalue	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	1.58836	1.54245	1.3166	1.3166
Factor2	0.04591	0.12292	0.0331	1.3547
Factor3	-0.07701	0.07530	-0.0638	1.2908
Factor4	-0.19854	-	-0.1646	1.0000

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Unexplained Variance = 99.5%

The eigenvalue of the study factors showed the strongly related fundamentals for assessing the factors predicting retention of academic staff in institutions of higher learning. In this study, four (4) factors were found with eigenvalues as shown in Table 4. The first factor (factor1) was found by using eigenvalue greater than one rule; factor-loading above 0.5 was selected based on the suggestion of Hair (1998) to establish the minimum-loading necessary to constitute an item.

Besides, it can be seen that the factors have explained 99.5% of the total variance. Thus, there is the need for higher institutions of higher learning to practically put to use, training programmes in order to enhance employees' retention.

Table 5: Factor Loadings (Pattern Matrix) and Unique Variances

Factor	Factor 1	Factor 2	Uniqueness	Commonality $\Sigma(\text{loading})^2$ or $1(-\text{uniqueness})\%$
Academic-Mentoring	0.4655	0.1364	0.7647	23.53%
On-the Job Training	0.6476	-0.0946	0.5716	42.84%
Coaching	0.6055	-0.0223	0.6328	36.72%
Orientation/Induction	0.5453	-0.0826	0.6958	30.42%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Presented in Table 5 is the factor-loading estimates; it was found that the four (4) variables were strongly connected with some specific factors and this profoundly indicates the extent to which those variables load on the factors; the result showed how much a single variable has in common with other factors (unique variances).

Basically, a relatively high commonality value indicates that a variable has much in common with the other variables taken together. On the other hand, a relatively low commonality implies that the variable does not sustain an established connection with the other variables. The result suggests that on-the-job training(42.84%) was found to be the most significant training dynamics influencing retention of academic staff in institutions of higher learning; this was accompanied by coaching(36.72%), orientation/induction(30.325) and the least, academic-mentoring(23.53%).

Table 6: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Training and Retention of Academic Staff in Institutions of Higher Learning

Training and Retention		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
A	Between Groups	2.4567	1	2.4567	4.09	0.0446
	Within Groups	118.4711	197	.601376		
	Total	120.9278	198	.610746		
Training and Retention		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
B	Between Groups	6.0489	1	6.0489	13.99	0.0002
	Within Groups	85.1549	197	.432258		
	Total	91.2039	198	.4606258		

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From Table 6, the variables have the degree of freedom between groups (df) = 1 and 197 within groups. It could be seen that the computed values A(F = 4.09) and B(F = 13.99) have obtained values higher than the tabulated value (0.0446 < 0.05; and 0.0002 < 0.05), suggesting that the difference in their mean is significant. Thus, there is variation in the training and retention of academic staff in Covenant and Bells universities.

In this study, two analytical tools were employed: ANOVA and multivariate-factor analysis. First, the study found a significant variation in the perception of academic staff on the variation in the training and retention in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. Prior studies had shown that there is significant variation in the way employees perceived training and retention practices. Hence the study agrees in part with the results of Korantwi-Barimah(2017); Onah and Anikwe (2016); Ozurumba and Amasuomo (2015) who found that a significant variation in training and retention of employees in organizations.

Second, the multivariate-factor analysis ranked on-the-job training as the most training dynamics that impels academic staff retention in institutions of higher learning; this was accompanied by coaching, orientation and the least was academic-mentoring. This result is in consonance with the findings of prior studies (Dede & Oluoch, 2021; Aleem&Bowra, 2020; Murtiningsih, 2020; Ogbu&Udensi, 2017; Ozurumba&Amasuomo, 2015; Selesho&Naile, 2014; and Oginni, et al, 2013) who established that organizations that are desirous of retaining talented and skilled staff should ensure adequate training and development, provision of job flexibility recognition, reward and compensation and attractive salaries for the workforce.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

This study investigated whether training impels academic staff retention in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria using a multivariate approach. While the study showed via the ANOVA result that there is variation in the perception of academic staff on training and retention practices multivariate-factor analysis concluded that on-the-job training is the most significant predictor influencing academic staff retention in institutions of higher learning. The study conforms to the equity theory where inputs enhance outputs.

In view of the findings, it was recommended that institutions of higher learning should increase the rate at which employees are engaged on-the-job training, coaching and orientation/induction. As a starting point for management of institutions of higher learning, academic-mentoring should be imbibed and encouraged so as to enhance the retention rates of academic staff. More so, to enhance academic staff output, retention strategies such as career development, attractive salary package, adequate training, provision of good learning and working climate, and job flexibility, recognition, rewards and compensation are required.

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