



## Determinants of Union Commitment Among Public Hospital Employees: a Proposed Model

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# DETERMINANTS OF UNION COMMITMENT AMONG PUBLIC HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES: A PROPOSED MODEL

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## Abstract

Union commitment of employee is considered to be the degree to which an organizational member intends to maintain membership in a particular union then, exercise effort for, to pinpoint with the goals of his or her union. Literature is reviewed for better understanding of the past, present and future needs in the study area. As a result of a thorough review of literature, a model is proposed to examine the associations between general union belief, union socialization, union leadership, perceived union instrumentality, job satisfaction and union commitment with a moderating variable of Political Atmosphere. The proposed model would help toward a better understanding of the relationship between the antecedents of union commitment among public sector employees in Nigeria. The population as part of the methodology is proposed to be the union members of public hospitals in Northwestern Nigeria. The model, will however, requires practical/empirical testing to validate the proposed relationships. The managerial implication of the proposed study is that the federal and state ministries of health, hospital administrators, union members and other stakeholders will benefits from the study outcome, it would also serve as a framework for future research.

Key words: Determinants, Union commitment, public Hospitals, Employees

## 1. Introduction

Gordon, Beauvais and Ladd (1984) in their studies came up with a four dimensional scale measuring union commitment as; union faithfulness, union belief, desire to work for the union, and responsibility to the union. Although there is general agreement with regard to Gordon et al.'s definition of union commitment, their proposed factor structure of the construct remains in argument. Barling, Fullagar and Kelloway (1992) established that most of the variables researched in prior studies of union commitment were stable, valid, generalizabl. Yet, Sverke and Kuruvilla (1995) found that although almost union commitment studies employed Gordon's uni- dimensional or multi- dimensional scale, only few of such studies were able to explore the theoretical formation of union commitment showing a four-factor structure. The degree to which this lack of agreement on the nature of the dimensionality of the union commitment construct has led to different un- known outcomes. In comparative analyses, these various measures appear to be tapping a common underlying construct (Sverke & Kuruvilla, 1995). According to Olufunmilayo and Kola (2014) trade unions are expected to expand the economic and social

settings of all workers in a given country apart from rendering assistance whether or not such workers are employed or have concluded to be employed. Possibly, they may be looked at as an extension of fairness from politics to commerce (Tatsuse & Sekene, 2011).

Despite a number of benefits of trade unionism, in protecting member's interest, there seems to be a reduction in union involvement and falling of labor actions within some countries, such as the Philippines, Vietnam and China (Binghay, 2007). Johari (2014) opined that a number of factors are responsible for the decline which includes problems in relation to general union belief, union satisfaction, union leadership, perceived union instrumentality, and job satisfaction which were rooted to the initial conceptualization of Gordon, Philpot, Burt, Thompson, and Spiller (1980). There appeared to be a number of factors responsible for the decline, but the Johari's (2014) claim seems to dominate the literature (Sibal, 2004; Binghay, 2007; Zacharewicz, Martinez – Inigo, & Kelloway; 2016; Mwathe, Gachung, & Waiganjo, 2017). Despite the causes, the deterioration in union participation which causes serious threat to trade unions across the globe. There were evidences that union participation has been widely researched within the context of Asia, showing inadequate studies on the construct under study in Nigerian context. Most of the local studies mainly focused on the issue of collective bargaining agreement (Bitonio, 2012; Edralin, 2009). This study, aimed at validating Bamberger et al. (1999), model and integrating the political atmosphere as recommended by Johari (2014), as there are lack of adequate research on the issue in the Nigerian perspective.

## **2. Problem**

In an ideal situation, government at different levels is supposed to be a policy maker and a regulator of industrial affairs. Trade unions are set purposely towards the establishment of the power balance between employers and employees, endowing them with a “common voice” and making their complaints heard. Employees' voice is experienced in organizations by allowing employees involvement and employee participation (Keser, Yilmaz & Kose, 2014). Statistics have shown that there is a decline in the Union Commitment in the Nigeria civil service, which is as a result of issues that are to do with the general union belief and the union members' satisfaction from 56 percent in 2000 to 48.4 percent in 2015 (OECD, 2015). The statistics above clearly shows a reduction in the employee commitment toward their labor unions. Similarly, Zacharewicz, Martinez – Inigo and Kelloway (2016) reported a poor employee commitment which were attributed to issues in perceived union instrumentality and Job satisfaction across six hundred and seventy six union members.

## **3. Literature Review**

### **3.1 General Union Belief and Union Commitment**

General union belief (GUB) refers to an individual belief in general union activities (Jahari, 2016). This has to do with some general benefit of union to society. There has been a literature evidences that showcase the relevance of general union belief in relation to the union commitment, few among such studies includes (Bamberger, Kluger, & Suchard, 1999; Tan & Aryee, 2002; Malik & Manroop, 2017). Empirical evidence establishing the association between general union belief and union commitment appeared to be mixed. Literatures have shown that several studies have been conducted in relation to GUB and UC. Among the studies which

reported a positive relationship includes: Johari and Ghazali (2011) who established a good relationship between two study constructs, in a study conducted which employed fifty thousand clerical officers, using stratified sampling technique with questionnaire as the research instruments. Similarly, the study of Keser, Yilmiz and Kose (2014) examined the association that existed between union commitment and some of its elements among four hundred and sixty one food and transport sector workers. The finding of the study established a direct relationship between the GUB and UC. Other studies with similar positive results include Ingham and Ingham (1998); Hess (2008); Grady (2013); Johari (2014). However, the findings of Beraldi, Syerke and Gaison (2009) established a negative relationship between the study constructs.

### **3.2 Union Socialization and Union Commitment**

According to Acayan, Cua, Te and Teng – Calleja (2015) Union socialization is considered to be the process by which an individual obtains the social information and skills necessary to undertake an organizational activities. Bachkirov (2017) explored the relationship between union socialization and affective commitment (AC), The finding from the study shows a very weak relationship between US and AC. Similarly, Campbel (2013) assessed a three-component model of professional commitment in a unionized environment to determine the workability of the model of professional commitment and its effect on participation and socialization in union and professional activities. Cross-sectional survey employed of licensed practical nurses which tested the power of a three-component model of professional commitment concurrent with union commitment; the impact of commitment on varying levels of participation and socialization in union and professional activities is examined. The entire three components were found supported with the professional union commitment. Xu, Liu, Cua, Te and Teng – Calleja (2015) examined how industry standards and community socialization contributes to the operational, strategic and environmental performances of supply chain partners. Survey data were collected from two hundred and sixteen firms in China, using structural equation modeling as a method for data analysis. The empirical finding established that industry standards and community socialization are of importance in accomplishing greater supply chain performances. Hence, this is signifying a positive relationship between the study constructs.

### **3.3 Union Leadership and Union Commitment**

Johari and Ghazali (2011) see leadership as a process of inducing, inspiring, and enabling others to contribute toward the usefulness and success of the business of which they are associates. However, in a union set, headship conduct which represents the ability of union leaders to encourage the involvement within among its members with some promising conduct that can positively add to the member's attitudes and participation. There were a number of empirical studies establishing the relationship between union leadership and commitment which includes (Snape, Chan & Redman 2004; Catano, Pond & Kelloway 2001; Hammer, Bayazit, Wazeter, 2009). Morishima (1995) in a study found leadership in union to predict union commitment significantly among Japanese white-collar and technical workers. Similarly, Sverke and Sjoberg (1994), in a study of public-sector white - collar workers found that leadership to be a predictor of union commitment. Other studies which examined leadership and union commitment includes, among others Oyewunmi and Oyenwunmi (2017); Jabeen, Behery and Abu Elnanian (2015); Raduan, Kumar and Ramasamy (2011); Piccolo and Colquitt (2006); Truong and King (2009); Bamberger, Kluger and Suchard (1999).

### **3.4 Perceived Union Instrumentality and Union Commitment**

Union instrumentality is considered to be the degree in which a trade union is perceived to be efficient in improving its member's welfare (Gordon, 1984). Several studies have established union instrumentality to be a factor influencing level of union satisfaction and commitment. (Kuruville, Gallagher and Wetzel, 1993; Griffins and Svenson 1996; Chawla, Singh, Singh, & Agarwal, 2018). Lee and Turner (2016) established a significant and positive association between perceived union instrumentality, goal commitment and motivation and teachers self-regulation and commitment of teachers. The study of Acayan, Cua and Teng (2015) which examined the antecedents and outcomes of union commitment among one hundred and ninety four members of academics, financial and pharmaceutical industries in Philippines, used structural equation modeling as a tool of data analysis and purposive sampling as a sampling technique. The finding indicated a significant and positive association among union instrumentality and union commitment. Gosh, Ragini and Alka Rai (2015) analyzed the role of union instrumentality in women involvement in trade union with the moderating role of perceived union instrumentality on the association among convenience, approval and women's participation in trade union. Other studies that established conflicting findings are Redman and Snape (2005); Gall and Fiorito (2012); Eren, (2013); Cregan (2013); Lee and Turner (2016).

### **3.5 Job Satisfaction and Union Commitment**

Job satisfaction is considered to be the pleasure that employees gain from their employment, the climate, and the condition of the workplace (Al-Aameri, 2000; Al-Hussami, 2008; Abdali, 2011). It tries to job describes the overall contentment or satisfaction of the employees about their intrinsic and extrinsic expectation of the work. Job satisfaction is seen as the contentment that employees gain from their job, the climate, and the condition of the workplace (Johari & Ghazali, 2011).

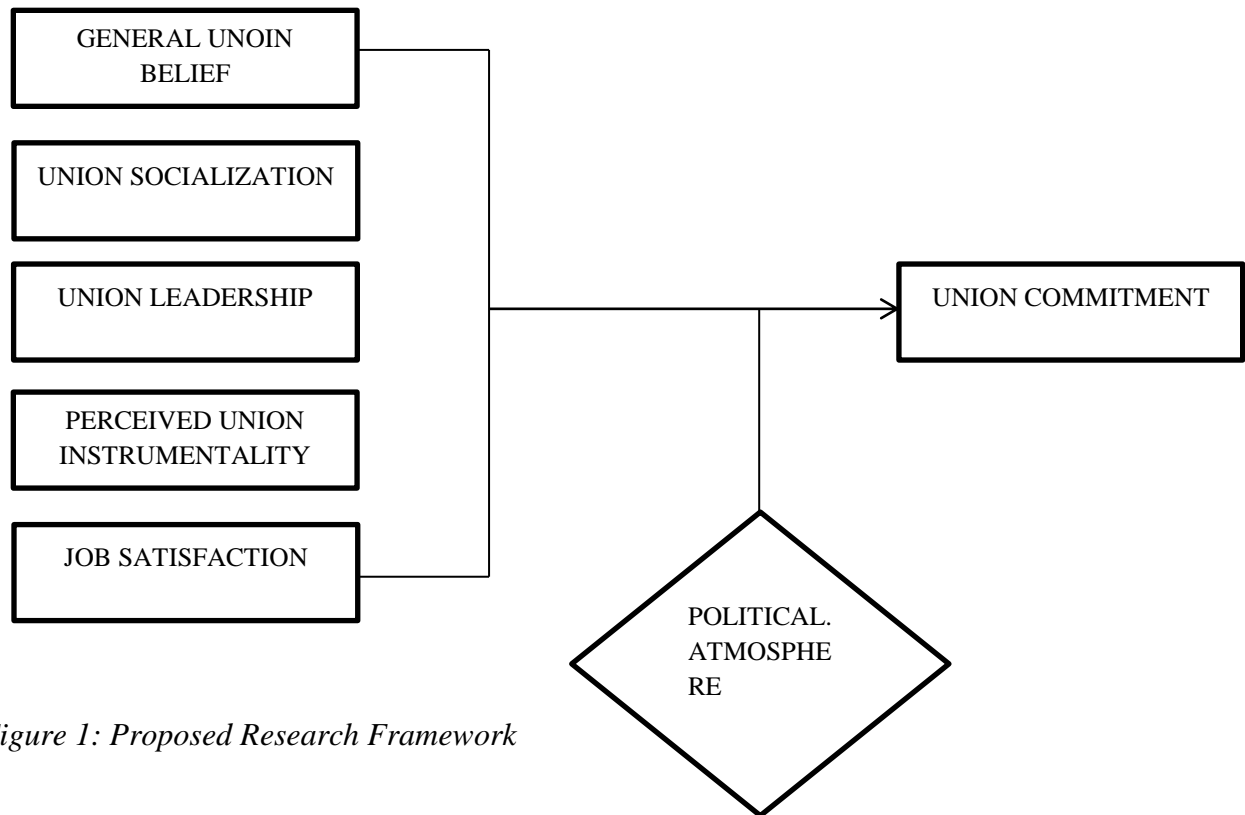
There appeared to be different findings and outcomes between job Satisfaction and Union Commitment. Tan and Aryee (2002) assess the antecedent and outcome of union loyal using a structural equation modeling and established a significant relationship between the study constructs. Similarly the study of Kwantes (2009) examined job satisfaction, culture and union commitment in both India and the United States, using questionnaire as the instrument for data collection and the hierarchical regression for data analysis. Job satisfaction is found to significantly and positively relate to union commitment in both countries. Ghosh et al (2015) examined the role of Job Satisfaction on Women's participation in Union among Indian manufacturing sector, with a sample of two hundred and fourteen respondents across five different organizations. The finding revealed a positive association among job Satisfaction and union commitment (Fullager & Barling, 1989). Berger, Olson and Boudreau (1983) found that job satisfaction have a significant effect on union commitment. Other studies with inconsistent results includes Bayazit, Hammer and Wazeter (2004); Campbell (2013); Ohana, (2014); Prysmakova, (2016); Malik and Manroop (2017).

### **3.6 Political Atmosphere as a Moderator**

Prior studies investigated the impact of political atmosphere on the relationship between other variables (Gall, Doucet & Hennebert, 2017; Obono, 2015; Gall, 2015) as independent, dependent or intervening variables respectively. Kirton and Healy (2018) explored the women under-representation in union leadership in the context of Barbados, using an in-depth interview with seventeen women leaders. The finding from the study revealed that political atmosphere contributed towards little participation of women in union leadership. Kidron and Peretz (2018) assessed the impact of political climate on employee engagement in political conduct in public sector organizations using triangulation. Data was employed from two hundred and seventeen managers/employees and interview with sixteen staff were conducted. The finding revealed that political climate is associated to political behavior; also both trust and commitment are associated to political environment. The study of Dhammika, Ahmad and Sam (2016) examined union politicization and its dimensions in Wayamba, Sri Lanka, which employed one hundred and thirty six public sector employee using stratified sampling. The outcome of the study showed that both political instrumentality and political belief have significant and positive effects on the commitment of employees. Similarly, the study of Schikonye (2003) established a negative relationship between the political atmosphere and union commitment among farmers after land reform in Zimbabwe.

### **3.7 GUB, US, UL, PUI, JS, PA Based Model**

Extent literature reviewed have shown that GUB, US, UL, PUI and JS have been used in prior studies which tried to provide explanation on the union commitment in different organizations. However, prior studies used a combination of some of the variables as predictors of union commitment (Mwathe, Gachunga and Waijanjo, 2017; Johari, 2014; Dhammika, 2015; Leite, Rodrigues & Albuquerque, 2014; BeauvaisAsamani & Mensah, 2013; Johari & Ghazali, 2011; Bamberger, Kluger & Suchard, 1998). Zacharewicz et al., (2016) in a study of union commitment predictors across sixteen Spanish autonomous communities suggested the need for further studies in other countries and sectors. Similarly, Johari (2016) recommended future studies with the above predictors and a moderating variable of political atmosphere. In a similar study by Johari (2014) suggested the examination of antecedent of union commitment using larger sample and should be conducted among public sector workers. Ghosh, Ragini and Acka Rai (2015) concur with the Johari's recommendation of inclusion of a moderating variable on the association among some determinants of union commitment. Leite et al., (2014) emphasized on future research to be carried in any country other than the Brazil with the predictors of union commitment. The present study is an attempt in proposing a model that will empirically study the General Union Belief, Union Socialization, Job Satisfaction, Perceive Union Instrumentality and Union commitment with the moderating variable of political atmosphere among public sector employees. In the same vien, Kidron and Peretz (2018) suggested the inclusion of political climate in the union commitment framework.



*Figure 1: Proposed Research Framework*

The proposed framework above is an attempt at incorporating a variable to strengthen the association among some determinants of union commitment among public sector organizations which has not been considered by the prior studies. The practical implication of the proposed study is that the federal and state ministries of health, hospital administrators, union members and other stakeholders in health sector would benefits from the study outcome.

## **5. Conclusion**

The paper proposed a model on the association among general union belief, union socialization, union leadership, perceived union instrumentality and job satisfaction on union commitment with the moderating variable of political atmosphere. The paper began with the introduction where background information on the study variables was presented. It followed with a problem statement where both the theoretical and methodological gaps on the need of the study were

identified. The literature review established the relationship between each of the study's independent variable with the dependent variable is discussed with the possibility of including political atmosphere as the moderating variable. The proposed model was then presented. The paper recommends an empirical investigation on the relationship between the identified determinants of union commitment among public hospitals employees in Nigeria.

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