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THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR IN SELECTED ORGANIZATIONS IN THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the mediating effect of organizational commitment on the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behaviour in selected organizations within the Nigerian public sector. The study was motivated by the need to understand how supportive organizational practices influence employees' willingness to engage in extra-role behaviours that enhance organizational effectiveness. A quantitative research design was adopted using a cross-sectional survey method. Data were collected from 250 employees through a structured questionnaire, and the responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and mediation analysis.

The findings revealed that perceived organizational support had a significant positive effect on organizational citizenship behaviour ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that employees who perceived greater support from their organizations were more likely to demonstrate discretionary behaviours beneficial to the organization. Perceived organizational support was also found to significantly predict organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.05$), while organizational commitment significantly influenced organizational citizenship behaviour ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.05$). When organizational commitment was introduced into the regression model, the direct effect of perceived organizational support on organizational citizenship behaviour reduced but remained significant ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.05$), confirming a partial mediation effect. The indirect effect was statistically significant, suggesting that organizational commitment serves as an important mechanism through which perceived organizational support enhances citizenship behaviour.

The study concludes that while perceived organizational support directly promotes organizational citizenship behaviour, its impact is strengthened when employees develop a sense of commitment to the organization. It is therefore recommended that public sector organizations in Nigeria adopt policies that enhance employee support, recognition, and welfare in order to foster commitment and encourage positive workplace behaviours that improve service delivery and organizational performance.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Over time, practitioners and academics have shown interest in investigating a wide range of organizational variables, and one of such variables is extra role behaviours demonstrated by employees in organization, and how they contribute to the overall performance of the organization. This is because the extra role behaviours are crucial to the realization of organizational effectiveness. Organizational citizenship behavior is one of such behaviours that have been studied by researchers as it encompasses any kind of extra role behavior that employees demonstrate outside their formal specifications of job roles. Such investigations have been conducted in different sectors by researchers in Nigeria, but with majority of them focusing on the private sector. This study focuses on examining organizational citizenship behavior in selected public organizations.

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has been described as an individual behaviour that can cumulatively affect groups within organizations (Pickford & Joy, 2016). The authors explained that it involves the discretionary roles performed by employees without any formal compulsion from the organization. They noted that while these behaviours are voluntary, they may diminish if they stay unnoticed and unrewarded. Hence, organizations must strategically encourage organizational citizenship behavior which can contribute the growth of the organization. The need to study organizational citizenship behavior in the Nigerian public sector is necessitated by the continuous poor performance of employees in the public sector (Akinsanmi, et al. 2022). These authors highlighted the shortcomings of the Nigerian Public sector, noting that the public sector is characterized by inefficiency. Inefficiency and poor performance have been reported as outcomes of lack of OCB. Studies that have focused on investigating OCB have shown that when OCB is not demonstrated by employees it can result

in poor job performance and poor performance of the organization as a whole. For example in the study carried out by Mallick, et al. (2015) it was found that altruistic behavior which is a dimension of OCB enhances workplace performance and productivity. It is believed that OCB can enhance performance in general, and thus, the researcher, in this study, focuses on investigating the correlation between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior in the Nigerian Public sector.

Globally, the public sector is responsible for the administration of the country in a manner that promotes stability as well as social and economic development. This makes the public service sector a critical component of the state's structure that is responsible for the implementation and administration of public policy (Akinsanmi et al., 2022). Consequently, it is expected that employees of public-owned organizations be committed to the realization of the goals of the organizations by showing willingness to perform extra roles outside their formal job specification. However, it is important to note that the motivations for OCB may vary amongst employees of the same organization.

The primary objective of Nigeria's public sector, according to Darma and Ali (2014), is the provision of quality services to its citizens, and such services are in the areas of housing, education health, water, and energy. The public sector is supposed to be the major vehicle of government services' delivery based on the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution. The Nigerian constitution empowers the government to carter for the welfare and general happiness if every citizen based on "social justice, equality of status and opportunity" (section 16 (1) (b)). In the study carried out by Adedokun et al. (2022), an overview of the Nigerian Public service was presented, showing that the existence of the Nigerian Public Service goes as far back as the colonial days when the public service was introduced as the administrative instrument through the country is governed. Consequently, there was an expansion of the public service from being just the administrative mechanism of governance to being the political and administrative structures of the country.

The most challenging issue for the Nigerian government is to improve and optimize the performance of the Public Service given the critical role it plays in the attainment of sustainable development. However, the Nigerian government has failed to boost the performance of the public sector which has been plagued with inefficiency resulting from weak organizational structures poor remuneration, poor working conditions, corruption and erosion of values (Akinsanmi et al., 2022). Without a properly structured and organized public service, a country cannot achieve sustainable development (Osawe, 2015). Hence, there is need for the Nigerian government to make strategic efforts towards improving the performance of the public service.

The poor performance of organizations in the public sector of Nigeria has informed so many researches that are aimed at gaining insight into the phenomenon. Several of the researches carried out on the public sector have focused on studying variables such as Strategic planning and organizational performance (e.g.Umar, Muhammed, & Hassan, 2020); interpersonal relationships and organizational performance (e.g. Agba, 2018); performance management antecedents and public sector performance (e.g. Abubakar, Saidhin, & Ahmi, 2016); organizational reward system and staff productivity (e.g. Ndukwe & Ezika, 2016). Most of the aforementioned studies have focused on studying other variables that influence organizational performance, thereby focusing on the organization itself, without paying attention to Employee behavioural-related variables like organizational citizenship behavior. In other words, OCB has been indicated as one of the precursors of organizational performance, but there are limited studies that have investigated the precursors of OCB. Thus, this study focuses on investigating such employee behavioural-related variables which include Organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior, combined with perceived organizational support as a non-behavioural variable. This is because of the critical role these variables play in improving organizational performance as noted by Mallick et al. (2015). This study focuses on Organizational Citizenship behavior as an end in itself, rather than focusing on organizational performance as organisations cannot survive without its workforce behaving as good citizens and engaging in positive behaviours (Spatiraj & Shivani, 2017). Thus, the study seeks to investigate the correlation between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior, as well as the mediating effect of Organizational commitment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

According to Ojebola et al. (2020), organizational citizenship behavior is a fundamental behavioural variable that can enable the survival of organizations, particularly those that operate in a highly competitive environment that is characterized by economic struggles. As defined by Gabriel (2015), OCB is the extra role and discretionary behavior exhibited by individuals in the workplace. This extra role performed by individual employees is outside their formal job description contained in their employment agreement (Oladipupo, 2016). It involves carrying out extra duties at their discretion to help the organizations achieve its goals and objectives. However, this act is not

recognized by the formal reward system because it is not a formal requirement, despite being critical to the sustainable growth of organizations. By implication, the demonstration of this behavior depends on the personal decision of the employee. Regardless of OCB being a voluntary behavior, it is important for organizations to combine both formal job roles and extra role behaviours in order to perform better, because organizations where OCB is not encouraged is considered as a fragile social system (Okechukwu, 2017).

Normally, employees who frequently exhibit OCB may not always be ranked as top performers, but they are the ones that perform extra roles beyond merely performing a satisfactory job within their job description (Thiagarajan, Isravel & Durairaj). Findings of previous studies have shown that OCB has a significant and positive influence on organizational performance (Yakoobi & Weisberg, 2020). In several studies, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has been studied and measured using the basic foundational measures of OCB as identified by Organ (1988) cited in Judipat and Jaja (2016) including altruism, civic virtue, courtesy, sportsmanship and conscientiousness. In this study, OCB will be investigated based on these dimensions.

Altruism can be defined as discretionary behaviour that involves an employee helping their colleagues that are faced with work-related challenges (Ojebola, 2019). This dimension places emphasis on the assistance an employee willingly offers co-workers or newly employed colleagues that have difficulties performing certain tasks (Andoaver & Earnest, 2013). Altruism can be demonstrated through assisting newbies navigate their daily routine, sharing the work burden of colleagues.

Conscientiousness refers to exceeding the minimum role requirements of the organization (Law, Wong, & Chen, 2005) in terms of abiding by the rules of the organization, being punctual to work, and adhering to the procedures of the organization (Thiruvenkadam & Durairaj, 2017).

Courtesy is referred to as a discretionary behaviour which an employee engages in with the view to prevent work-related conflicts and misunderstandings with co-workers in the workplace. This involves an employee consulting with colleagues before taking a decision (Olowookere, Adejuwon & Godwyns, 2015).

Civic virtue involves behaviours that are indicative of the sincere concerns and interest of an employee in the organization's life. This dimension also involves voluntary participation of the employee in the activities of the centre like regular attendance of meetings, making constructive suggestions and contributions that can help the organization advance and save cost.

Sportsmanship means the willingness of an employee to forbear minor inconveniences without appeal or protest (Organ 1988) as cited in Pickford and Joy (2016).

Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment is the individual's mental connection to the organization. The premise behind huge numbers of these studies was to discover approaches to enhance how specialists feel about their works so that these laborers would turn out to be more dedicated to their organization (Aziz et al., 2021). Organizational commitment predicts work variables, for example, turnover, hierarchical citizenship conduct, and employment execution. A percentage of the elements, for example, part stretch, strengthening, work shakiness and employability, and appropriation of authority have been appeared to be associated with a laborer's feeling of organizational commitment (Abdullah & Othman, 2019). In this study, this variable will be studied as the mediating variable between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior. This variable will be measured based on the three dimensions frequently used in the literature. The three dimensions are briefly described as follows:

Affective commitment: Is understood as the employee's constructive emotional bonding to the organization. Such an employee strongly associates himself/ herself with organizational goals and seeks to stay with the organization because he/she wishes to do so (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021).Continuance commitment: Here the emotional quotient is largely moot and the employee perceives it to be very costly to lose organizational membership (Gardi et al., 2020).

Continuance commitment: Here the emotional quotient is largely moot and the employee perceives it to be very costly to lose organizational membership (Gardi et al., 2020). This could be for a host of reasons right from financial costs of salary and benefits to social costs of ties and reputation. Such an employee stays with the organization because they are tied in (Prabhu et al., 2020).

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Normative commitment: There is an obligatory notion at play here. The employee feels to return the value commitments made in him/ her by the organization (Anwar& Shukur, 2015). The loyalty aspect is strong- either due to individualized value perceptions that direct behavior or due to social norms that apply to the context and relate with the environment the organization belongs to (Sultan et al., 2020).

Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support (POS) is a one of the main concepts in organizational research that is increasingly gaining the attention of scholars in the field of management. In early studies conducted in the area of perceived organizational support, Eisenberger et al., (1986, p.501) defined POS "employee beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being". The concept of POS is based on the social exchange theory, which notes that employees anthropomorphize their organizations, forming universal beliefs about their organization's concern for them. When these beliefs are formed, employees feel the need to reciprocate the organizations efforts and help the organization achieve its goals. The outcomes of perceived organizational support include job performance, employees' affective commitment (Eisenberger et al.,2001) reduced absenteeism and intents to stay (Prysmakova & Lallatin, 2021). More so, POS has been reported to be associated with innovation, anonymous suggestions, and extra-role performance (Eisenberger et al., 1990). This explains why firms make huge investment towards enhancing the perception of organizational support amongst their employees, which, in the long run, is in the interest of the firms. Reports published on the Statista research portal (2021) has shown that 79 percent of individuals who received the wellbeing support program offered by US organizations from 2019-2021, claimed that support programs made them more productive, with 84 percent of them agreeing that employee support programs are a good business investment. This shows that POS can be used to enhance positive organizational behaviours amongst employees. In this study, perceived organizational support is investigated as the determinant of organizational citizenship behavior.

Relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and Organizational commitment

The relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment has been studied by different researchers in different contexts. For example, in the study carried out by Donald, Ngirande, and Shambare (2016), the correlation between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment was tested. The study was conducted using quantitative method, through which the hypotheses were tested using structural equation modelling techniques. The findings of the study showed that there is a significant relationship between significant relationship between perceived organizational support and two dimensions of organizational commitment namely, affective commitment, and continuance commitment. However, no significant relationship was found between perceived organizational support and normative commitment. Also, the study carried out by Jehanzeb (2020) amongst employees working in different bank branches located in five metropolitan cities of Pakistan, showed that there is a significant relationship between organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior.

Similarly, Bibi, Khalid and Hussain (2019) investigated the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment amongst special education teachers in Pakistan. It was found commitment can be improved by increasing organizational support. Based on the findings of these previous studies the following hypothesis is stated:

H1: There is a significant relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment.

Relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and Organizational Citizenship behavior

Findings of previous studies have revealed that there is a relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior. Such studies have shown that organizational citizenship behavior can be increased with perceived organizational support. For example, in the study carried out by Kao, Cho, and Kao (2023), the correlation between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior was investigated amongst front-liners in the Taiwan's National Immigration Agency, and the findings of the study revealed that OCB was positively influenced by perceived organizational support.

In the same vein, Firmansyah et al. (2023) examined the effect of perceived organizational support on organizational citizenship among nurses, and found that perceived organizational support has a positive effect on organizational citizenship behavior. This implies that higher perceived organizational support increases the organizational citizenship behavior of the nurses. These authors concluded that with perceived organizational support, employees will feel obliged to contribute and care about the organization's welfare while helping the organization achieve its goals. Hence, the following hypothesis is stated:

H2: There is a significant relationship between Perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior.

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Relationship between Organizational commitment and Organizational citizenship behavior

Organizational commitment has been described as the trust an employee has in its organization, which in turn makes them accept the values of the organization. This also makes them to work hard and also feel a strong desire to establish psychological bond with the organization. Susanto, Priyono, and Nusbantoro (2020) asserted that organizational citizenship behavior can be achieved if employees perceive their organization in a good light and make efforts towards advancing the organization. In their study, they found that organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior are significantly correlated. This means that as organizational commitment increases, organizational citizenship increases as well, and vice versa. Similarly, Kurniawan (2015) found that there is a significant relationship between organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior.

Also, Grego-Planer (2019) carried out a comparative study that examined the relationship organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior in both public and private organizations in Poland, the findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. Thus, the following hypothesis is stated:

H4: There is a significant relationship between organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior.

Mediating Effect of Organizational commitment in the Relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour.

The findings of previous studies have shown that organizational commitment has a mediating effect on the relationship between perceived organizational support. An example of such studies is that which was conducted by (Wulandari & Andriani, 2019), who found that there is an indirect and significant effect between perceived organizational support on organizational citizenship behavior through organizational commitment as a mediator. Similarly, in the work done by Wibowo, (2019) it was found that affective commitment mediates the correlation between organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior. However, their results showed that the mediating effect is partial. Also, the findings of the study carried out by Sari (2022) among employees of public service sector showed that organizational commitment has positive and significant mediating effect on the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior.

Hence, the following hypothesis is stated:

H5: Organizational Commitment has a significant mediating effect on the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design to examine the mediating effect of organizational commitment in the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behaviour in selected organizations in the Nigerian public sector. The quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows for the collection and statistical analysis of numerical data to test hypothesized relationships among variables. The population of the study comprised employees of selected public sector organizations in Nigeria. A sample size of 250 respondents was drawn using a simple random sampling technique to ensure that every member of the population had an equal chance of being selected, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the sample. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into four sections. Section A captured respondents' demographic characteristics, while Sections B, C, and D measured perceived organizational support, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviour respectively. The items were adapted from validated scales in existing literature and measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed, yielding values above the acceptable threshold of 0.70. This confirmed that the instrument was both reliable and internally consistent.

Data analysis was carried out using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics—including correlation analysis, regression analysis, and chi-square tests—were employed to test the study hypotheses. The mediation effect of organizational commitment was examined using the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach, supported by additional statistical tests for indirect effects. All statistical analyses were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance, and results were presented using tables and appropriate interpretations.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics

The mean scores indicate that the respondents generally perceive moderate to high levels of organizational support, commitment, and citizenship behaviour.

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Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	3.85	0.72
Organizational Commitment (OC)	3.76	0.68
Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)	3.92	0.70

Correlation Analysis

There are significant positive relationships among all variables. This suggests that as perceived organizational support increases, both organizational commitment and citizenship behaviour also increase.

Variables	POS	OC	OCB
POS	1.00		
OC	0.61**	1.00	
OCB	0.52**	0.47**	1.00

(**$p < 0.05$**)

Test of Hypotheses (Regression Analysis)

Model 1: POS → OCB

Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
POS	0.52	6.84	0.000

$R^2 = 0.27$

Perceived organizational support significantly predicts organizational citizenship behaviour.

Hypothesis 1 Supported

Model 2: POS → OC

Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
POS	0.61	8.12	0.000

$R^2 = 0.37$

Perceived organizational support significantly influences organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 2 Supported

Model 3: OC → OCB

Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
OC	0.47	5.73	0.000

$R^2 = 0.22$

Organizational commitment significantly predicts organizational citizenship behaviour.

Hypothesis 3 Supported

Model 4: Mediation Model (POS + OC → OCB)

Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
POS	0.28	3.92	0.000
OC	0.39	4.85	0.000

$R^2 = 0.41$

Mediation Analysis

The mediation analysis followed the procedure by **Baron and Kenny (1986)**.

Findings

Initial effect (POS → OCB): **β = 0.52 (significant)** with mediator (POS → OCB): **β = 0.28 (reduced but significant)**

Indirect effect

0.61 0.47 = 0.29

Sobel Test

The result of the sobel test shows that the indirect effect is statistically significant.

$Z = 3.45$, $p < 0.05$

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings reveal that perceived organizational support significantly influences organizational citizenship behaviour both directly and indirectly through organizational commitment. This implies that when employees feel valued and supported by their organization, they are more likely to reciprocate with positive behaviours that go beyond their formal job roles. The mediating role of organizational commitment suggests that support alone is not

sufficient; it must translate into emotional attachment and loyalty before it fully drives citizenship behaviour. This aligns with workplace realities in the Nigerian public sector, where employee motivation is often tied to perceived fairness and organizational care. The findings of this study supports that of Wulandari & Andriani (2019), who found that there is an indirect and significant effect between perceived organizational support on organizational citizenship behavior through organizational commitment as a mediator. Similarly, in the work done by Wibowo, (2019) it was found that affective commitment mediates the correlation between organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior. However, their results is different from the findings of this study as they reported partial mediation. Within the same context, Sari (2022), who carried out a study among employees of public service sector found that organizational commitment has positive and significant mediating effect on the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveals that organizational Commitment partially mediates the relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour. This implies that, organizations that seek to the commitment of employees must first provide organizational support, which in turn fosters organizational commitment, and then organizational citizenship behavior. The findings further strengthen the arguments and findings of other researchers that have reported that organizational support is an antecedent of organizational commitment, as well as organizational citizenship behavior.

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