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Workplace Democracy Practices and Librarians' Commitment in Universities in Southwest Nigeria

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Introduction

The effort of committed personnel is needed for the workplace to function optimally and to achieve the goals of the organization, especially in this global competitive space. However, where commitment is conceded in an organization like a library gives the library authority concern. This could imply one of the reasons why researchers and library management are interested in the subject of librarians' commitment. Organizational commitment is the extent to which an employee develops an attachment and sense of allegiance to her organization (Gorgulu & Akilli, 2017; Nkhukhu-Orlando, Brown, Wilson, Forcheh, Linn &Fako, 2019). Meyer and Allen (1997) conceptualized the dimensions of organizational commitment into affective, continuance and normative commitment. Affective Commitment reflects employees' identification with and involvement with his or her workplace and its goals. Continuance commitment refers to employees' need to stay in the organization due to a lack of alternatives. Normative commitment reflects employees' feeling of obligation to remain in his or her organization due to the consequences of leaving (Ebikeseke & Dickson, 2018).

Many workplace or organizational factors has been discussed to be an influence on organizational commitment in various studies. One of the workplace characteristics that has been found to influence employee commitment is workplace democracy (Safari, Salehzadeh, &Ghaziasgar, 2018). Workplace democracy is a concept that is used to describe a non-authoritative managerial style or participative management. Workplace democracy can be explained as a responsibility towards the governed ones, equal rights of participation, free movement of information, and representation of the governed. It is a process that increases the power of a broader group of people (employees) to influence the decisions and activities of an organization (Geckil & Tikici, 2016). Also, workplace democracy can be described as a process where workers have the right to

participate in the collective governance of the organization and determine their internal regulation, future direction and policies. This can encourage participation in decision making, open communication, and overall involvement in the success of the organization (Breen, 2015). However, according to Vopalecky and Durda (2017) workplace democracy has not been embraced extensively in many organizations.

Scholars such as Han and Garg (2018), Safari, Salehzadeh and Ghaziasgar (2018) have identified some dimensions of workplace democracy as accountability, transparency, decentralization, and individual rights. However, this study will be based on the workplace dimensions identified by Ahmed, Adeel, Ali and Rehman (2019) being the most recent and a build on previous dimensions identified by scholars. These authors identified workplace democracy dimensions as; liberalism (freedom, fairness, integrity, tolerance), functionalism (knowledge sharing, learning environment, accountability), and constitutionalism (structure, shared responsibility, transparency). Liberalism can be defined as the fundamental human rights of individuals in a democratic setting, which is used in identifying the prevalence of morality among employees. Besides, it is a political philosophy that is centred on freedom, by the approval of the governed and fairness before the law. This means that liberalism emphasizes person independence or autonomy, parity of opportunity and the protection of individual rights in the political, economic and organizational world (Ahmed, Adeel, Ali &Rehman, 2019).

Functionalism the second dimension of workplace democracy is described as the process, operations, and activities that take place in the organization. It consists of knowledge sharing, enabling learning environment, and accountability as a sub-component. Functionalism is, therefore, the basic features and functions of a daily organizational process and operations that are carried out by the staff of an organization. This may suggest that functionalism encourages

interaction, socialization, and participation by every employee in a democratic organization. Therefore, functionalism is a driving force for productivity, as it encourages social interaction, and lubricates any form of friction that might have occurred due to differences in opinions and judgment (Geckil & Tikici, 2016; Ahmed, Adeel, Ali & Rehman, 2019).

In an organizational context, constitutionalism (the third dimension of workplace democracy) refers to a system of government or administration based on a constitution; it is a system of government that demonstrates adherence to the principles of the constitution Therefore, constitutionalism ensures that governmental or organizational powers are limited beyond theory, and in practice (Ahmed, 2019). For instance, the principles of the constitution could be seen as a set of written documents for guidelines, policies, and rules that is present and available to every stakeholder in an organization. This written document empowers the management to protect and safeguard employees' rights, welfare, and interest. This means that employees should have access to the written documents of their organization such as published documents defining policies, mission and vision statements. The dimensions of constitutionalism include structure, shared responsibility, and transparency. The structure of a democratic workplace entails specialization, centrality in decision-making, length and width of hierarchy and span of control. To have workplace democratic practices, a supportive dynamic structure is necessary because it may effectively contribute to staff behaviour and improve their performance and commitment level (Ahmed, 2019).

The study carried out by Ahmed, Adeel, Ali and Rehman (2019) affirm that workplace democracy has a strong positive correlation with organizational commitment. This suggests that employees may be more committed to their organizations when workplace democracy practices is been encouraged. Besides, employees could develop a sense of psychological indebtedness to their

organization, by being committed to their organization especially when they have some level of involvement in their organizational practices and decision-making process. In other words, workplace democracy might give employees a voice leading to an increased organizational commitment level, skill upgrade due to regular participation in the organizational process, and improvement of organizational productivity. In corroboration, some studies also showed a significant positive relationship between democratic practices in organizations and employee commitment (Han & Garg, 2018; Safari, Salehzadeh, & Ghaziasgar, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Several researchers have stated their concern about the low level of commitment among librarians working in university libraries. The decline in the commitment of libraries is revealed in the high rate of absenteeism, poor service delivery, and laziness (Ademodi & Akintomide, 2015; Oyovwevotu, 2017). The commitment of librarians may be affected by essential psychological factors such as workplace democracy practices (Weber & Unterrainer, 2009; Al-Hussami & Hammad, 2018). Workplace democracy is a management approach that favours employee participation in decision making, open communication and overall involvement in the activities of an organization (Breen, 2015). Organizations, where workplace democracy practice is high, have been shown to record d high level of organizational commitment (Safari, Salehzadeh & Ghaziasgar, 2018). Despite the importance of organizational commitment, there remains a paucity of literature on it and its relationship with workplace democracy practices among librarians in universities in southwest, Nigeria. It is on this basis that this study seeks to investigate whether workplace democracy practices influence librarians' commitment.

Research Question

1. What is the extent of workplace democracy practices in university libraries in southwest, Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses will be tested at $p < 0.05$ level of significance:

H_{01}: Workplace democracy has no significant influence on librarians' commitment in universities in southwest, Nigeria.

Conceptual Model

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE   DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Workplace Democracy Practices		Librarians' Commitment
Liberalism	Ho1	Affective
Functionalism	→	Continuance
Constitutionalism		Normative

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Workplace Democracy and Librarians' Commitment

Methodology

A survey research design was adopted for the study. The survey research design is considered appropriate because it permits the collection of primary data at one time in point from a large audience using a questionnaire as an instrument. According to Asika (2005); Awoniyi, Aderanti and Tayo (2011), the survey research design is a valuable tool for assessing opinions and trends; it is aimed solely at establishing relationships between variables under study. The population consisted of 477 librarians in Southwest, Nigeria. Proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select 217 librarians who served as respondents in the study. A researcher's developed instrument was used for data collection and collected data were subjected to analysis using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results and Findings

Analysis of Research Question

Research Question One: What is the extent of workplace democracy practices in university libraries in southwest, Nigeria?
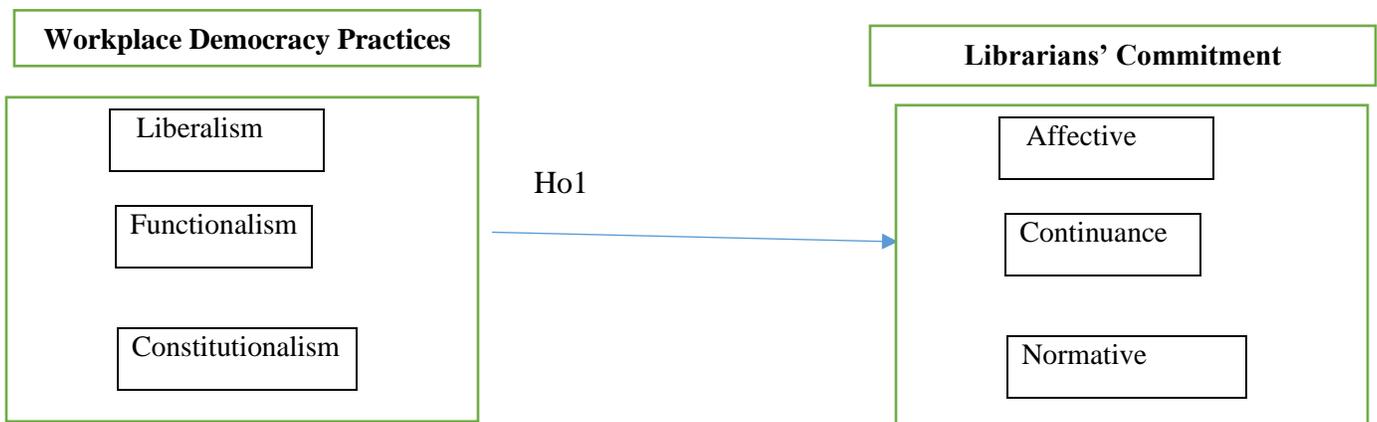
Table 1.1 Extent of Workplace Democracy Practices in University Libraries

	VHE (%)	HE (%)	LE (%)	VLE (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Functionalism (Mean = 3.25, SD = 0.75)						
The level at which my library operates a system of regular audit and compliance is to a	108 (53.7)	69 (24.3)	24 (11.9)	-	3.42	0.70
Adoption of new procedures are always welcome in my library to a	99 (49.3)	78 (38.8)	24 (11.9)	-	3.37	0.69
The culture of sharing past experiences and learning in my library is done to a	71 (35.3)	102 (50.7)	28 (13.9)	-	3.21	0.67

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	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	SD
Workers normally do not hesitate to ask for help from anyone more knowledgeable in any aspect to a	84 (41.8)	83 (41.3)	22 (10.9)	12 (6.0)	3.19	0.86
Seminars, workshops and conferences are often arranged to acquire new knowledge to a	67 (33.3)	84 (41.8)	42 (20.9)	8 (4.0)	3.04	0.84
Constitutionalism (Mean = 3.20, SD = 0.76)						
Clear communication procedure for complaints in my library is to a	98 (48.8)	75 (37.3)	16 (8.0)	12 (6.0)	3.29	0.85
Necessary information is accessible to employees in my library to a	74 (36.8)	94 (46.8)	33 (16.4)	-	3.20	0.70
There is a feeling of sense of belonging in my library to a	74 (36.8)	87 (43.3)	40 (19.9)	-	3.17	0.74
Employees and management work with each other in completing targets and benchmarks to a	66 (32.8)	107 (53.2)	20 (10)	8 (4.0)	3.15	0.75
Liberalism (Mean = 3.18, SD = 0.75)						
In my organization, there is a system of meritocracy to a	82 (40.8)	111 (55.2)	8 (4.0)	-	3.33	0.68
The level at which I make independent decisions related to my work is to a	85 (42.3)	96 (47.8)	20 (10)	-	3.32	0.65
Equal opportunities are provided to every employee for growth and development to a	87 (43.3)	79 (39.3)	35 (17.4)	-	3.26	0.74
The liberty to set my own work pace in the library is to a	77 (38.3)	88 (43.8)	28 (13.9)	8 (4.0)	3.16	0.81
Discrimination of any kind is discouraged in my library to a	57 (28.4)	98 (48.8)	42 (20.9)	4 (2.0)	3.03	0.76
No action is taken without employees being given a chance to be heard to a	55 (27.4)	100 (49.8)	30 (14.9)	16 (8.0)	2.97	0.86
Average Overall Mean					**3.21**	**0.75**

Source: Field Survey 2021

KEY: VHE=Very High Extent, HE= High Extent, LE=Low Extent, VLE=Very Low Extent ***Decision Rule if mean is 1 to 1.74=Very Low Extent; 1.75 to 2.49 = Low Extent; 2.5 to 3.24 =High Extent; 3.25 to 4= Very High Extent

Table 1.1 shows that the workplace democracy practices in university libraries from a general perspective in southwest Nigeria was to a high extent ($\bar{x}$=3.21). Specifically, the extent of workplace democracy practices in university libraries was to a high extent in terms of functionalism ($\bar{x}$=3.25), constitutionalism ($\bar{x}$=3.20) and liberalism ($\bar{x}$=3.18). This implies that the most prevalent workplace democracy practice in university libraries in southwest Nigeria was functionalism, followed by constitutionalism; while liberalism was the least practised workplace democracy activity in university libraries in southwest Nigeria.

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis one: Workplace democracy has no significant influence on librarians' commitment in universities in southwest, Nigeria

Table 1.2: Influence of Workplace Democracy on Librarians' Commitment in Universities in Southwest

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	p	R^2
(Constant)	-0.196	3.339		-0.059	0.953	0.514
Workplace Democracy	1.001	0.069	0.717	14.494	0.000	

Dependent Variable: Librarians' Commitment

Source: Field Survey 2021, *Note: β= Standardized Coefficient, significant at 0.05*
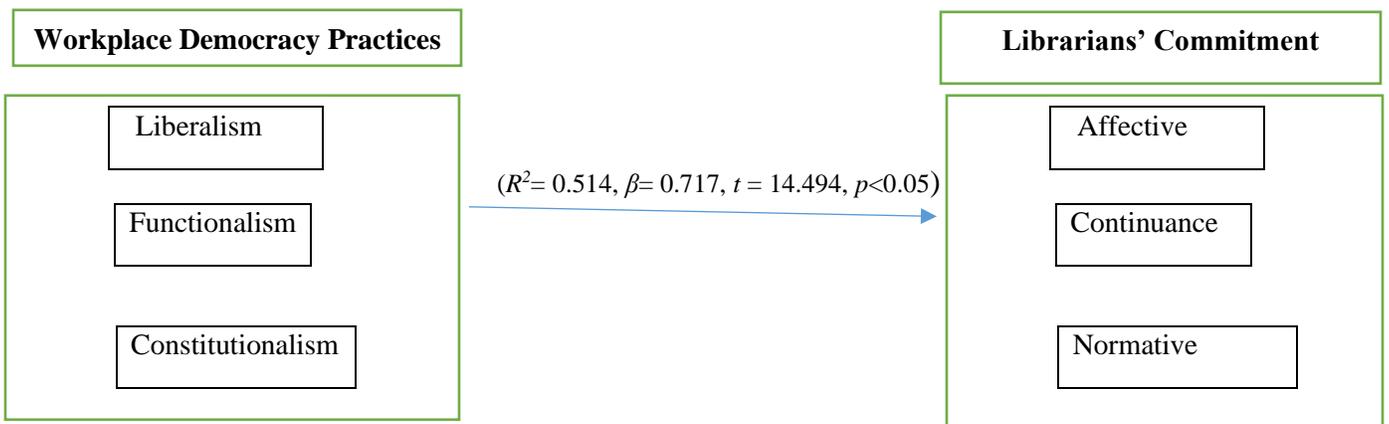
Table 1.2 indicates that workplace democracy has a significant influence on librarians' commitment in universities in southwest, Nigeria (R^2= 0.514, β= 0.717, t = 14.494, p<0.05). The model shows that workplace democracy could explain 51.4% variation (R^2= 0.514) in librarians' commitment in universities in southwest, Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that workplace democracy has no significant influence on librarians' commitment in universities in southwest, Nigeria was rejected. Based on this evidence, the null hypothesis, therefore, is restated thus; workplace democracy has a significant influence on librarians' commitment in universities

in southwest, Nigeria. The model further shows that workplace democracy has a strong positive $(r(201) = 0.717, p<0.05)$ influence on librarians' commitment. This suggests that improvement in workplace democracy in universities in southwest Nigeria would lead to an increase in librarians' commitment; while the reduction in workplace democracy would worsen librarians' commitment in universities in southwest, Nigeria. The implication of this analysis is that workplace democracy should be adopted in universities in southwest, Nigeria to improve librarians' commitment.

Resultant Model

Independent Variable   Dependent Variable

Workplace Democracy Practices		Librarians' Commitment
Liberalism	$(R^2= 0.514, \beta= 0.717, t = 14.494, p<0.05)$	Affective
Functionalism		Continuance
Constitutionalism		Normative

Resultant Model Summary

The model shows that workplace democracy could explain 51.4% variation $(R^2= 0.514)$ in librarians' commitment in universities in southwest, Nigeria. Based on the hypothesis formulated for this study, invariably the null hypothesis is rejected and restated thus: Workplace democracy practices have a significant influence on librarians' commitment in universities in Southwest, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The study examined the influence of workplace democracy and librarians' commitment in universities in southwest, Nigeria. The study adopted the survey research design, two hundred and one (201) participants were involved in the study. Based on the findings of the research question, it was discovered that the extent to which workplace democracy practices were engaged in university libraries from a general perspective in southwest Nigeria was high. Similarly, Safari, Salehzadeh and Ghaziasgar (2018) reported that that workplace democracy was being practised in the organization of their study. In addition, further analysis pointed out that the high extent of workplace democracy practices was specifically in terms of functionalism, constitutionalism and liberalism.

The implication of this is that librarians in universities in southwest are part of the process, operations, and activities that takes place in the library which is functionalism, this should lead to increased efficiency and productivity at the workplace. Also, the findings revealed constitutionalism as the second most rated workplace democracy practice. Constitutionalism is a system of government that demonstrates adherence to the principles of the constitution, such that organizational powers are limited beyond theory and in practice. Hence, librarians in universities in southwest, Nigeria carries out every laid down principle by the library administration. While the least practised is liberalism, this could imply that some librarians are not allowed to express their fundamental human rights. Ahmed, Adeel, Ali and Rehman (2019) found that workplace democracy practices were high in the studied organization and it led to an increased level of employee commitment, citizenship behaviour, and reduced intentions to leave the organization.

The test of hypothesis revealed that workplace democracy has a significant influence on librarians' commitment in universities in southwest, Nigeria (R^2= 0.514, β= 0.717, t = 14.494, $p<0.05$). Workplace democracy was found to have a strong positive ($r(201) = 0.717$, $p<0.05$) influence on

librarians' commitment. This implies that improvement in workplace democracy in universities in southwest Nigeria would lead to an increase e in librarians' commitment; while the reduction in workplace democracy would worsen librarians' commitment in universities in southwest, Nigeria. Supporting the findings of this study, Weber and Unterrainer (2009) found that democratic patterns or methods of the organizational decision-making process positively influenced the organizational commitment of employees in Germany. Also, the study carried out by David-Alonge (2019) revealed a relationship between the dimensions of organizational democracy with the measures of employee commitment. Yeoman (2019) also demonstrated that organizations that practice a democratic organizational system produce committed staff. Similarly, Süheyla and Ali (2020) found that the practice of the democratic style gave participants the freedom and a sense of commitment towards their organization. Chen (2013) also found a significant positive relationship between organizational commitment indicators and workplace democracy.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Organizational commitment is a global concern to employers, heads of organizations, and managerial bodies. However, this can be managed if necessary and working measures are put in place for employees. This study investigated the influence of workplace democracy practices on librarians' commitment in universities in Southwest, Nigeria. Findings revealed that workplace democracy is a significant predictor of librarians' commitment in universities in southwest, Nigeria. It was also revealed that workplace democracy practices have a significant influence on librarians' commitment to universities in southwest, Nigeria. The study concludes that workplace democracy practice should be encouraged in university libraries. The following recommendations were made based on the findings;

1. University and library management should make sure that workplace democracy is regularly practised by librarians to effectively create room for broader participation in all the activities of the organization.

2. The library management should develop strategies that consistently improve the level of affective, normative and continuance commitment of librarians.

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