

EMPLOYEE'S ADVOCACY, EMPLOYEE'S INVOLVEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: INSIGHTS FROM HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHERS

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Abstract

This study draws on social exchange theory (SET) to examine employee advocacy and employee involvement and its effect on organizational commitment in the higher education sector. We used a two-wave (2018 and 2019), multi-source, repeated cross-sectional data from 521 employees of 18 Nigerian public higher education institutions (universities, polytechnics and colleges of education) to analyze these relationships. Structural equation modelling analysis (SEM-AMOS) was employed to test the direct relationships, and Hayes PROCESS Macro 3.5 was used to test the multiple mediation analysis. The results show that both employee advocacy and employee involvement associated positively with organizational commitment. However, only emotional energy mediated the relationships between the higher education employees (HEEs) advocacy, involvement and organizational commitment in this population. Our study provides practical implications for higher education sector managers or supervisors by demonstrating the importance of providing HEEs with opportunities to fully involve actively in their job roles to stimulate employees' emotional energy towards achieving their institutional goals and improve employee advocacy behaviours. Our results contribute to the literature and SET by describing how higher education sector managers can focus on employee involvement and advocacy to facilitate employee organizational commitment.

Keywords: Employee engagement, employee involvement, job performance, organizational commitment, higher education employees, employee vigour

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Introduction

Higher education sector which comprises all universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, colleges of technology, institutes of technology, institutes of agriculture and other institutions providing formal tertiary education programmes, is one of the largest sectors of the economy as it plays a crucial role in national development and prosperous society (Decramer et al., 2013; Franco-Santos & Doherty, 2017). This role has many facets, including producing quality and competent graduates for the labour market, job creation, research and development activities etcetera. Nevertheless, higher education systems face numerous challenges such as the high imposition of taxes on staff, low salary, poor infrastructures and facilities, low performance of staff, corruption relating to the promotion of staff, unfavourable work conditions, etcetera, that have been at the forefront of public debates (Agbionu et al., 2018). A foremost priority in these debates concerns the need to improve higher education employees' (HEEs) commitment as previously reported in the literature (e.g., Sharma & Jyoti, 2010).

The higher education institutions, like other organizations, rely on their employees to achieve their objectives and improve organizational performance as no organization can grow beyond its quality of human resources (Ren et al., 2011). As we know, "productivity lies within the employees' ability and commitment as well as initiatives to improve the sustainability of the organization (Agbionu, 2018, p.73). The HEEs comprising the academic and non-academic staff are the most valuable assets of the institutions (e.g., Brown et al., 1993). Academic and policy reports have outlined useful ways to improve organizational commitment, yet a pertinent issue remains conspicuously absent: the role of HEEs advocacy and involvement and the implications for organizational commitment. Evidence suggests that employees are less likely to commit to their roles if they are not adequately involved in the pursuit of their organizational goals (Saks, 2006) or perceive that their organization values the exchange relationship (Walden and Westerman, 2018), but, how relevant is this to the debates around HEEs?

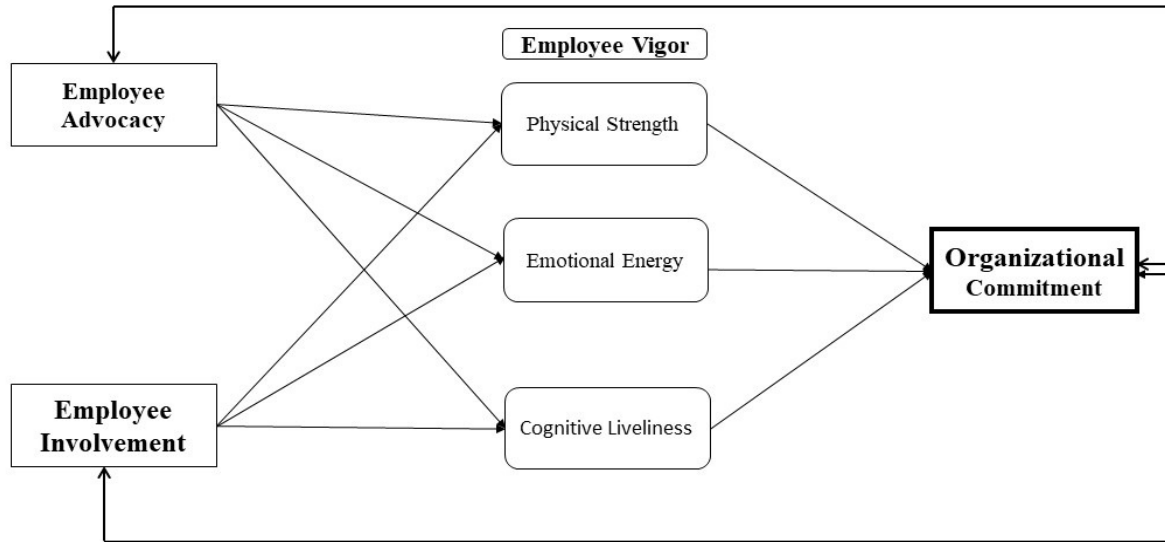
Organizational commitment is a multidimensional construct and highly crucial standards for determining organizational failure or success (e.g., Sendawula et al., 2018). In the higher education sector, organizational commitment has a significant role to play in the overall functioning of the sector. Quality commitment of HEEs is necessary for academic

performance and consequently, overall higher education productivity. The concept of organizational commitment has generated a higher interest in many sectors such as healthcare, tourism, agriculture, education, entertainment, etcetera (e.g., Shantz et al., 2013). However, we adopt Kalleberg and Berg (1987, p. 159) definition of organizational commitment as the “degree to which an employee identifies with the goals and values of the organization and is willing to exert effort to help it succeed”.

Organizational commitment has been associated with employee involvement and employee advocacy (Bakker et al., 2012; Saks, 2006, Walden & Westerman, 2018). Despite these links as established in previous studies, the links between employee advocacy and involvement, and the HEEs outcomes have received limited attention in the research literature any scholars have investigated the influence of employee advocacy and employee involvement on organizational commitment in other sectors with limited focus on employees in the higher education sector. We, therefore, lack sufficient insights on how employee advocacy and involvement might influence HEEs commitment to their organization or the underlying mechanisms for such relationships. This indicates a theoretical and empirical gap that the present study aims to fill. Our goal is to determine whether HEEs advocacy and involvement might influence HEEs’ commitment to their organization, and the potential mediating mechanisms between these constructs. We explore the nature of these mechanisms, focusing on HEEs’ vigor (physical strength, emotional energy, and cognitive liveliness) (Shirom, 2013) and guided by the social exchange theory (SET). The literature shows that employee advocacy and employee involvement provide several benefits (e.g., Felstead et al., 2010; Thelen, 2020; Walden & Westerman, 2018): yet the direct implications for HEEs are not fully understood. The present study enriches the literature by providing deeper insights into the subject of study— a neglected domain in organizational research. Using two-wave, multi-source, repeated cross-sectional data collected from HEEs in Nigeria, we apply a robust empirical analysis on a set of complementary hypotheses (Figure 1).

Figure 1

The Hypotheses Model



Literature Review

Organizational Commitment

This concerns the level of employees' commitment to the visions and goals of the organizations in which they work. Previous studies have recognized the significance of organizational commitment in achieving the aims and visions of any organization (e.g., Brown et al, 1993). These studies also acknowledged that employees tend to perform well in organizations when they are trained, motivated and properly engaged in the discharge of their duties. For example, many studies found that employees' organizational commitment predicted employee retention and employee effectiveness (e.g. Singh & Gupta, 2015). According to Mowday et al. (1979), organizational commitment can be referred to as the strength of an employee's identification with and involvement in an organization. It directs employees' behaviours by helping them to align with their organization's goals, and remain with an organization over time. Organizational commitment has been associated with several desirable outcomes for organizations, most notably increased employee involvement and advocacy (e.g., Thelen, 2020). It has been associated with SET research, with many researchers concluding that employee commitment to there is a compensation for their

organizational support (e.g., Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Morgan & Zeffane, 2003). Drawing upon the SET, we argue that organizational commitment may be improved as a result of HEEs advocacy and involvement in their job roles.

Employee Involvement

Employee involvement is important in human resource management. It boosts employees' capability to directly influence their job tasks and responsibilities (Ogbonnaya & Babalola, 2020). It has been defined as "the exercise, by employees of influence over how their work is organized and carried out" (Fenton-O'Creedy, 2001, p. 28). When employees are fully involved in their organizations' visions and goals, they may be more likely to show creativity or resourcefulness in their role, engage in optimistic decision-making and accomplish meaningful organizational goals (May et al., 2004; Wood & Wall, 2007).

In the higher education sector, employee involvement is relevant in that it can empower HEEs, provide them with a sense of responsibility and autonomy in managing their own jobs and making decisions about their own work priorities and meeting high-quality standards (Goedhart et al., 2017). Employee involvement can also be referred to as various ways in which employees contribute to their goals of their organizations such as participation, decision-making, consultation and empowerment (e.g., Felstead et al., 2010; Morgan & Zeffane, 2003). Employee involvement supports active participation of employees in their organization and might increase employee performance, well-being or the entire organization. Felstead et al. (2010, p. 1685) found that "working in an environment where employee involvement is high rather than low doubles the probability that respondents 'strongly agree' that their jobs require them to learn on a continual basis (up from an estimated probability of .23 to .46)".

Employee Advocacy

As a new topic that has recently emerged in the public relations, marketing and management cycles, there is a limited empirical literature and theoretical research related to it. However, there appears to be an increase in organizational interests towards employee advocacy in the recent times (e.g., Walden & Westerman, 2018). Thelen (2020, p. 1) explains that the "recent increased interests that organizations have shown toward employee advocacy

can be attributed to the high levels of trust that people confer to personal sources of information". For example, The Nielsen Group (2015) found that 83% of their survey respondents confirmed that they trust the recommendations they get from employees or individuals they know compared to the 15% who trust messages from organizations.

Kim and Rhee (2011) explained that employees have the capacity to share relevant information about their organizations with external audiences in order to attract more customers. This is vital in that employees of certain firms are often seen as trustworthy and credible sources of genuine information about firms (Kim & Rhee, 2011). In the present study, we adopt Men (2014, p. 262) definition of employee advocacy as "a behavioural construct, that is, the voluntary promotion or defence of a company, its products, or its brands by an employee externally". We argue that employee advocacy is relevant in the higher education sector because, quality or genuine voluntary information shared by HEEs can enhance the higher education institutions' reputation (e.g., Kim & Rhee, 2011; Walden & Westerman, 2018), and providing an enabling work environment for HEEs to willingly share relevant information about their institutions with external audiences, defend either through the social media or face-to-face conversations can improve the employees commitment to their organizational goals (e.g., Men, 2014).

Employee Vigour

Employee vigour refers to employees' positive emotions at work (Shirom, 2003). Shirom et al. (2013) defined vigour as an individuals' feelings that they possess physical strength, emotional energy, and cognitive liveliness, and represents a moderate-intensity affect experienced at work" (p. 50). Shirom (2003) has explained that vigor is a positive affective response to employees' ongoing interaction with significant elements in the employees' job and work environment that comprises the interconnected feeling of physical strength, emotional energy, and cognitive liveliness. According to Cai et al. (2020), it is important to investigate vigour since employees want to feel vigorous at work. Previous studies (e.g., Little et al., 2011) have found that vigor associates with employee outcomes such as performance, job retention, engagement, etcetera.

Shirom et al. (2013) has pointed out that employees may have feelings concerning physical capabilities which may make them exert physical energy in their workplaces. Also, employees may develop interpersonal feelings which can arise due to the expression of

sympathy, empathy and emotional support to others. Many studies have investigated the impact of vigor at work on employee outcomes and found that vigor at work positively and significantly impacts employee outcomes (e.g., Devi, 2017; Little et al., 2011; Shraga&Shirom, 2009). We, therefore, argue that the HEEs ability to involve deeply in their job roles and serve as reputation makers of their institutions (advocacy) in order to help their institutions, achieve their standards may be through vigor (Shraga&Shirom, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

We draw on the SET to explain the relationships between HEEs involvement and advocacy and organizational commitment. The SET explains that positive actions taken by organizations in favour of employees can prompt positive workplace attitudes and behaviours (e.g., Kurtessis et al., 2017). SET has been applied in several organizational research. For example, Colquitt et al. (2013) has explained that SET variables such as trust, organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, employee engagement, and employee advocacy and employee involvement are important to relations among organizational citizenship behaviour. SET is a key model in examining workplace relationships and its basic premise is on the norm of reciprocity, according to which people will respond favourably if actions performed by others are perceived as being of greater benefit (Gould-Williams, 2007). Therefore, drawing on SET, we examine the mechanisms through which employee advocacy and involvement might improve HEEs commitment to their organizations. We argue that higher education managers' efforts toward employee advocacy and involvement may shape employees' desire to reciprocate through positive workplace attitudes and behaviours.

Hypotheses Development

Linking Employee Advocacy to Organizational Commitment

Previous study has found that “communicating with employees in ways that are supportive and appropriate can create increased organizational commitment in employees, and that those employees who experience strong commitment are more likely to speak positively (i.e., advocate) about their organization to external audiences” (Walden & Westerman, 2018, p. 2). This indicates that employees that perceived adequate support from their organizations may tend to perform better in defending their organization from criticism, share quality information regarding their organizations with external audiences and commit to achieving

their organizations'' goals (Men, 2014; Walden & Westerman, 2018) than employees who perceive non-support from their organizations. This may be that employees who perceive supports from their organizations may be able to work efficiently beyond their formal duties and co-workers with colleagues to improve productivity for the benefit of their organizations (Walden & Westerman, 2018). Shiromet al. (2013) has explained that employees who perceive supports from their organizations tend to have positive attitudes and work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, and "these make the employees psychologically present at work, which minimizes their possibility to do work-related mistakes and errors" (Sendawula et al., 2018, p. 4). Also, such employees may be more likely to experience positive emotions that may widen their thinking, leading them to become more attentive and absorbed in their work (Sendawula et al., 2018). Along these lines, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: *HEEs advocacy is positively related to employee commitment to their organizations.*

Hypothesis 2: *HEEs advocacy will positively influence all dimensions of employee vigor: (a) physical strength, (b) emotional energy and (c) cognitive liveliness.*

Linking Employee Involvement to Organizational Commitment

Employee involvement might directly influence commitment since it enables employees to directly and actively participate in assisting their organizations to achieve their missions and objectives. It can also enable employees to apply their own ideas, expertise and efforts towards decision-making. Gifford et al. (2005) has explained that employee involvement can enable organizations to harness the potentials of their employees and align the interests of employees with those of their organizations. Also, employees that perceive high involvement in their workplaces can be more influential in their organizations and larger organizational employment policies. Gifford et al. (2005) has pointed out various aims of employee involvement initiatives which include: "to increase motivation and commitment in employees, to channel their knowledge and skills to improve processes; to consider their interests and keep them informed of the organization is activities and position." (p. 1). Lawler

(1986) have identified four elements of employee involvement as power (giving employees the authority to make work-related decisions), information (giving employee easy access to pertinent information), knowledge and skills (training and developing employees), and rewards (giving incentives for involvement). Along these lines, we, therefore, hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 3: *HEE involvement is positively related to organizational commitment.*

Hypothesis 4: *HEE involvement will positively influence all dimensions of employee vigor:*

(a) physical strength, (b) emotional energy and (c) cognitive liveliness.

Mediating Role of Vigour

The literature has reported positive and significant effects of vigor at work in areas such as employees' performance, organizational commitment, involvement, and productivity (Shirom et al., 2013). This means that employees with high vigor can persevere in their efforts at work and can invest more resources into their jobs by working hard to help their organizations to accomplish their goals (Shirom et al., 2013). For example, Sonnentag and Niessen (2008) found a positive effect of vigor trait on efficient work completion. Shirom et al. (2013) found that individual work capability is positively related to feeling vigorous at work. Carmeli et al. (2009) demonstrated that high levels of vigor were significantly related to better job performance and commitment. Despite the several studies that have reported the significant and positive role of vigor at work, very little of these studies have focused on the higher education sector. We hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 5: *Employee vigor: (a) physical strength, (b) emotional energy and (c) cognitive liveliness have positive effects on HEEs organizational commitment.*

Hypothesis 6: *Employee vigor: (a) physical strength, (b) emotional energy and (c) cognitive liveliness mediates the relationship between HEEs advocacy and organizational commitment.*

***Hypothesis 7:** Employee vigor: (a) physical strength, (b) emotional energy and (c) cognitive liveliness mediates the relationship between HEEs involvement and organizational commitment.*

Method

Participants and Procedure

We used a two-wave, multi-source, repeated cross-sectional data (2018 and 2019) from employees of Nigerian public higher education institutions. All participants in this study have above 5 years of work experience in the higher education sector as non-academic or academic staff, therefore, they can provide useful information concerning the subject of study. Our choice of only HEEs was on the notion that the majority of previous studies have focused more on employees in other sectors with little focus on the higher education sector. We designed the questionnaire using Google Form (an online survey tool) for sharing on the higher education staff online (particularly, What Sapp) platforms (Smedley& Coulson, 2018). For clarity, in Nigeria, What Sapp platform (online forums) has been a useful means of communication among staff of organizations. There are uncountable official What Sapp forums managed by top staff of higher education institutions in Nigeria. We designed the questionnaire with an accompanying consent note which explained that participation is voluntary, and that HEEs' personal data and responses would be confidential and that we would use data for research purposes only (e.g., Bakker et al., 2012). The part A of the questionnaire requested the demographic information of the participants that include their WhatsApp or email contacts (excluding names), while part B contains the questions with the items.

At wave 1 (in 2018), we shared the link to the online questionnaire to the various HEEs unions' What Sapp forums, contacted the Admins of the unions' What Sapp forums to share the link and encourage colleagues to participate willingly in the survey. Participants were advised not to share the survey link to colleagues outside their institutions. This enabled us to ensure that respondents in Wave 1 did not respond during Wave 2. Through this approach, many HEEs in the first purposefully selected Nigerian higher education institutions received the link to the questionnaire and responded willingly. After a period of 6 months, we received a total of 483 responses from the major public higher education sector (universities, polytechnics and colleges of education) in Nigeria. To ensure that respondents have gained

enough work experience to offer useful information, we removed 182 respondents (37.69%) who have below 5 years of work experience in the higher education sector from the data set remaining a total of 301 respondents (62.31%).

At Wave 2 (in 2019), we administered the same questionnaire to HEEs in different Nigerian public higher education institutions that were not included in wave 1 and followed the same process as in Wave 1. At the end of the 6 months data collection process, 319 respondents completed the questionnaire. After removing respondents who have below 5 years of work experience and incomplete responses from the data set, a total of 220 responses were used for the final data set. Overall, the repeated cross-sectional samples included $N = 301$ HEEs (62.31% response rate) at wave 1 and $N = 220$ HEEs (68.96% response rate) at wave 2. This approach helped to reduce the influence of common method bias, aided match responses and combine data from different HEEs into a unified dataset.

Before aggregating the data, we applied interclass correlational coefficients 1 and 2 to test the interrater reliability among the respondents. The interclass correlational coefficients values ranged from 0.73 to 0.94 indicating justification for data aggregation (LeBreton & Senter, 2008). Hence, we aggregated and merged the data into a unified dataset to obtain a final sample of 521 for the final dataset. Meanwhile, 224 respondents (43%) are females and 297 (57%) are males within the age range of 32 to 55 years old. Among this population, 193 (37%) are teaching staff while 328 (62.95%) are non-teaching staff from 18 Nigerian public higher education institutions (8 universities, 6 polytechnics and 4 colleges of education).

Measures

Employee advocacy. We adapted the 4-item modified advocacy intentions scale (Walden & Westerman, 2018). Responses were made on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Sample items include: “I will recommend the organization’s mission and service to others”. Walden and Westerman (2018) modified the scale from Men (2014) and Fullerton (2011) and reported a Cronbach’s α of .96. However, our α was 0.92.

Employee involvement. We adopted the 3-item employee involvement scale (Ogbonnaya&Babalola, 2020). The scale was adopted given that it was specifically designed to assess three important issues: employees' ability to make suggestions to improve their organizations, frequent opportunities to show initiative in their role and ability to make improvements happen in their organizations. Responses were made on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1 = strongly *disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). A sample item includes: "I am able to make improvements happen in my area of work". The Cronbach's α was 0.93. Our α 0.91.

Employee vigor. We used a 14-item Shirom-Melamed Vigor Measure (SMVM) (Shirom, 2003), which includes a five-item subscale of physical strength, a four-item subscale of emotional energy, and a five-item subscale of cognitive liveliness. Sample items include: "I feel vigorous" (physical strength); "I feel able to be sensitive to the needs of co-workers and customers" (emotional energy); "I feel I am able to contribute new ideas" (cognitive liveliness). All items were rated on a Likert-type 7-point scale, ranging from (1 = *never or almost never* to 7 = *always or almost always*). The SMVS scale has the following internal consistency with α ranging from 0.87 to 0.92 for the global scale (e.g., Shirom et al., 2013). Our α were 0.75 (physical strength), 0.98 (Emotional energy) and 0.91 (cognitive liveliness).

Organizational commitment. We used a 15-item organizational commitment scale (Mowday et al., 1979). Responses were made on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). A sample item includes: "I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful". The α for the original scale was reported to vary from 0.82 to 0.93 (see, Maillet, 1984). Our α was 0.97.

Control Variables. We controlled for age and sex of the HEEs which might influence work behaviours (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004).

Analytical procedure

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Amos 24.0 to test the measurement model fit indices. The latent variables representing employee advocacy, employee involvement, vigor (physical strength, emotional energy and cognitive liveliness), and organizational commitment consisted of the measurement model (e.g., Ogbonnaya&Babalola, 2020). The overall goodness-of-fit was considered adequate: $\chi^2 = 368.68$; $df = 120$; $\chi^2/df =$

3.07; CFI = 0.95, GFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.94, IFI = 0.95; SRMR = 0.04, and RMSEA = 0.06, indicating an acceptable model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Model Validity and Reliability Measures

The indicator factors loadings are significant and exceed the acceptable value of ≥ 0.6 on their corresponding constructs. Convergent validity was established as the average variance extracted (AVE) is ≥ 0.50 . The discriminant validity was established as the square root of the AVE is greater than the correlation of the latent variables in the CFA (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Also, the Cronbach alpha and composite reliability values are ≥ 0.70 and ≥ 0.60 respectively while the factor loadings are ≥ 0.50 .

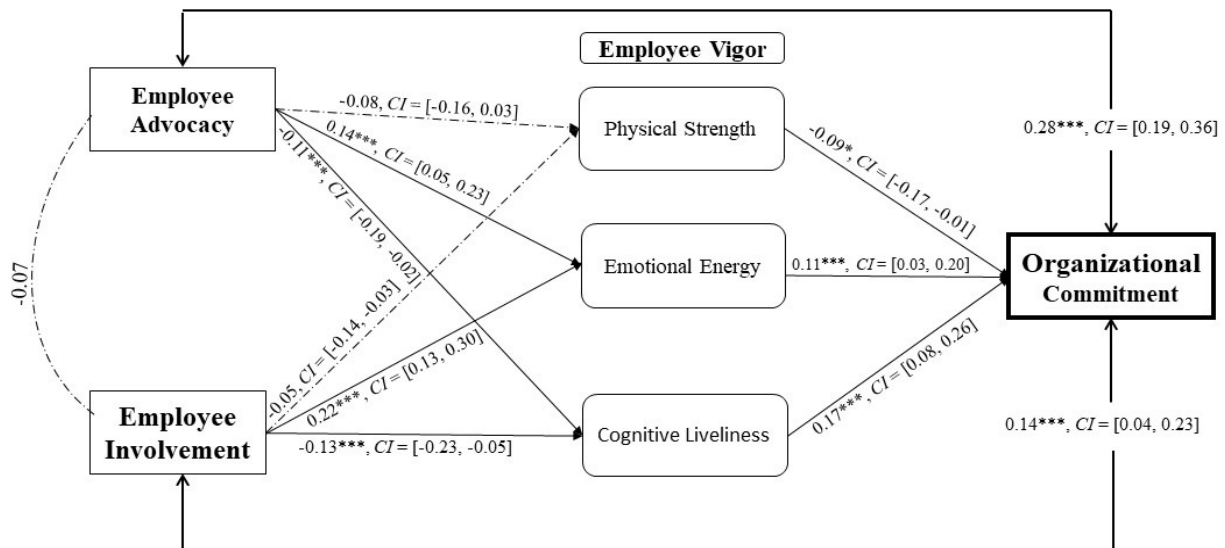
Results

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, and bivariate correlations among the variables. The analysis shows that HEEs involvement ($r = 0.12, p < .001$) and advocacy ($r = 0.27, p < .001$) correlated positively with organizational commitment. Also, we found that all the mediating variables, physical strength ($r = -0.14, p < .001$), emotional energy ($r = 0.16, p < .001$) and cognitive liveliness ($r = 0.13, p < .001$) correlated positively with organizational commitment. Therefore, following Baron and Kenny (1986), this result of the bivariate analysis authenticates the need for the mediation analysis proposed in this study.

To test the hypotheses, we conducted structural equation modelling (SEM – AMOS 24.0) to analyze the relationships. We tested the direct relationships by applying bias-corrected 1,000 resample bootstraps to determine all direct effects of HEEs advocacy and involvement on organizational commitment (at 95% confidence interval) as well as the mediators simultaneously. Figure 2 shows the parameter estimates for all direct effects in the model. The model fit measures for the SEM-analysis (final model) indicated an acceptable fit: $\chi^2 = 10.47$; $df = 7$; $\chi^2/df = 1.49$; CFI = 0.97, GFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.91, IFI = 0.97, SRMR = 0.03, RMSEA = 0.03, PClose = 0.77, $p = 0.16$, indicating an acceptable model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Figure 2

Results of the Structural Model



** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Standardized beta weights are reported. Dashed lines are no significant pathways. Final model for relationships among the variables (Advocacy and involvement), vigor (physical strength, emotional energy, and cognitive liveliness), and work outcome (organizational commitment). Standardized beta weights are reported.

In the final model as shown in Figure 2, the results of hypotheses 1 and 2 show that employee advocacy ($\beta = 0.28$, $SE = 0.43$, $p < .001$) and employee involvement ($\beta = 0.14$, $SE = 0.43$, $p < .001$) were associated positively with organizational commitment. Also, employee advocacy was not related to physical strength ($\beta = -0.08$, $SE = 0.44$, $p = .13$). However, it was associated positively with emotional energy ($\beta = .14$, $SE = 0.44$, $p < .001$) but associated negatively with cognitive liveliness ($\beta = -0.11$, $SE = 0.42$, $p < .001$). The results fully support hypotheses 1 and 2b.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 (Figure 2) show that employee involvement was positively associated with organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.14$, $SE = 0.42$, $p < .001$). Also, involvement was positively related to emotional energy ($\beta = 0.22$, $SE = 0.43$, $P < .001$) but negatively related to cognitive liveliness ($\beta = -0.13$, $SE = 0.41$, $p < .001$). However, we found no evidence that employee involvement was related to physical strength ($\beta = -0.05$, $SE = 0.43$, $p = .23$). These results support only hypotheses 3 and 3b.

The results of hypotheses 5 show the direct relationship between vigor and organizational commitment. As shown in Figure 2, physical strength associated negatively with organizational commitment ($\beta = -0.09$, $SE = 0.42$, $p < .05$), while emotional energy ($\beta = 0.11$, $SE = 0.44$, $p < .05$) and cognitive liveliness ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < .001$) were associated positively with organizational commitment. These findings support hypotheses 5b & 5c. Regarding the covariates (control variables), we found no evidence that both Age and Gender influence HEEs commitment to their organization in this population. Also, 0.8% of the variance in physical strength was accounted for, 3% in cognitive liveliness, 6.2% in emotional energy and 13.8% in organizational commitment was accounted for in this study.

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Bivariate Correlations among Variables

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Age	1.36	0.48	1						
2 Gender	1.34	0.49	0.01	1					
3 Employee Involvement	11.4	4.04	-0.02	-0.06	1				
4 Employee Advocacy	11.78	3.67	0.05	0.08	-0.07	1			
5 Physical Strength	13.33	2.56	0.02	0.03	-0.05	-0.07	1		
6 Emotional Energy	11.83	3.56	0.07	0.01	0.21**	0.13**	-0.10*	1	
7 Cognitive Liveliness	12.99	2.14	0.02	0.06	-0.13**	-0.10*	-0.04	-0.13**	1
8 Organizational Commitment	11.99	2.77	0.01	0.03	0.12**	0.27**	-0.14**	0.16**	0.13**

N = 521; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

Analysis of Indirect Effects

To test the mediation (hypotheses 6), we followed the procedure outlined by Hayes (2018, 144) –the “k PROCESS commands” to find the specific indirect effects. This enabled us to learn how each of the dimensions of vigor mediates the relationships between the predictors and outcome variables in this study.

Table 3

Mediation Analysis

Bias-corrected 95% CI

Paths Estimates Errors Lower Upper

<i>Employee Advocacy</i> → <i>Physical Strength</i>	→	0.00	0.01	-0.00	0.02
<i>Employee Advocacy</i> → <i>Emotional Energy</i>	→	0.01***	0.01	0.01	0.03
<i>Employee Advocacy</i> → <i>Cognitive Liveliness</i>	→	-0.01***	0.01	-0.03	-0.00
<i>Employee Involvement</i> → <i>Physical Strength</i>	→	0.00	0.01	-0.00	0.01
<i>Employee Involvement</i> → <i>Emotional Energy</i>	→	0.02***	0.01	0.01	0.04
<i>Employee Involvement</i> → <i>Cognitive Liveliness</i>	→	-0.01***	0.01	-0.03	-0.00

The study, therefore, used Hayes PROCESS Macro 3.5, applied Model 4 and 5,000 resample bootstrap method to determine the specific indirect effects. Thus, Table 3 shows that while the three mediators potentially explained the relationship between the HEEs advocacy and organizational commitment, the only significant positive indirect effect was via emotional energy ($\beta = 0.01$, $CI = [0.01, 0.03]$, $p < .001$) Also, emotional energy ($\beta = 0.02$, $CI = [0.01, 0.04]$, $p < .001$) mediated the relationship between employee involvement and organizational commitment.

Discussion

Relying on the SET, we assessed a model of HEEs commitment to their organization. Determining how HEEs advocacy and involvement in their job roles can foster their commitment to their organization contributes to our understanding of organizational commitment in the higher education sector in this population. As far as we know, no previous studies have drawn upon SET to test the relationships among HEEs advocacy and involvement, vigor (physical strength, emotional energy and cognitive liveliness), and organizational commitment in a single comprehensive model. The model proposed that HEEs advocacy and involvement were related to organizational commitment, and we found full support for the hypothesized model. Also, we proposed that employee vigor (physical strength, emotional energy and cognitive liveliness) mediated these relationships. However, we found some supports for the hypothesis. HEEs advocacy was associated positively with organizational commitment. Also, HEEs involvement was associated positively with

organizational commitment, and these relationships were largely mediated by emotional energy. We, therefore, discuss the most important contributions of the present study.

First, HEEs advocacy was positively associated with organizational commitment. These results corroborate previous studies that linked employee advocacy to organizational commitment (e.g. Thelen, 2020; Walden & Westerman, 2018). Also, we found that employee advocacy was only related positively to emotional energy. This suggests that the HEEs who perceive supports of their organizations are more likely to obtain emotional energy from their organizations and increase their willingness to work toward achieving organizational goals and missions (Shraga and Shirom, 2009). Also, in line with recent SET studies (e.g., Ogbonnaya & Babalola, 2020), higher education supervisors' or managers' support to HEEs may likely enhance employees' emotional energy at work (e.g., Spreitzer et al., 2005), and foster employee commitment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Second, as expected, we found that involvement was associated positively with organizational commitment. This result is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Mackie et al., 2001; Morgan & Zeffane, 2003; Wolf & Zwick, 2008), that increased employee involvement was associated with an increase in productivity and ability to help an organization achieve its mission and goals. Also, we found that employee involvement was related positively to only emotional energy. This result suggests that positive emotions can increase employees' actionability. Such positive emotional energy can offer employees the needed psychological premise for working toward achieving the organization's objectives. Another possible interpretation of this finding is that employees who perceived adequate involvement in their job roles may be more likely to experience emotional energy in this population.

Third, interestingly, we found that emotional energy and cognitive liveliness positively associated with organizational commitment. These findings are in line with previous studies (Shirom, 2004; Cai et al., 2020). However, an interesting point to note in the findings of the present study is that emotional energy has played a significant role in the relationships between the HEEs advocacy, involvement, and organizational commitment. A possible interpretation of this result is that emotional energy (a dimension of vigor) appears to be highly relevant in improving employee commitment to their organization. This could be that employees with higher emotional energy can establish better interpersonal relationships with colleagues, customers, managers and create a good interpersonal atmosphere for quality

service delivery. Also, it can be interpreted that employees with higher emotional energy can concentrate on their work, recover more quickly from work frustrations and increase more opportunities for their organizations to achieve their goals. Therefore, our findings further suggest that when higher education sector invests more on employee advocacy and involvement in their job roles, they are building rational capital with HEEs that will “help them feel both trusted and imbued with the tools to do their job” (Walden & Westerman, 2018, p. 13).

In the mediation analysis, only emotional energy is the dimension of vigor that exerted significant influence on employee commitment to their organization (Table 3). This interesting finding may not be surprising since “emotional states can be transferred directly from one individual to another via mimicry and the copying of emotionally relevant bodily actions like facial expressions, whereas physical strength and cognitive liveliness are more like an individual trait” (Cai et al., 2020, p. 8). This finding suggests that the relationship that exists between the HEEs advocacy, HEEs involvement and organizational commitment was through emotional energy. This outcome suggests that HEEs advocacy and HEEs involvement may not wholly be the reasons for the HEEs’ increased commitment to their organization, rather the emotional states transferred directly through the higher education managers or supervisors supports, the conducive work environment as well as emotional energy in the HEEs’ ability to effectively commit to their organization.

Conclusion

This study examined the effect of HEEs advocacy and involvement on the employees’ commitment to their organization via employee’s vigor. The findings of our study have managerial and theoretical implications. For example, our findings emphasized the need for the higher education sector managers or supervisors to provide their employees with opportunities to fully involve actively in their job roles to stimulate employee advocacy behaviors and employees’ emotional energy towards achieving their institutional goals. Our findings also emphasized the relevance of SET by demonstrating that employee involvement and advocacy are important resources that positively influence the way HEEs perceive their emotional energy in this population. Our findings extend the key tenets of SET beyond the

management and psychology disciplines where they are widely studied, by providing an understanding of key social exchange principles.

Also, our findings inform higher education management practice in several ways. For example, higher education institutions may improve employees' commitment to work (e.g., Felstead&Gallie, 2004; Wood & Wall, 2007), and intensify employee vigor (particularly, emotional energy and cognitive liveliness) by considering investing in employee advocacy and employee involvement. The results of our study indicate that HEEs emotional energy (a dimension of vigor) explains the relationships between employee advocacy and involvement, and organizational commitment in this population. In line with previous research, employee involvement and advocacy have implications for human resource management practices, which can impact commitment in general, and productivity in particular (e.g., Phipps et al., 2013; Zhu et al., 2007).The present study extends literature surrounding employee involvement and advocacy, and organizational commitment.

Our findings have demonstrated that providing HEEs with opportunities to involve actively in their roles can enable them to commit to achieving their organizational goals. Also, providing HEEs with the opportunity to advocate for their organizations can improve employee advocacy behaviours. We, therefore, suggest that the higher education sector managers can promote their employees' emotional energy by improving the level of the employees' involvement in their job roles and advocacy behaviours. Higher education sector managers can focus more on maintaining a culture of involving employees in decision-making and incentive-based reward practices (e.g., Shraga&Shirom, 2009). This can enable the employees to contribute positively to achieving their organizational goals such as an increase in profitability and productivity (e.g., Phipps et al., 2013).

Limitations

The use of SET, coupled with the robust two-wave analytical approach strengthened the contributions of the present study. Despite the strength, we advise caution when interpreting the results of the present study, beyond the limitations of this study. First, our sample was employees of Nigerian public higher education institutions. However, in Nigeria and elsewhere, higher education institutions include both private and public. Therefore, this limits the generalization of the findings to other employees of private higher education institutions.

We suggest that future studies should repeat this study with employees in both private and public higher education institutions. Also, the study participants are Nigerians, which also limits the generalization of the findings to other developed cultures where the relationships might not hold-up. Another limitation of our study is that all the participants have above 5 years of work experience. This may limit the generalizability of our findings. We recommend that future studies should include employees who have below 5 years of work experience.

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