

**CAREER COMMITMENT OF STAFF IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO PRIVATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN
OGUN STATE, NIGERIA**

BY

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Abstract

This paper is a comparative analysis of career commitment between professional and paraprofessional librarians in two private universities; Covenant University and the Bells University both in Ota, Ogun State of Nigeria. The study revealed that both professional and paraprofessional librarians are committed to their carrier. A greater number of professional librarians in both The Bells University of Technology and Covenant University admitted that they are very committed. This is expressed by 66.7% and 78.6% respondents. Among the Para-professional staff, 60% from the Bells and 52.6% from Covenant University admitted that they are committed. The study showed that professional staff from both university libraries displayed commitment through the attendance of conferences, regular attendance of professional meetings, embracing best practices among others. On the other hand, the paraprofessionals exhibit carrier commitment through in-house trainings and embracing best practices. Passion, university education benefits and recognition stimulate both professional and paraprofessional staff to career choice. The study also revealed some motivational factors which contribute to career choice. They include rapid promotion, retirement benefits and good salary package among others. The paper recommended that employers should provide adequate motivation to library staff but also charged the employees to base their choice of career on passion rather than fringe benefits that are accruable to a career. It also admonished them to distinguish between being in a job and building a career.

Key words: *career choice, professional librarians, paraprofessional librarians*

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Introduction

Career can be defined as a chosen pursuit, a profession or an occupation. It is the general course or progression of one's working life or professional achievements (Answers.com). It is something to be pursued throughout life and involves building and creating an identity, especially in the corporate world. It is a lifelong phenomenon that determines the relevance of persons in the society they belong to. Enjoying a career therefore is one of the most important goals in life but very rarely do people just fall into the career of their dreams, it takes a combination of proactive thought and action (Pavlina, 2007).

Commitment is both mental and emotional. Pavlina (2007) noted that it is an internal decision, not something that can be forced from outside. He further submitted that commitment occurs when your thoughts and emotions are pointing in the same direction.

According to Ellemers, Gilder and Heuvel (1998) career commitment refers to people's motivation to work toward personal advancement in their profession. Popoola and Zaid (2008) also viewed it as the degree of dedication an individual has to his/her chosen line of work or profession.

The level of commitment an individual demonstrates in his/her career to a large extent determines the height of achievement in same. In order to keep pace with new developments, maintain relevance and entrench best practices professionals and Para-professionals in various fields demonstrate some level of commitment to their careers. Aryee and Tan (1992) in a research conducted on the career commitment of Teachers and Nurses in Singapore observed that those who demonstrated commitment to their profession did so to keep up with new developments in the profession and to acquire additional skills and training.

This paper therefore seeks to compare the level of commitment of professional and paraprofessional librarians in two private university libraries in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

This study aims to:

1. ascertain the level of commitment of professional and paraprofessional librarians in the two libraries to their career

2. find out factors that affect the career commitment of professional and paraprofessional librarians in the libraries under study
3. find out reasons for career choice of professional and paraprofessional librarians
4. discover factors that motivate professional and paraprofessional librarians in their career

Research Questions

The study seeks to address the following questions:

1. How committed are professional and paraprofessional librarians to their career?
2. What factors affect the career commitment of professional and paraprofessional librarians?
3. What are the reasons behind the career choice of professional and paraprofessional librarians?
4. What factors motivate professional and paraprofessional librarians in their career?

Literature Review

Reasons for choosing a career

One of the most difficult questions every individual has to face and answer in life is what career to choose. Issa and Nwalo (2008) opined that a wrong choice of career can lead to frustration and low productivity. Studies have also shown that four general individual characteristics influence how people make career choices. These include; interests, self image, personality and social backgrounds.

Stanford University News Service (1991) citing Krumboltz posited that many young people never make a career choice; rather they simply follow a path of least resistance.

Professionals in various fields choose careers based on so many factors. Some of these factors as posited by Ferry (2006) include life context, personal attitude and educational attainment. In the same vein, Tella (2007) mentioned attractive salary, good condition of service and job security as some of the reasons why people choose a career.

Olawanle and Abayomi (2006) also discovered that many people chose librarianship as a career because of their previous work experience in libraries. A study conducted by Adanu and Amekuedee (2010) on factors influencing the choice of librarianship as a course of study at the diploma level in Ghana revealed that most of these factors are mainly external with an opportunity for further education being the most prevalent. Other factors include association with librarians, experience in library work, a liking for books and the need for career change.

Similarly Alemna (1991) found out that librarianship was chosen as a career by postgraduate students at the University of Ghana Library School because of the opportunity it presents for intellectual development and further education. At the University of Alabama, Taylor, Perry, Barton and Spencer (2010) discovered that MLIS students at the university chose librarianship as a career because of their enthusiasm for information organization and sharing, personal disposition for information management and relish for the service aspects of librarianship. Employability and career flexibility were some of the reasons also adduced for choosing librarianship as a career (Shannon, 2008).

Factors affecting career commitment

In order to have a clear understanding of factors affecting career commitment, Popoola and Zaid (2008) identified three facets of career commitment. These include:

Affective career commitment which according to them refers to psychological attachment to a chosen line of work or profession by an individual, which makes him/her stay put in his/her chosen line of work or profession because he/she wants to.

Continuance career commitment refers to the cost associated with quitting the profession. This they opined implies that an individual remains in a profession or chosen line of work because he/she needs to.

Normative career commitment they further submitted is a perceived obligation to remain in one's chosen line of work or profession.

There are a number of factors and/or variables that impact on career commitment of professionals and paraprofessionals in various fields of human endeavour. Popoola and Oluwole (2007) noted that demographic variables such as sex, age, educational qualification, marital status and job tenure affected career commitment of records management personnel in Ondo state civil service in Nigeria.

In the same vein, Gilder and Heuvel (1998) observed that age, job tenure, work satisfaction and level of education had significant relationships with career commitment of Dutch workers. Adeyemo (2001) noted that among the Nigerian Police, job involvement, organizational commitment, team-oriented commitment accounted for their job satisfaction.

Motivation and career commitment

Motivation is an important component of career commitment and job satisfaction. Well motivated staff is one who is ready and willing to go the extra mile to achieve organizational goals and objectives. Motivation according to Free Dictionary (2010) is the process that arouses, sustains and regulates human behaviour. Pan (2010) identified two main kinds of motivation to include intrinsic which is internal and extrinsic which occurs when external factors compel the person to do something. He further highlighted salaries, benefits, working conditions, supervision, policy, safety, security, affiliation, and relationship as externally motivated needs while recognition, growth, achievement, advancement, responsibility, job nature were viewed as internal motivators.

Methods

The descriptive survey method was adopted for the study. Two private universities in Ogun State were selected and used. The universities include: Covenant University (CU) and Bells University of Technology (BUT), both in Ota. The questionnaire used to gather data was divided into six (6) sections labeled A to F. Section A includes the personal data of respondents; Section B is on career commitment, Section C is on level on commitment, Section D is on how commitment is shown, Section E is on reasons for career choice while Section F is on motivational factors in career choice. The Total Enumeration method was adopted because of the proximity of the researchers to the libraries under study.

A total of 44 professional and paraprofessional library staff participated in the study. A total of 60 professional and paraprofessional library staff were contacted to participate in the study and there was 73% response rate.

A questionnaire was designed and administered through a research assistant. Out of the 60 copies of the questionnaire distributed to the library staff, 44 (73%) were duly completed, retrieved and used for the analysis.

Table 1: Distribution and returns of questionnaire by University Staff

University affiliation	(a) Copies distributed	(b) % of copies distributed	(c) Copies retrieved	(d) response rate [(c)/(a)*100]
Bells University of Technology	20	33.3	12	27
Covenant University	40	66.7	32	73
Total	60	100	44	100

Table 1 represents the distribution and returns of copies of the questionnaire by university.

Table 2: Qualification and Work Status of the respondents

Qualification	Frequency	%	Status	Frequency	%
BLS		25	Assistant Librarian-Librarian II	15	34
MLS	10	23	Librarian I-Senior Librarian	4	09
PhD	-	-	Principal Librarian- Deputy University Librarian	-	
Others	23	52	University Librarian	2	05
			Others	23	52
Total	44	100	Total	44	100

Table 2 presents the qualification and work status of the respondents. In terms of their qualifications, 25% of them had BLS degrees, 23% had MLS degrees, none had doctoral degrees and 52% had SSCE. The table also provides their work status characteristics, which indicate that most of the professional librarians (34%) were in the lower level positions while the paraprofessionals were mainly library assistants.

Data Analyses and Findings
Career Commitment

Table 3: Commitment to Career

Commitment to Career	Bells University of Technology			Covenant University				
	Professionals	Paraprofessionals		Professionals		Paraprofessionals		
Are you committed to your career	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	7	100	5	100	14	100	18	100
No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Percentages are proportions of respondents from each university who affirmed their commitment

All sampled professional and paraprofessional library staff affirmed that they were committed to their career as shown in table 3. This is expected as it is rare to openly admit none commitment to one's career.

Table 4: Level of Commitment

Level of Commitment	Bells University of Technology				Covenant University			
	Professionals		Para-professionals		Professionals		Para-professionals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Highly Committed	5	71	2	40	11	79	8	44
Committed	2	29	3	60	3	21	10	56
Not committed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Not highly committed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	7	100	5	100	14	100	18	100

Percentages are proportions of respondents from each university who mention various levels of commitment

Table 4 represents various levels of the respondents' commitment to their career. 71% professional librarians from BUT as against 79% from CU show that they are very committed to their career. Preponderance of paraprofessionals in the two libraries also indicated commitment, 60% and 56% respectively.

How Commitment is shown

Table 5: How commitment is shown

Showing Commitment to Career	Bells University of Technology (BUT)				Covenant University (CU)			
	Professionals		Para-professionals		Professionals		Para-professionals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Regular attendance of professional meetings	5	71	-	-	7	50	-	-
Payment of annual membership dues	4	57	-	-	8	57	-	-
Attendance of conferences	4	57	-	-	12	86	-	-
Participation in in-house training/workshops	5	71	3	60	8	57	15	83
Embracing best practices	7	100	4	80	8	57	18	100
Others	5	71	3	60	9	64	7	39

Percentages are proportions of respondents from each university who mention how commitment is shown.

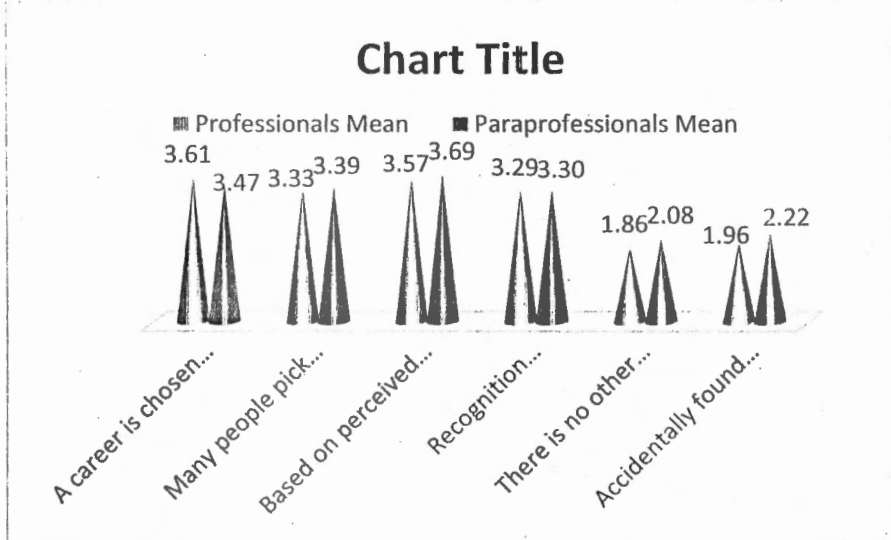
Results in table 5 represent how professional and paraprofessional library staff in the institutions under study show commitment to their career. Regular attendance of professional meetings, participation in professional trainings/workshops and others such as finding new ways of doing old things and acquisition of higher degrees which ranked 83% respectively represent how professional librarians in Bells University of Technology show commitment to their career. On the contrary paraprofessionals in the same institution ranked embracing best practices higher than any other variable (80%). None of the paraprofessionals in BUT chose the options, regular attendance of professional meetings, payment of annual membership dues and attendance of conferences.

This is expected as most paraprofessionals do not attend professional meetings and conferences neither do they pay annual dues since most of them are not qualified to register with the professional body. Attendance of conferences ranked highest 86% among CU professional librarians while embracing best practices and participation in in-house training/workshop, 100% and 83% respectively ranked highest among the paraprofessionals. Other rankings are as presented in table 5.

Table 6: Reasons for Career Choice

Reasons for career choice	Professional	Paraprofessional
	Mean	Mean
A career is chosen based on passion	3.61	3.47
Many people pick up careers based on university qualification(s)	3.33	3.39
Based on perceived benefits derivable from being in the profession	3.57	3.69
Recognition accorded to a career	3.29	3.3
There is no other career to fit into	1.86	2.08
Accidentally found myself in this career	1.96	2.22

Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents according to Reasons for Career Choice



The mean analysis of responses of professional and paraprofessional library staff under study on reasons for their career choice is as presented in table 6 as well as figure 1. An average of 3.61 professionals as against 3.47 paraprofessionals agreed that a career is chosen based on passion. There is an almost even distribution in average of responses by both professionals and paraprofessionals, 3.29 and 3.30 respectively, on recognition accorded to a career. An average of 1.96 professionals and 2.22 paraprofessionals affirmed that they accidentally found themselves in their career. Other responses are as presented in table 6 and figure 1.

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Motivational Factors in Career Commitment

Table 7: Motivational factors in Career Commitment

Motivational factors	Bells University of Technology				Covenant University			
	Professionals		Para-professionals		Professionals		Para-professionals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Rapid promotion	7	100	5	100	14	100	18	100
Retirement benefits	7	100	5	100	12	86	17	94
Adequate working facilities	4	57	3	60	14	100	9	50
Good allowances	7	100	5	100	9	64	18	100
Good salary package	6	100	5	100	11	79	18	100
Recognition by other colleagues	4	57	1	20	13	93	4	22
Good working condition	4	57	5	100	9	64	11	61
Creates a good platform for networking with other colleagues around the world	5	72	-	-	11	79	1	06
Attendance of professional conferences	4	57	-	-	12	86	1	06
Others	1	16	4	80	5	36	2	11

Table 7 represents factors that motivate professional and paraprofessional library staff in the two institutions under study. The table shows that 7 professional and 5 paraprofessional librarians representing 100% respectively, all from the BUT agree that rapid promotion is a motivational factor in carrier commitment.

A total of 14 professional and 18 paraprofessional librarians from C representing 100% also responded positively about the place of rapid promotion in career commitment. Other motivational factors that attracted high positive response include retirement benefits representing 100%, good allowances and good salary package. Each of the above responses attracted 7 professional and 5 Paraprofessionals representing 100% in each case. The motivational factor for CU professional librarians according to their ranking are adequate working conditions with 14 or 100% respondents, recognition by other colleagues 93%, retirement benefits attracting 86% or 12 respondents. Among the paraprofessionals, good allowances attracted 100% response, good salary package 18 or 100% response rate. As for retirement benefits, 17 or 94% responded positively. The responses to the other factors are as enumerated in the table.

Discussion

The study revealed that both professional and paraprofessional library staff agreed that they are committed to their careers. Attendance of conferences, participation in professional meetings and payment of membership dues ranked highest among professionals on how they show commitment to their careers; however, participation in professional in-house trainings/workshops and embracing best practices ranked highest among the paraprofessionals. This response is expected as most paraprofessional librarians are not qualified to register with the library professional body in Nigeria. Responses from the study also revealed that the career choice of both the professionals and paraprofessionals used for this study is mostly prompted by passion, 21 or 100% and 17 or 74% professionals and paraprofessionals respectively, university qualification 21 and 23, perceived benefits derivable from a career 100% in both cases.

However, 20 or 95% of professional librarians and 10 or 43% disagreed that a career is chosen by accident. The major motivating factors of the two categories of library staff include rapid promotion, retirement benefits, good allowances and salary.

Conclusion

The paper examined a comparative study of career commitment of professional and paraprofessional library staff in two private university libraries in Ogun State. Career commitment results in greater employment output.

This study revealed among other findings that librarians are more committed to their career when certain factors are put in place by the employer. The same trend obtains in other fields of endeavour. By way of recommendations, employers should seek ways of providing adequate motivation to library staff; however, library staff should base their career choice on passion rather than fringe benefits accruable to a career. A distinction between being in a job and building a career should be well spelt out. This will serve as a driving force to greater career achievements.

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Abstract
This study
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Techniques
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Introduction
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