

EFFECT OF ECONOMIC STRESS ON JOB COMMITMENT AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN THE POST COVID-19 ERA

Mabel C. Anugwara*

Department of Education Economics Federal College of Education, Eha Amufu

*Corresponding Author: -

ABSTRACT

The recent Coronavirus pandemic created a significant impact on the civil service system of every society. The prolonged measures instituted to combat the spread of the virus undoubtedly impacted the employees' working commitment and instigated an unprecedented decline in workplace motivation. More so, the economic impact of the pandemic prompted a change in the socio-economic lifestyle of many employees and could be a factor in workplace commitment. Thus, the present study examined the effect of economic stress on job commitment among civil servants in the post-Covid-19 era. A convenience sample of two hundred and twenty respondents pooled from different ministries, departments, and agencies in the Enugu State civil service participated in the survey. The respondents completed a self-report measure of the economic stress scale and organizational commitment questionnaire. The simple regression analysis performed on the data demonstrated that economic stress positively predicted job commitment in the post-Covid-19 era. The finding revealed that economic stress explained 12.2% of the respondents' job commitment variation.

KEYWORDS: *Economic stress, job commitment, civil servants, post-Covid-19 era*

Background

The topical coronavirus epidemic impacted all sectors of modern-day society. The control measures generally instituted to combat the rapid spread of the disease, including movement restrictions and closure of economic and social activities, significantly affected the spending pattern of the government and individuals. Perhaps the pandemic's consequences are implicated in social, psychological, and financial affairs (Bostan et al., 2020). It negatively impacted the current prospects of households, businesses, and the macro-economy (Chronopoulos et al., 2020). The pandemic stressed the importance of understanding the sources of exposure that can lead to a financial crisis (Onofrei et al., 2021). The prolonged movement restriction involved simultaneous interruptions in supplying and demanding in an interconnected business world. Nonetheless, the disease led to a decline in supply and productivity, including loss, layoffs, and deteriorating economic prospects. Studies have highlighted the economic, social, and health consequences of the recent epidemic in Nigeria (see., Adiyoh et al., 2020; Ajibo, 2020; Akande & Akande, 2020; Aladejebi, 2020; Aribisala & Oluwadamilare, 2020; Briggs & Kattey, 2020; Ilesanmi et al., 2021; Ilesanmi & Afolabi, 2020; Imanche et al., 2020; Jelilov et al., 2020; Mogaji, 2020; Ohia et al., 2020; Otache, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic created an unprecedented disruption in education in human history (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Nonetheless, while the pandemic disrupted job activities, the overall economic consequences of the outbreak could negatively impact employees' contribution to practical input across job roles.

Matters relating to the personal economy have been associated with stress despite socio-economic status. Economic uncertainty instigated by the pandemic increased spending and financial stress. Economic stress reflects the feeling of stress due to the current state of one's finances and economic worries. Economic stress is a universal phenomenon and broadly documented (e.g., Choi & Kim, 2014; Davig & Hakkio, 2010; Goel, 2014; Jeong Kim, 2020; Kitara & Karlsson, 2020; Neppl et al., 2016; Pollack et al., 2012; Probst et al., 2018). Indeed, it is mainly described as a threat to job performance and overall well-being among employees in an economic crisis (Sanchez-Gomez et al., 2021). The trend poses significant negative implications, especially for an adult with family responsibilities. It entails objective and subjective components reflecting the employment and income dimensions of the worker-earner role.

Equally, several scholars have stressed the link between economic stress and the quality of individual, marital, and family well-being (Fonseca et al., 2016; Zurlo et al., 2014) and the feelings of scarcity or threat due to uncertainty or inability to meet basic needs and provide security (Bartholomae & Fox, 2017), including increased anxiety, hostility, depression, somatic complaints, poor physical health, and declined commitment to job role (Drentea & Reynolds, 2012). Thus, the overall effect of economic distress relative to work commitment has an enormous impact in the job setting.

Work dedication is a vital component of any nation's civil service need. The involvement of civil servants in the administration of responsibilities is a key factor in determining the efficiency and long-term viability of the goals set. Commitment to the job is abstracted as a psychological link between employees and their job roles. Thus, it is theorized as the overall dedication to work, including regular attendance, efficient communication with co-workers, unbiased input, and fair practices. The echoes of employees' willingness to deploy their effort to contribute effectively are subject to various factors, including financial confidence. Thus, the economic crisis occasioned by the pandemic, which is implicated in inflation, delayed wages, and high expenditure, could affect civil servants' motivation and commitment to their job roles. Indeed, it might be central to financial extortions and related irregularities in the work setting.

A growing body of research connects employment dedication to workplace effectiveness. (Alansaari et al., 2019; Berberoglu, 2018; Đorđević et al., 2020; Hakim, 2015; Khan et al., 2014; Nwachuku et al., 2018; Paramita et al., 2020; Setiono et al., 2019; Simatupang & Saroyeni, 2018). Over the past decades, most employers' principal objective has been to improve workers' commitment, particularly when a practical commitment has been linked to employee motivation and job competency. While the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic may have affected the financial status of many workers, it is essential to investigate its effect on civil servants' commitment to their job roles. Thus, the current study intends to examine economic stress as a factor explaining the variations in civil servants' commitment to work in the post-covid-19 era.

Hypothesis: *Economic stress is a positive predictor of job commitment among civil servants in the post-covid-19 era.*

Method

Participants

The participants for the study included two hundred and twenty civil servants from the Enugu state civil service. The participants comprising males and females with ages ranging from 36 to 58 years ($m=36.1$, $S. D=4.3$), were conveniently sampled from different ministries, departments, and agencies in the Enugu State civil service. They were approached between January and March 2022 and urged to participate in the study. Nevertheless, the selection criteria were a minimum of five years of working experience and one year in the current job post. However, the respondents had six years of experience in their field and approximately two to five years in their existing job roles. Academic qualifications and ranks were not considered for the current research.

Instruments

The Economic Stress Scale (ESS), adapted from the Family Economic Strain Scale developed by (Hilton & Devall, 1997), measures the perceived economic stress. The measure is a 15-item Linkert-type scale scored on a 5-point scale. A

reliability coefficient of 0.87 was recorded for the instrument following a pilot study. A higher score indicates higher economic stress.

Job commitment was measured using the Organizational Commitment Scale. The scale is a 12 items measure developed to ascertain dimensions of job commitment, including affective, continual, and normative commitment. The Linkert form scale is scored in a 5-point range from 1-to 5 for strong disagreement and agreement. The Cronbach's alpha for the three factors was .892, .886, and .922. Perhaps, a higher score indicates a higher commitment.

Result

A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive role of economic stress on job commitment among civil servants. The study revealed that economic stress statistically significantly predicted job commitment among civil servants at F (1,218), 42.54, P<.000, with an R² of .122.

Table 1: - Table shows the simple regression analysis conducted to determine the effect of economic stress on job commitment.

	B	SEB	β	R ²	t	Sig
Constant	1.82	.036			62.76	.000
Economic Stress	-.74	.047	-.742	.122	-15.64	.000

Note. B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; SEB = Standardized error of the coefficient; β = Standardized coefficient; R² = Coefficient of determination. *P<.000.

Discussion

The primary objective of the present study was to explore the role of economic stress on job commitment among civil servants in the post-Covid-19 era. In particular, the employees' commitment was viewed as eagerness and motivation for job roles, as previously stated in the text. Thus, the study assumed that the perceived economic stress statistically significantly accounted for the variation in the job commitments among the respondents in the post-Covid-19 era. A simple regression analysis was conducted on the data, and a statistically significant effect of economic stress on job commitment was established F (1,218), 42.54, P<.000. The R² indicated that economic stress contributed 12.2% of the variance in the job commitment among the civil servants in the post-Covid-19 phase. The result of the study corroborates previous research that established a positive association between financial stress and work commitment (Wielers & van der Meer, 2021) and absenteeism (Kim & Garman, 2003). Indeed, the study results suggest that economic stress following the Covid-19 pandemic may have provided a pathway that leads to poor commitment in the work setting. In these times of economic crisis, it is conceivable that government officials with basic income may resort to other sources that provide a desirable outcome, putting their professional duties and ethics at risk. The expectation thus is that the introduction of a different income channel might induce a decline in intrinsic work commitment. Indeed, the probable consequence might be observed in elevated negative working attitudes, poor office communication, increased biases, and corruption. Mullainathan (2013) revealed that problems of financial insufficiency are associated with diminished cognitive capacities. Thus, it has the potential to alter an individual's commitment to responsibility.

Limitations, strengths, and future directions

The small sample size posed a barrier to the generalization of the present finding. Also, data were uniquely self-reported, thus raising the issue of common method variance. However, the study contributes to the literature by revealing economic stress as a vital factor in job commitment, thus broadening our knowledge of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the contribution of the civil servants to work demands in Nigeria's civil service system. Moreover, there are indications of scarce literature attempting to examine the role of economic stress on job commitment in the post-Covid-19 working period in the Nigerian context. Thus, justifying the present investigation. Future researchers should use samples from more comprehensive sources and utilize multiple data collection methods.

Conclusion

This study was focused on assessing the impact of economic stress on job commitment among civil servants in the post-Covid-19 era. Indeed, the result supported our expectation that economic stress would significantly predict job commitment in the civil service. Therefore, it is concluded that economic stress is an essential determinant of the civil servant's commitment to work roles in the post-Covid-19 phase. The finding has implications for organizational development and workplace well-being. Thus, the study recommends that civil servants be exposed to financial management training to enhance their financial management in economic difficulties.

REFERENCES

- [1] Adiyoh, I. S., Ze, T., Tougem, T. O., & Dalibi, S. G. (2020). Effect of COVID-19 pandemic on small and medium scale businesses in Nigeria. *International Journal of Research Publications*, 56(1). <https://doi.org/10.47119/ijrp100561720201305>
- [2] Ajibo, H. (2020). Effect of Covid-19 on Nigerian socio-economic well-being, health sector pandemic preparedness, and the role of Nigerian social workers in the war against Covid-19. *Social Work in Public Health*, 35(7). <https://doi.org/10.1080/19371918.2020.1806168>
- [3] Akande, O. W., & Akande, T. M. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic: A global health burden. *The Nigerian postgraduate medical journal* (Vol. 27, Issue 3). https://doi.org/10.4103/npmj.npmj_157_20
- [4] Aladejebi, O. (2020). Managing small businesses in Nigeria during covid-19 crisis : Impact and survival strategies. *Journal of Business and Management*, 22(8).
- [5] Alansaari, O. I. A., Yusoff, R. B. M., & Ismail, F. B. (2019). Exploring the link between employee commitment, recruitment process, and performance of internal supply chain of manufacturing firms in UAE. *Uncertain Supply Chain Management*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.uscm.2018.10.002>
- [6] Annune, A. E., Agoh, J. A., Annune, D. F., & Ihongo, D. A. (2020). Sensitization and awareness creation as tools for curbing perceived effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on university library users in Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 2020.
- [7] Aribisala, & Oluwadamilare Olufolarin. (2020). Economic impact of COVID-19 lockdown on small-medium enterprise (SMEs) in Lagos state. *International Journal on Integrated Education*, 3(7). <https://doi.org/10.31149/ijie.v3i7.490>
- [8] Bartholomae, S., & Fox, J. (2017). Coping with economic stress: A test of deterioration and stress-suppressing models. *Journal of Financial Therapy*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.4148/1944-9771.1134>
- [9] Berberoglu, A. (2018). Impact of organizational climate on organizational commitment and perceived organizational performance: Empirical evidence from public hospitals. *BMC Health Services Research*, 18(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-018-3149-z>
- [10] Bostan, S., Erdem, R., Öztürk, Y. E., Kılıç, T., & Yılmaz, A. (2020). The effect of COVID-19 pandemic on the Turkish society. *Electronic Journal of General Medicine*, 17(6). <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejgm/7944>
- [11] Briggs, D. C., & Kattey, K. A. (2020). COVID-19: Parents' healthcare-seeking behavior for their sick children in Nigeria - An online survey. *International Journal of TROPICAL DISEASE & Health*. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ijtdh/2020/v4i1i330344>
- [12] Choi, J.-M., & Kim, S.-Y. (2014). Relationship between perceived income inequality and suicidal ideation in the elderly -focusing on the mediating effect of economic stress-. *The Journal of the Korea Contents Association*, 14(11). <https://doi.org/10.5392/jkca.2014.14.11.743>
- [13] Choiriyah, Wibowo, Riyadi, H., & Umar, H. (2019). The influence of competence and organizational commitment on work satisfaction and their impact on the performance of employees (Study in PT. KAI Divre III, South Sumatera). *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijhrs.v9i1.14037>
- [14] Chronopoulos, D. K., Lukas, M., & Wilson, J. O. S. (2020). Consumer spending responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Assessment of Great Britain. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3586723>
- [15] Davig, T., & Hakkio, C. (2010). What is the effect of financial stress on economic activity: *Economic Review, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, Q II*.
- [16] Đorđević, B., Ivanović-Đukić, M., Lepojević, V., & Milanović, S. (2020). The impact of employees' commitment on organizational performances. *Strategic Management*, 25(3). <https://doi.org/10.5937/straman2003028d>
- [17] Drentea, P., & Reynolds, J. R. (2012). Neither a borrower nor a lender be: The relative importance of debt and SES for mental health among older adults. *Journal of Aging and Health*, 24(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0898264311431304>
- [18] Fonseca, G., Cunha, D., Crespo, C., & Relvas, A. P. (2016). Families in the context of macroeconomic crises: A systematic review. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 30(6). <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000230>
- [19] Goel, R. K. (2014). Economic stress and cigarette smoking: Evidence from the United States. *Economic Modelling*, 40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econmod.2014.04.009>
- [20] Hakim, A. (2015). Effect of organizational culture, organizational commitment to performance : Study in hospital of district south Konawe of southeast Sulawesi. *The International Journal of Engineering And Science*, 4(5).
- [21] Hilton, J. M., & Devall, E. L. (1997). The family economic strain scale: Development and evaluation of the instrument with single-and two-parent families. In *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* (Vol. 18, Issue 3). <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024974829218>
- [22] Ilesanmi, F. F., Ilesanmi, O. S., & Afolabi, A. A. (2021). The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on food losses in the agricultural value chains in Africa: The Nigerian case study. *Public Health in Practice*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhip.2021.100087>
- [23] Ilesanmi, O., & Afolabi, A. (2020). Perception and practices during the COVID-19 pandemic in an urban community in Nigeria: A cross-sectional study. *PeerJ*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.10038>
- [24] Imanche, S. A., Tian, Z., Akintunde, T. Y., Orelaja, O. A., & Tasinda, O. T. (2020). COVID-19, Sino-Nigeria economic relations and consequences of trade deficits in Nigeria. *Open Journal of Business and Management*, 08(05). <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojbm.2020.85127>
- [25] Jelilov, G., Iorember, P. T., Usman, O., & Yua, P. M. (2020). Testing the nexus between stock market returns and inflation in Nigeria: Does the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic matter? *Journal of Public Affairs*, 20(4).

- <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2289>
- [26] Jeong Kim, H. (2020). The effects of economic stress, career maturity, and major satisfaction on job stress in third and fourth-grade students of the university. *Medico-Legal Update*, 20(1). <https://doi.org/10.37506/v20/i1/2020/mlu/194523>
- [27] Khan, I., Dongping, H., & Ghauri, T. A. (2014). Impact of attitude on employees performance: A study of the textile industry in Punjab, Pakistan. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 30(30 A). <https://doi.org/10.5829/idosi.wasj.2014.30.icmrp.25>
- [28] Kim, J., & Garman, E. T. (2003). Financial stress and absenteeism: An empirically derived model. *Journal of Financial Counseling and Planning*, 14(1).
- [29] Kitara, D. L., & Karlsson, O. (2020). The effects of economic stress and urbanization on driving behaviors of boda-boda drivers and accidents in Gulu, northern Uganda: A qualitative view of drivers. *Pan African Medical Journal*, 36. <https://doi.org/10.11604/pamj.2020.36.47.21382>
- [30] Mogaji, E. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 on transportation in Lagos, Nigeria. *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trip.2020.100154>
- [31] Mullainathan, S. (2013). Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much | Sendhil Mullainathan. *Harvard University*.
- [32] Nepl, T. K., Senia, J. M., & Donnellan, M. B. (2016). Effects of economic hardship: Testing the Family Stress Model over time. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 30(1). <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000168>
- [33] Nwachukwu, C. E., Chladkova, H., & Olatunji, F. (2018). The Relationship between Employee Commitment to Strategy Implementation and Employee Satisfaction. *Trends Economics and Management*, 12(31). <https://doi.org/10.13164/trends.2018.31.45>
- [34] Ohia, C., Bakarey, A. S., & Ahmad, T. (2020). COVID-19 and Nigeria: putting the realities in context. In *International Journal of Infectious Diseases* (Vol. 95). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijid.2020.04.062>
- [35] Onofrei, M., Cigu, E., Gavriluta, A. F., Bostan, I., & Oprea, F. (2021). Effects of the covid-19 pandemic on the budgetary mechanism established to cover public health expenditure. A case study of Romania. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(3). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18031134>
- [36] Otache, I. (2020). The Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Nigeria's economy and possible coping strategies. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Management Studies*, 7(3). <https://doi.org/10.20448/journal.500.2020.73.173.179>
- [37] Paramita, E., Lumbanraja, P., & Absah, Y. (2020). The influence of organizational culture and organizational commitment on employee performance and job satisfaction as a moderating variable at PT. Bank Mandiri (Persero), Tbk. *International Journal of Research and Review (Ijrrjournal.Com)*, 7(March).
- [38] Pokhrel, S., & Chhetri, R. (2021). A literature review on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning. *Higher Education for the Future*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2347631120983481>
- [39] Pollack, J. M., Vanepps, E. M., & Hayes, A. F. (2012). The moderating role of social ties on entrepreneurs' depressed affect and withdrawal intentions in response to economic stress. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 33(6). <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1794>
- [40] Probst, T. M., Sinclair, R. R., Sears, L. E., Gailey, N. J., Black, K. J., & Cheung, J. H. (2018). Economic stress and well-being: Does population health context matter? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 103(9). <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000309>
- [41] Sanchez-Gomez, M., Giorgi, G., Finstad, G. L., Alessio, F., Ariza-Montes, A., Arcangeli, G., & Mucci, N. (2021). Economic stress at work: Its impact on absenteeism and innovation. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(10). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18105265>
- [42] Setiono, B. A., Brahmasari, I. A., & Mujanah, S. (2019). Effect of safety culture, safety leadership, and safety climate on employee commitments and employee performance PT. Pelindo III (Persero) East Java Province. *Sebelas Maret Business Review*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.20961/snbr.v3i1.13680>
- [43] Simatupang, A., & Saroyeni, P. (2018). The effect of discipline, motivation, and commitment on employee performance. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)*, 20(6).
- [44] Wielers, R., & van der Meer, P. H. (2021). Beyond Income: Why We Want to Keep on Working Even if We Don't Need the Money. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 16(4). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-020-09834-1>
- [45] Zurlo, K. A., Yoon, W. A., & Kim, H. (2014). Unsecured consumer debt and mental health outcomes in middle-aged and older Americans. *Journals of Gerontology - Series B Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, 69(3). <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbu020>