

# Equitable Distributive Justice and Academic Staff Commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

The study examined the extent to which Equitable Distributive Justice predicts Academic Staff Commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. Correlational research design was used for the study. The population of this study consisted of all the 7615 academic staff who taught in all the 7 Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. Hat and draw method was used to select 4 Universities out of the 7 Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. Multi stage sampling techniques (proportionate and stratified sampling techniques) were used to select 381 (5%) academic staff in the Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. Two instruments titled, “Equitable Distributive Justice Scale” (EDJS) and “Job Commitment Scale” (JCS) were used to gather data for the study. The instruments were validated by three validates. The reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach Alpha Analysis with reliability coefficients of .968 for EDJS and .899 for JCS. Simple Linear Regression Analysis was used to answer the research questions and to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that promotion with  $R^2$  of .016 and P-Value of .015 is a significant predictor of academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. The result also revealed that compensation with  $R^2$  of .005 and P-Value of .172 is not a significant predictor of academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. Based on these findings, it was recommended, amongst others that, the management of various universities should provide improved working conditions in their universities through provision of safe and secured environment, prompt promotion and encourage regular career development of academic staff so as to improve their commitment. Suggestions for further research have also been made based on the findings of the study.

## INTRODUCTION

The university is a community of scholars, researchers and learners who work together to push the boundaries of human understanding and advance the frontiers of knowledge. To fulfill the purpose and aim of university establishment, academic staff are needed to illuminate the minds of the students and inspire them to soar to new heights in their chosen fields. Academic staff are stewards of knowledge and can be regarded as the wheel on which the pivot of university education revolves. They are individuals employed by the university to contribute to the institution's core functions. The primary duties of academic staff include effective classroom teaching, counseling of students, continuous development of the curriculum through assessment, scholarly activity, academic research, management of student programmes as well as other assigned administrative duties. The success or failure of any university is contingent on the attitude and commitment of academic staff to work (Subair and Adebola, 2019).

Academic staff commitment is the degree of positive and affective bond between the academic staff and the university. It is also the relative strength of lecturers' identification with and involvement in a particular university. Academic staff commitment can be demonstrated in the area of affective commitment (emotional attachment to university), normative commitment (feelings of obligation to stay with the university) and continuance commitment to job (awareness of the cost associated with leaving the university). Hayat et al. (2015) observed that academic staff commitment is related to job satisfaction, well-being, strategies of conflict resolution, team effectiveness, motivation, job performance, students' achievement, sustained employee's physical health and organizational citizenship behaviour. As noted by Akram et al. (2015) academic staff

commitment in the universities could be reduced due to inequality in the distribution of justice in terms of staff promotion, sponsorship to conferences, staff training, discipline and staff accommodation. This is to say that injustice is one of the factors that affects academic staff commitment in the university system

The word “justice” is derived from the latin word “jus” meaning right or law (Parnami, 2019). It connotes moral righteousness, fairness and fundamental equality of all men. Organizational justice therefore refers to a fair and equal treatment of employees by organizations. It is seen as a fundamental requirement for effective functioning of organizations in terms of employees involvement in decision-making process. Tafamel and Akrawah (2019) classified organizational justice into three namely: procedural justice, interactive (interactional) justice and distributive justice. Procedural Justice is the fairness of procedures designed in the implementation of strategic decisions. In procedural justice, individuals are not only interested in what they receive in terms of rewards, but also how the reward is distributed. Interactional justice refers to the interpersonal side of the decision-making process based on the principle of fairness. It is also seen as the extent of respectful dealing with employees anticipated by the organization and other employees in the process of managerial decisions and actions. Distributive justice is associated with the benefits like remunerations and incentives that are delivered to employees in a fair manner. It is concerned with the distribution of outcomes and resources in relation to employees’ performance and job satisfaction in the workplace. It stipulates that advantages and burdens be distributed to workers in an organization according to proportionate equality. Equitable distributive justice therefore means that, one's reward should be equal to or commensurate with one’s contributions to the organization.

Specifically, justice is important in the university because employees’ perception regarding organizational justice is linked to many key individual and organizational outcomes. Treating an employee fairly can lead to positive reactions by others in the organization which can ultimately lead to improved work environment, improved staff attitudes, staff behavior and performance. Cropanzano and Molina, (2015) observed that academic staff perception of injustice tends to reduce positive outcomes and can also promote retaliatory and vengeful behaviour. Similarly, Eigen and Litwin, (2014) noted that when employees feel that they have been treated fairly, organizations will be able to maintain control over potential challenges and threats they face from staff, thus reaping the benefits of being a good employer. Rahmatia et al. (2022) suggested that justice should be distributed in an organization equitably since distributive justice leads to higher job satisfaction, greater loyalty, enhanced motivation, stronger relationships and greater trust among academic staff in the university. Justice that could be equitably distributed to academic staff in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria that could enhance their commitment as considered in this study are promotion and compensation.

Promotion is seen as the advancement of an employee to a higher job position which goes with greater responsibility, higher salary, higher position and higher level of authority within an organization. Employee promotion means the ascension of an employee to higher ranks. Tilahun, (2019) define promotion as a call to higher post, carrying greater responsibilities, higher status and better salary. To Bala and El-jajah, (2019), promotion is the movement of an employee upward in the hierarchy of the organization typically leading to enhancement of responsibility, rank and improved salary package. Based on the definitions above, promotion is a move in one position to another which involves both wages and status increase. Promotion drives employees and it is a reward for dedication and loyalty towards an organization. In the university system, when academic staff are promoted to a new rank, they often take on additional responsibilities and contribute more significantly to the university. As a result, promotion is often accompanied by salary increase, bonus, incentives, benefit upgrade and title change. These forms of rewards can also be regarded as compensation.

Compensation is the reward or remuneration provided by the organization to workers, since labor has to contribute energy and thoughts for the betterment of the organization in order to achieve the intended purpose. According to Alamelu et al. (2015), compensation means any form of payment made to individual for the work done for the organization or any form of service rendered to the organization. Sukiman and Mintarta, (2016) define compensation as the overall remuneration received by employee as a result of the implementation of the work in the organization. The remuneration could be in the form of salaries, wages, bonuses, incentives and other benefits such as health benefits, holiday allowance, money for food and leave. Compensation is an input-output exchange involving an employee and employer. Employees are required to contribute efforts and employers are required to pay wages to employees. In this exchange process, the organization offers pay for

availability of workers, knowledge, skills, education and experience. When the employees are satisfied with appropriate type of compensation, their commitment may be increased or maintained. As noted by Syahreza et al. (2017) and Pertiwi and Supartha (2021), the better the compensation system provided by organization to employees, the higher the level of employee satisfaction and motivating employees to achieve satisfactory performance. Hence compensation must be carried out fairly and appropriately by designing compensation structure based on the employee's needs to obtain their commitment for the organization.

For academic staff to show commitment in the universities especially Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria, such academic staff are expected to carry out their primary functions. In a study to examine the level of lecturer's job performance in Nigerian universities, Ekundayo and Ayodele, (2019) agreed that 18.6% of lecturers show low level of job performance, 62.4% show moderate level of job performance while 19.0% show high level of job performance. The 18.6% of lecturers who showed low level of job performance might have exhibited low research output, poor professional development, negative attitude about the university and its policies. Some of them might have engaged in dishonest practices such as plagiarism, falsification of data and unethical research practices. All these could suggest lack of commitment of academic staff to the university. This can become a problem not only to the university management but to students, parents and academic staff as can lead to students' poor academic performance, indiscipline, disruptive behaviour in terms of cultism, vandalism, stealing, bullying, staff social instability, poor educational attainment and mental illness. The primary cause of these behaviours could be attributed to inequitable distribution of justice in the university. This has raised the concern of scholars to attempt finding solutions to these problems through studies conducted at different places and time. It was observed from the reviewed studies that none was done specifically on equitable distributive justice and academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. In previous studies reviewed, some of the variables used in the present study were not considered. This has therefore created a gap in knowledge and information and has raised the concern of the present study to establish the influence of equitable distributive justice on academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria face challenges of maintaining academic staff commitment which is crucial for quality education. Despite the importance of equitable distributive justice in maintaining a fair and effective work environment, there are concerns that some academic staff in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria may not be so committed to their institutions due to perceived injustices in the allocation of resources, opportunities and rewards. Some Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria are plagued by disparities in resource allocation, inequitable distribution of benefits such as promotions, training, research funding, workload distribution and compensation. All these may likely result in low academic staff morale, brain drain, turnover of experienced staff, strained relationships among academic staff, administration and students; decreased quality of education, poor research output and above all reduced commitment to teaching and research.

This suggests that, the success of any academic institution could hinge on the commitment shown by the academic staff. It is believed that equitable distributive justice in terms of job insecurity, motivation, promotion, staff development, compensation, discipline and communication can have significant impact on academic staff commitment in universities. When academic staff feel that they are being treated fairly and equitably in terms of compensation, benefits, workload and other aspects of their employment, they are more likely to be committed to their work and the university as a whole by showing passion for teaching, dedication to student learning, professionalism, improved quality relationship among colleagues and student and above all displaying a strong sense of self-discipline and responsibility. But the reverse might be the case in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. This has raised the concern of the scholar to attempt finding the extent of relationship between equitable distributive justice and academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.

It was observed from the reviewed studies that no study was done specifically on equitable distributive justice and academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. In previous studies reviewed, some of the variables used in the present study were not considered. This has therefore created a gap in knowledge and information and has raised the concern of the present study to establish the influence of equitable distributive justice on academic staff commitment in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. The question therefore is, to what extent does equitable distributive justice predict academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria?

### **Purpose of the Study**

Specifically, the study sought to determine the extent to which:

1. Promotion predicts academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria
2. Compensation predicts academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria

### **Research Questions**

To guide the study, the following research questions were raised:

1. To what extent does promotion predict academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria?
2. To what extent does compensation predict academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Academic staff promotion is not a significant predictor of academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.
2. Compensation is not a significant predictor of academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of this study consisted of 7414 academic staff from all the federal universities in South-South Nigeria. Hat and draw method was used to select four Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. Proportionate and stratified sampling techniques were used to select 381 academic staff from the selected four Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. This represents 5% of academic staff in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. The choice of proportionate sampling technique was to give each selected university equal representation in the study. The choice of Stratified sampling technique was also considered appropriate as most of equitable justices are position specific. Two researcher developed instruments titled "Equitable Distributive Justice Scale" (EDJS) and "Job Commitment Scale" (JCS) were used to obtain information from respondents. Both instruments were constructed on a four-point rating scale.

The instruments were validated by three validates. To ascertain the reliability of the instruments, inter-item consistency method was used. The instruments were administered on 30 academic staff who are in the study area but not part of the main study. The data collected were subjected to Cronbach Alpha Reliability Test. A reliability coefficient of .968 was obtained for EDJS and .899 for JCS. Out of 381 instruments sent out, 370 copies were returned. This represents 97% return. Out of 370 instruments returned, 3 instruments were wrongly filled and were not useful for analysis. All completed and returned copies of the instruments were coded and subjected to statistical analysis. Simple Linear and Multiple Linear Regression Analyses were used in answering research questions and to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule

by Schober et al. (2018) was applied while answering the research questions to show the strength and direction of prediction between equitable distributive justice and academic staff commitment. In testing the null hypotheses, the calculated P-values were compared with .05 alpha level of significance.

## RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does promotion predict academic staff commitment in federal universities in South-South Nigeria?

**Table 1 Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the extent to which Promotion predict Academic Staff Commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria**

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Extent of Prediction	Std. Error of the Estimate
Promotion	.127	.016	1.6%	8.03027

Academic Staff  
Commitment

Result in Table 1 shows the R for the strength of relationship and R<sup>2</sup> for the determination of the extent of prediction between staff promotion and academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. The R-value of 0.127 indicates a low extent of relationship between the two variables. The calculated R<sup>2</sup> of .016 which is the coefficient of determination indicates that only 1.6 % of academic staff commitment is predicted by staff promotion. This implies that 1.6% of the variation in staff commitment is due to promotion enjoyed by academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does compensation predict academic staff commitment in federal universities in South-South Nigeria?

**Table 2 Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the extent to which Compensation predict Academic Staff Commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria**

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Extent of Prediction	Std. Error of the Estimate
Compensation				
Academic Staff Commitment	.071	.005	0.5%	8.07489

Result in Table 2 shows the R for the strength of relationship and R<sup>2</sup> for the determination of the extent of prediction between compensation and academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. The R-value of .071 indicates a negligible extent of relationship between the two variables. The calculated R<sup>2</sup> of .005 which is the coefficient of determination indicates that only 0.5 % of academic staff commitment is predicted by compensation. This implies that 0.5% of the variation in staff commitment is due to compensation enjoyed by academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.

## Testing of Null Hypotheses

**Null Hypothesis 1:** Promotion is not a significant predictor of academic staff commitment in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.



**Table 3 Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the extent to which Promotion predicts Academic Staff Commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria**

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Cal	Sig of F
Regression	385.254	1	385.254	5.974*	.015
Residual	23601.572	366	64.485		
Total	23986.826	367			

\* Significant at the 0.05 level of significance.

The result in Table 3 shows the calculated F-value 5.974 with its corresponding P-Value of .015 which is less than the .05 level of significance with 1 and 366 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which states that Promotion is not a significant predictor of academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria is rejected. This result means that promotion significantly predicts academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.

**Null Hypothesis 2:** Compensation is not a significant predictor of academic staff commitment in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

**Table 4 Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the extent to which Compensation predicts Academic Staff Commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria**

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Cal	Sig of F
Regression	122.242	1	122.242	1.875	.172
Residual	23864.584	366	65.204		
Total	23986.826	367			

\* Significant at the 0.05 level of significance.

The entries in Table 4 reveal the calculated F-value of 1.875 with its corresponding P-Value of .172 which is greater than the .05 level of significance with 1 and 366 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which states that compensation is not a significant predictor of academic staff commitment in federal universities in South-South Nigeria is retained. This means that compensation does not significantly predict academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The major findings of the study are presented based on the research questions answered and the null hypotheses tested.

### Findings Based on Research Questions

Research questions answered revealed the following:

1. Promotion to a low extent predicts academic staff commitment
2. Compensation to a negligible extent predicts academic staff commitment

### Findings Based on Research Hypotheses

The null hypotheses tested revealed the following findings:

1. Promotion is a significant predictor of academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.
2. Compensation is not a significant predictor of academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

### Promotion and Academic Staff Commitment

The result of analysis shows a low positive relationship between promotion and academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. The corresponding hypothesis reveals a significant prediction between promotion and academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. This result must have come out this way for reasons that the recognition and opportunity afforded by promotion serve as a powerful catalyst for staff commitment, inspiring individuals to dedicate their talents and energies to the organization's success. As employees are promoted within an organization, they are not only presented with new challenges and responsibilities, but also with a renewed sense of purpose and value. This result could also be attributed to the fact that academic staff who earn promotions will feel more satisfied as their contributions are recognized and appropriately rewarded. This recognition of their career advancement will play a pivotal role in cultivating a positive workplace culture, nurturing a strong emotional connection to the organization and making academic staff to be more committed to their various universities.

This finding of this study is in tandem with the findings Duru et al. (2023) who agreed that promotion and employees' performance in universities are significantly related, thus employees' commitment can be improved through regular promotion of employees. The finding of this study is further supported by Quan and Trang (2015) who agreed that promotion has a great influence on the organizational commitment. The authors opined that promotion is an essential element in fostering staff commitment when wielded with care and prudence. Also, the finding of this study is supported by Olurotimi et al. (2015) who revealed that high levels of teacher's promotion tends to have high social and psychological atmosphere in the classroom that result in high productivity and effectiveness in job performance and willingness to stay longer in their organization. All the results agree that for employees' performance to improve, there should be regular promotion of employees. The implication of these results is that promotion inspires individuals to work in an organization for a long time for the fulfillment of their needs, which subsequently results in increased performance and stability of organizations. As employees ascend the ranks within an organization, their commitment often deepens and matures, mirroring the growth and evolution of the organization itself. When academic staff are promoted on merit and there is increment in salary of promoted staff, it will bring a positive improvement in academic staff's behavior and will boost their morale to put them at a higher level of commitment in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

### Compensation and Academic Staff Commitment

Testing of the second hypotheses revealed a negligible positive relationship between compensation and academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. The corresponding hypothesis reveals insignificant prediction between compensation and academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. This result seems to have come out this way probably because academic staff perceive that their level of compensation is not fair and commensurate with their contributions to the university. Academic staff may prioritize other factors like job security, opportunity for advancement, institutional culture and values, governance and university leadership. Similarly, demographic and individual differences such as age, experience, and discipline may influence the relationship between compensation and academic staff commitment.

This finding is in tandem with Nosiri and Olaolu, (2024) who agreed that compensation does not significantly affect the performance of academic staff in the university. This finding of this study is refuted by Koitalek, (2016) who found a significant positive relationship between compensation package and employee commitment. This implies that for employees to be committed, there should be adequate compensation package for employees. Also at variance with this finding is Rinto and Syah, (2018) who also agreed that staff

compensation has a positive influence on organizational commitment. This is to say that, if academic staff are frequently compensated for the job they do, there is every tendency that their commitment level will improve. As a result, every organization needs to be able to decide on the staff compensation package in order to support the attainment of organizational objectives more successfully and effectively. When an organization offers fair and equitable compensation to its staff, it sends a powerful message of value and respect to the employee.

## CONCLUSION

This study was able to make various discoveries and observations about the extent to which equitable distributive justice predicted academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that promotion is a significant predictor of academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. The result also revealed that compensation is not a significant predictor of academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. This clearly shows that when justice exists in the university environment, academic staff will generate strong feeling of obligation towards their respective institutions and they will be more committed to their job. It is through fair procedures for job decisions with appropriate allocation of resources that lecturers will put more efforts in teaching and discharging their job obligation. Therefore, it can be deduced that equitable distribution of justice will result in high academic staff commitment in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Federal Government should allocate more funds to the education sector to settle the promotion benefits of academic staff in the higher education in order to improve their commitment.
2. The management of various universities should ensure fairness in promotion procedure process, create constant promotion activities and should increase salary if academic staff is being promoted.
3. The management of various universities should ensure that compensation programs are well structured so as to promote fairness and also motivate academic staff.
4. Similar studies should be carried out in other organizations and private universities in order to confirm whether or not the interplay between these variables are similar.

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