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Relationship between Safe School Environment and Lecturers' Commitment in Tertiary Institutions of Zamfara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between safe school environment and lecturers' commitment in federal government-owned tertiary institutions of Zamfara state, Nigeria. One (1) null hypothesis was established to guide the study. The study adopted descriptive research design of correlational type. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire titled "Safe School Environment and Lecturers' Commitment Questionnaire". The population of the study comprise all lecturers in the three (3) federal government-owned tertiary institutions in Zamfara state. A total number of 129 respondents were selected to participate in the study using simple random sampling technique. With reference to the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient result of ($r = 0.76, p < 0.05$), the study observed that there is a strong positive significant relationship between safe school environment and lecturers' commitment in tertiary institutions. Based on findings, the study recommends that tertiary institutions should adopt comprehensive policies that address harassment, bullying, and discrimination as provided by the Federal Ministry of Education. This will help the institutions to maintain a zero-tolerance approach to violence in educational institutions' environment and institution-based communities.

Keywords: Safe School, Environment, Lecturers' Commitment, Tertiary Institutions

INTRODUCTION

A safe school environment can be described as the extent to which school settings promote student safety and student health, which may include topics such as the physical plant, the academic

environment, available physical and mental health supports and services, and the fairness and adequacy of disciplinary procedures, as supported by relevant research and an assessment of validity

(Zais, 2011). United Nations International Children's Education Fund [UNICEF] (2016) observed that too often and in many countries, schools are still places of violence and fear. In the same vein, Applebury (2010) posited that every child should feel safe from violence in their school, yet there are many that do not. Today, it is not unusual for students to violently attack other students, teachers, security guards and school personnel, showing a complete lack of respect for authority. These attacks often result in injury and at times, death. Witnessing these acts can also cause intense fear and anxiety within other students as well as staff members, making the school environment a psychologically distressing place to be. A safety school environment promotes and provide conducive environment in which all students and staff feel safe. In a safe and welcoming environment, an academically or emotionally troubled student needs quick attention, as much as the physically ill (Silver-Rocio, 2018, as cited in Eluemuno, Anokam, Ipem, Eluchie, Nwikpo, 2022) student can also be made safe by preventing and stopping physical aggression. Putting in place strict rules and regulations showed that the school should respond immediately to aggressive situations. When there is school discipline, it addresses school wide safety, classroom safety and self-discipline among students and teachers (David, George, Jeffrey & Walter 2010).

On the other hand, organizational commitment is directly related to the feeling of belonging, as well as to the responsibilities that workers have within their organization, so it's necessary to have committed and effective workers in the organization to increase productivity (Estrada and Mamani, 2020). Commitment is a psychological attachment to an institution in which people give their loyalty to the institutional values and goals. Lecturers' commitment is the emotional bond lecturers demonstrate toward their assigned responsibilities. Lecturers' commitment is one of the most essential elements that could facilitate the effective teaching required to enhance the academic achievement of students. As such, with high level of commitment could make a difference to teaching and learning in the school system. Committed lecturers are affiliated to the school they work by investing their time and energy in promoting their school effectiveness. Lecturers' commitment is associated with creating an effective learning environment in which students enhance their abilities for greater achievement. Commitment is an internal force that drives lecturers to teach effectively (Njoku, 2016).

Adebayo and Ileuma (2023) job commitment is a term that refers to an individual's level of dedication and attachment to their job and employer. It is the degree to which an employee is motivated to stay with their current job, and to put forth the effort necessary to perform their job well. Lecturers job commitment refers to the level of dedication, responsibility, and effort that a lecturer puts into their job. It is a combination of personal and professional characteristics that contribute to the effectiveness of a lecturers and the success of their students. Committed lecturers are those who takes their role in shaping the future of their students seriously. They view teaching as a calling rather than just a job and put in the necessary time and effort to ensure that their students receive a high-quality education. This includes staying up-to-date with the latest educational trends and practices, creating engaging and meaningful lessons, and being available to their students outside of regular class hours. Lecturers job commitment also involves the personal characteristics of a lecturers, such as their passion for their subject matter, their love of working with young people, and their commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of

their students. A committed lecturer is someone who is always looking for ways to improve their teaching skills and create a better learning environment for their students. Additionally, lecturers job commitment encompasses professional ethics and a strong sense of responsibility. A committed lecturer is someone who is accountable for their actions and is dedicated to doing what is best for their students. They understand that their role is not only to impart knowledge but also to serve as positive role models and guide their students towards becoming responsible, ethical citizens. Lecturers job commitment is a critical component of effective teaching. A lecturer who is fully committed to their job is more likely to have a positive impact on their students, fosters a love of learning, and contributes to a thriving educational environment.

Furthermore, Adebayo and Ileuma (2023) poor job commitment among lecturers can have a profound and far-reaching impact on students, schools, and the education system as a whole, thus, their level of commitment to their job can have a significant impact on student outcomes. One of the most noticeable consequences of poor lecturers' job commitment is a decline in the quality of education that students receive. Lecturers who are not fully committed to their job may not be interested in their students' learning and may not put in the time and effort required to create engaging and effective lesson plans. This can lead to a less stimulating and less effective learning environment, which can result in lower student achievement and a lack of motivation to learn. In addition to impacting students' learning, poor lecturers' job commitment can also harm the morale and motivation of other lecturers and staff within a school. When one lecturer lacks commitment, it can create a negative atmosphere that can spread to other staff members, reducing the overall level of job satisfaction and commitment within the school. This can lead to high turnover rates, difficulty attracting and retaining quality lecturers, and a decline in the overall reputation of the school.

Based on the above, the federal government of Nigeria found safe school environment worthy of being provided and maintained through a systematic and synergic approach. The Federal Ministry of Education alongside other relevant stakeholders in education designed two comprehensive policy documents notably, the "Minimum Standards for Safe Schools in Nigeria". These standards define the essential conditions for ensuring learners' and school personnel safety in educational settings (UNICEF, 2023). The second policy is the "National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools with Its Implementing Guidelines: Nigeria Education in Emergencies Working Groups". The fundamental objective of this policy document is to create a safe learning environment for school users; and to build capacity of learners, teachers, school personnel and government officials for child protection, school safety and security; as well as to create awareness among school administrators, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents, and community members of their responsibility in identifying, discouraging, reporting and dealing with possible cases of violence or abuse against learners (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2021).

Problem Statement

The actualisation of a safe school environment is a crucial aspect of education and a necessary condition for lecturers' job commitment in Nigeria. Lecturers' commitment to their official responsibilities plays a vital role in the education system and their job satisfaction and commitment are essential for the success of students and the school. Thus, ensuring their safety in the school

environment is essential for their job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment. Safety within educational institutions is a major problem affecting students, teachers, and the community all over the world. Most of the schools have tried coming up with measures to ensure that students and the faculty as whole feel safe while in school (Peretomode & Bello, 2018). In recent years, public schools in Nigeria experienced a several problems threatening school security which make the school unsafe for the students and for the school personnel. This assertion was confirmed by Adebayo and Ileuma (2023) who discussed that, in Nigeria, the security situation in schools has been a cause for concern in recent years. Incidents of violence, theft, and vandalism are common, and lecturers are often the victims. This creates a hostile work environment that negatively impacts the morale and job commitment of lecturers.

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria have increasingly become unsafe for students. From the southwestern region where students say they are being sexually violated and one student recently found dead in a shallow grave, to the northern region where terrorists abduct students and lecturers (Garba & Kabir, 2023). HumAngle (2023) proclaimed that the lack of basic infrastructure like street lights and inefficient security officials have made campuses vulnerable to attacks. In fact, most institutions are now experiencing the spillover of insecurity affecting Nigeria. There have been some reported cases of safety incidences in various institutions of learning across Nigeria. Examples of such safety related incidents as reported in various local newspapers Punch (2023, September 25) and Channels (2023, September, 22) reported an incident at Federal University Gusau on September 22, 2023, suspected bandits, armed with sophisticated weapons invaded three students' rented apartments in Sabon Gida Village near the Federal University Gusau and kidnapped an unspecified number of students, taking them to an unknown destination. Relatively, a female student of the Federal University Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE) was reported missing as at Wednesday, 6th September 2023 and was found dead on campus. As confirmed by the Registrar of the institution (Balogun, 2023, September 6). Furthermore, Aljazeera-English (2021, April 23) reported that on April 21, 2021, gunmen attacked a private university in Nigeria's northern Kaduna state, killing one staff member and kidnapping some students.

In spite of the incidents stated above, reports had it that the federal government of Nigeria fears that educational institutions in 14 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, are at risk of attacks by bandits and insurgents (Habib & Angbulu, 2024).

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between safe school environment and lecturers' commitment in tertiary institutions of Zamfara state, Nigeria.

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between safe school environment and lecturers' commitment in tertiary institutions of Zamfara state, Nigeria.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concept of Safe School Environment

A safe school environment is a school that is free from violence and fear with respect to disciplinary procedures (Udali, 2020). According UNICEF (2016), a safe school environment is not always easy to describe. The ideal environment does not rely on federal, state and district laws, regulations and policies alone, it is

dependent on how every school functions every day. It boils down to ensuring that each person who crosses the threshold of that school or boards a school bus on any given day feels safe, supported and secure. UNICEF therefore admitted that safe schools are not those schools which are free of risks but those with sufficient resistance and resilience to avoid disasters or to recover from them. Similarly, Bosah, Bosah and Ejese (2019) posited that safety of school environment entails prevention of injuries or other health hazard through considerably secured facilities and equipment and through well planned and intelligent device

Indicators of a Safe School Environment

According to Ihekoronye and Opara (2021) a safe and peaceful school environment has a crisis response plan in place to deal with unforeseen emergencies. In a safe school, (i) students feel respected and know that the learning community cares about their individual needs and expects them to succeed; (ii) parents and community members are welcomed and encouraged to share ideas, talents and resources for improving the school; (iii) high standards exist and are communicated on a regular basis; (iv) students and staff know that learning and achievement are encouraged and highly valued and that positive social behaviors are expected; (v) there is continued involvement and cooperation of parents, students, lecturers, security staff, classified staff and law enforcement representatives in designing and revising of the school's discipline, disaster, safe school and crisis plans; and finally, (vi) prevention is stressed and the staff and students are prepared for emergencies and other unforeseen situations.

Dimensions of Safe School Environment

A review of global evidence on creating and measuring safe school environment highlighted the two major interconnected dimensions which were found relevant and thus adopted dimensions are:

1. Physical School Safety

At the broadest level, school safety is about ensuring that students are physically safe in school. Physical safety pertains to the architecture of the school building; control of who enters and exits the building; and keeping students and staff from bodily harm once they are inside the school. A comprehensive school safety framework requires a range of strategies, interventions, and effective threat assessment policies to ensure physical safety. The goal for schools is to develop an integrated approach that spans the ranges of possible dangers, from minor misbehaviour to life-threatening situations, and at the same time focuses on maintaining safety and order (Yoder et al, 2017). Physical safety also safety from risks that can cause bodily harm in school or on the way to and from school, for example, from aggression, including acts of physical or sexual violence and abuse; the school physical infrastructure; or health conditions/diseases such as those that stem from poor nutrition, contaminated water, and inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene services (World Bank, 2021). According to Adebayo and Ileuma (2023) physical school safety refers to the measures taken to ensure the safety of students, lecturers, and staff in a school environment. This includes measures to prevent accidents, violence, theft, and other security threats. Physical school safety is a critical component of creating a safe and secure learning environment, as it can greatly impact the overall well-being of students and staff, as well as the academic success of students. In the same vein, Adebayo and Ileuma (2023) highlighted some important aspects of physical school safety as follows: (i) building design, (ii) emergency planning, (iii) security technology,

(iv) personnel, (v) communication, (vi) maintenance, and (vii) student supervision.

2. Psychosocial School Safety

Psychosocial school safety refers to the emotional and social well-being of students and staff in a school environment. This concept recognizes that staff and students' mental health and overall well-being play a significant role in their ability to learn and succeed in school. The goal of psychosocial school safety is to create a supportive and inclusive environment that promotes positive mental health and helps students feel safe and valued. This involves addressing a range of social, emotional, and behavioural issues that can impact student well-being, including bullying, harassment, stress, anxiety, and depression. A safe and supportive school environment can have a profound impact on students' academic achievement and overall success. Research has shown that students who feel safe and supported are more likely to attend school regularly, perform better academically, and experience less stress and anxiety (Adebayo & Ileuma, 2023). In order to create a psychosocial safe school environment, school administrators, lecturers, and staff must work together to establish clear policies and procedures to address bullying and harassment. This can involve implementing anti-bullying programs, providing training to staff on recognizing and responding to signs of emotional distress, and offering support services to students who may be struggling with mental health issues (Shepherd & Gruber, 2019). In addition, schools must foster a positive and inclusive culture that values diversity and promotes respect and understanding among students. This can involve promoting positive relationships among students, encouraging open communication, and offering opportunities for students to participate in activities that promote teamwork and collaboration (Shin, 2019). It is also important for schools to involve families and the wider community in efforts to create a psychosocial safe school environment. Schools can work with parents and community organizations to provide support and resources for families, and to help raise awareness about the importance of emotional and social well-being. The following are some of the notable and significant dimensions of psychosocial school safety as highlighted by World Bank (2021) and Viennet and Pont (2017): (i) instructional practices and environment, (ii) interactions and relationships, (iii) school connectedness, (iv) mental health and well-being, (v) school climate, and (vi) student behaviour.

Concept of Lecturers Commitment

Commitment refers to behavior or psychological state explaining the employee-employer relationship which ultimately affects their tendency to stay or quit the organization (Kotzé and Nel, 2020). Allen (2016) and Stepanek and Paul (2023) described organizational commitment as loyalty, a psychological bond, identification with an organization, or something that drives one to give energy to and pursue activities for the good of one's organization.

Particularly, lecturers' commitment is fundamental for excellent instructing and it integrates a commitment to the school, learners, vocation persistence, skillful knowledge base, and teaching profession (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004 as cited in Ma, 2022) and lecturers' commitment reflects lecturers' sense of loyalty and dependence on the enterprise they work for and is shown as a substantial indicator of numerous learning and psychological outcomes (Day, 2008).

Dimensions of Lecturers Commitments

Meyer and Allen (1997) dissected organizational commitment into three (3) main dimensions as follows:

Affective Commitment

Affective commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in an organization. Such employees continue employment with an organization because they want to do so (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Abu Siri et al. (2020) upheld that, affective commitment is the desire to work for a company because it agrees with the organization's goals and there is a desire to carry it out. Related components include emotional, identification, and employee involvement in an organization. Tadesse (2019) upheld that, affective commitment is defined as the wish of workers to commit emotionally to the organization. Workers stay in the organization with their own will and desire. Furthermore, Affective commitment consists of the desire to stay at an organization out of emotional attachment. Individuals high in affective commitment enjoy the organization and choose to stay there because they want to (Allen, 2016).

Continuance Commitment

Continuance commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving from and the benefits associated with staying in an organization. Such employees link to and remain in an organization because they need to do so (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Continuance commitment is the desire to keep working for the company because they do not want to lose something related to their work. The related component is the employee's perception of the loss that will be faced if leaving the organization. (Abu Siri et al., 2020). Continuance commitment refers to the workers to make the decision of staying in the organization by weighing the costs of leaving against the benefits of staying in the organization (Tadesse, 2019).

Normative Commitment

According to Tadesse (2019) normative commitment is the final dimension which refers to a type of compulsory commitment in which workers stay in the organization owing to a sense of security and responsibility. Normative commitment reflects a feeling of obligation to continue employment. Such employees feel that they're in debt and ought to remain with an organization. It develops on the basis of a collection of pressures stem from values that individuals learn during their familial, cultural and organizational socialization processes (Karakus, & Aslan, 2009). In addition, normative Affective commitment is the desire to work for a company because of pressure from other parties. The related component is in the form of employee feelings about obligations that must be given to the organization. (Abu Siri et al., 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted descriptive research design of correlational type. The population of the study comprise all lecturers in the three (3) federal government-owned tertiary institutions of Zamfara state. A total number of 129 respondents were selected to participate in the study using simple random sampling technique. For the purpose of data collection, a self-constructed questionnaire titled "Safe School Environment and Lecturers' Commitment Questionnaire" was constructed. The instrument consists 3 sections. Section A contained 3 items on the demographic information of the respondents. Section B covered 16 constructs of determining the extent of safe school environment, while Section C covered 11 constructs related to lecturers' commitment which was

developed on a five-point Likert scale. Thus, the instrument has a total number of 30 items. The data analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistics. In this study, descriptive statistics was employed in analyzing the demographic information of the respondents using Frequency Distribution (F) and Simple Percentage (%); While, inferential statistics was employed in hypothesis testing to determine the correlation and strength of the relationship between the study variables using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient.

RESULTS

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Respondents

Demography	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender:	Male	98	75.97
	Female	31	24.03
Qualification:	B.Sc/B.Ed	33	25.58
	M.Sc./M.Ed	49	37.98
	Ph.D	47	36.43
Years of Experience:	0 - 2 Years	17	13.18
	3 - 5 Years	36	27.91
	6 - 10 Years	33	25.58
	11 Years & above	43	33.33
Total		129	100

Source: Researchers' Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 revealed that 98 (75.97%) of the respondents were males, while 31 (24.03%) were females. This denotes that majority of the respondents were males and only few were females.

On the highest educational qualification, it was exposed that 33 (25.58%) of the respondents were the holders of a bachelors' degree. 49 (37.98%) were the holders of as master's degree; while 47 (36.43%) of the respondents were Ph.D holders. This indicates that most of the respondents have M.Sc./M.Ed, followed by those with Ph.D, while the holders of a bachelors' degree were the least.

On the length of in-service experience, 17 (13.18%) have 0 - 2 years' experience, 36 (27.91%) have 3 - 5 years' experience, 33 (25.58%) have 6 - 10 years' experience, while 43 (33.33%) have 11 Years & above.

Hypothesis Testing

H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between safe school environment and lecturers' commitment in tertiary institutions of Zamfara state, Nigeria.

Table 2. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis on the Relationship Between Safe School Environment and Lecturers' Commitment

		Safe School Environment	Lecturers' Commitment
Safe School Environment	Pearson Correlation	1	0.76**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.05

	N	129	129
Lecturers' Commitment	Pearson Correlation	0.76**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.05	
	N	129	129

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2024. Note: Correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed)

From the Pearson product moment correlation analysis coefficient result of ($r = 0.76$, $p < 0.05$) obtained in table 2 presented above, it was revealed that there is a strong significant relationship between safe school environment and lecturers' commitment in tertiary institutions. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that, there is no significant relationship between safe school environment and lecturers' commitment in tertiary institutions of Zamfara state, Nigeria, is rejected. This expressed that as safe school environment practices are effectively provided and managed, lecturers' commitment tends to increase.

Discussions

From the statistical analysis of Pearson product moment correlation analysis coefficient result of ($r = 0.76$, $p < 0.05$) obtained in table 2 presented above, their study observed that there is a significant relationship between safe school environment and lecturers' commitment. This finding is in conformity with that of Adekunle and Ambali (2019) who reported in their study that, there exists a strong relationship between safe school measures and lecturers' commitment among public educational institutions in Nigeria. Okeke-James et al. (2023) observed that a safe school environment has a significant positive relationship with the level of lecturers' commitment, denoting that safe school environment practices has a significant impact in enhancing the level of lecturers' commitment among public schools in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the findings of this study were supported by Ihekoronye and Opara (2021) who reported in their that safe school environment practices have a direct influence on the level of lecturers' commitment and learners learning performance and achievements. Therefore, putting safe school environment measures contribute to the teaching and learning processes which leads to the timely achievement of educational goals effectively as expected. Similarly, Okenwe, Ononogbo, and Ujah (2018) conducted a study a on the Safety needs for enhancing lecturers' commitment on instilling discipline among secondary school students in Awka South local government area in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study concluded that there exists a high significant relationship between school environmental safety practices and quality education delivery in public tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Finally, Kelley et al. (2005) declared that there is a relative direct connection between the school safety and the lecturers' commitment. A safe school environment makes school staff feel productive, motivated, energized, effective, and committed in their respective schools.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between safe school environment and lecturers' commitment in tertiary institutions of Zamfara state, Nigeria. The study learnt that, tertiary institutions in Nigeria are facing safety-related threats that affect school

environment and lecturers' commitment. To sum up, this study concluded that safety of school environment is quite significant in determining the level of lecturers' commitment among tertiary institutions of Zamfara state, Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on findings, the study recommends that:

1. Tertiary institutions should adopt comprehensive policies that address harassment, bullying, and discrimination as provided by the Federal Ministry of Education. This will help the institutions to maintain a zero-tolerance approach to violence in educational institutions' environment and institution-based communities.
2. Institutions should ensure that security infrastructure, such as strong buildings and fencing, CCTV surveillance, well-lit pathways, and controlled access points, are installed and adequately maintained.
3. Managements of the tertiary institutions should ensure that safety policies are clearly communicated to all stakeholders, including lecturers, students, and non-academic staff.
4. Government should encourage regular dialogue between lecturers, management, and students to identify safety concerns and jointly find solutions. Furthermore, lecturers should be involved in decision-making processes concerning campus safety and other institutional matters.
5. Finally, the institutions should establish functional counseling and support services for lecturers and students to handle stress, anxiety, and workplace challenges.

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