

Personal Characteristics as Predictors of Employee Commitment of Academic Staff in
Universities in Uganda: A Test of Social Identity Theory

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Abstract

The study sought to examine the extent to which seven personal characteristics, namely age, sex, highest level of education attained, marital status, length of service and position in the hierarchy and self-efficacy, were predictors of employment commitment. The cross sectional-correlational study involved 301 respondents from seven universities in Uganda. Data were collected using a questionnaire whose validity and reliability were tested using factor analysis and Cronbach alpha respectively. Percentages and means were used for descriptive analysis, while multiple regression with dummies was used for inferential analysis to test the hypotheses. Results showed that while age, education level, (single) marital status, length of service and self-efficacy were significant predictors of employee commitment, sex and positions in the hierarchy were not. Pertinent conclusions were made and hence the recommendations to the effect that the directorates of human resource in the respective universities, should encourage retention of long serving staff, support staff to further their education, support their families and develop staff self-efficacy to enhance their employment commitment.

Keywords: *Academic staff, employee commitment, personal characteristics, regression with dummies, Uganda.*

1. Introduction

Employee commitment is the force that binds an individual to a target and to a course of action of relevance to that target experienced in different ways (mindsets), namely the affective, continuance and normative (Meyer & Maltin, 2010). The affective mindset refers to an emotional attachment to and involvement with an organisation; the continuance mindset denotes the perceived costs of leaving an organisation; while the normative mindset refers to the felt responsibility to support and remain a member of the organisation (Meyer, Stanley & Parfyonova, 2012). Employees with high organisational commitment feelings affect organisational performance in positive ways because they lessen the frequency of performing negative behaviour and improve the quality of service (Yilmaz & Çokluk-Bökeoğlu, 2008).

Employee commitment encourages the individual to exhibit organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) that is to do many voluntary actions necessary for the organisation. Other authors propose that employee commitment reduces employee turnover (Lambert & Hogan, 2009). Employee commitment leads to the acceptance of organisational change, in that when an organisation engages in change initiatives, committed employees provide many benefits such as putting in extra effort to ensure that the change succeeds (Visagie & Steyn, 2011).

Organisational commitment enhances knowledge sharing between employees by which skills and expertise are reciprocally exchanged among members of the organisation (Demirel & Goc, 2013). Knowledge sharing leads to the creation of new ideas among the employees and presenting new ideas fundamental to a living organisation. Owing to its importance, various studies (e.g. Bayona-Sáez, Goñi-Legaz & Madorrán-García, 2009; McCabe & Garavan, 2008; Smeenk, Teelken, Eisinga & Doorewaard, 2009; Suman & Srivastava, 2012) have been devoted to establishing the antecedents or determinants of employee commitment. However, as those studies suggest, there has been a bias towards the West, thus excluding the developing world contexts. This paper accordingly reports on a survey on the employee commitment of academic staff in universities in Uganda carried out with the purpose of checking whether the commitment can be predicted using the characteristics of the individual academic staff.

2. Social Identity Theory

This paper is premised on Social Identity Theory (SIT), which proposes that individuals classify themselves and others into various social categories (Jones & Volpe, 2010). Therefore, in many social contexts people define their sense of self in terms of group membership such as organisational membership, gender, race, age cohort or religious affiliation. This means that a person's psychology often depends on the state of the groups that define the self. If these groups provide a person with stability, meaning, purpose, and direction, then this will typically have positive implications on the employee (Haslam, Jetten, Postmes & Haslam, 2009). SIT postulates that in organisations people classify themselves in social categories such as personal characteristics and this gives them identity leading to positive implications such as commitment. It is therefore appropriate to postulate that personal characteristics relate to employee commitment. Therefore, this paper devoted itself to relating personal characteristics to employee commitment. Thus, the objectives of this study were to establish whether; age, sex, highest level of education attained, marital status, length of service and position in the hierarchy and self-efficacy were antecedents of the employee commitment of academic staff in universities.

3. Related Literature

3.1 Age as a Predictor of Employee Commitment. Several scholars (e.g. Angelis, Conti, Cooper & Gill, 2010; Bayona-Sáez et al., 2009; Dick, 2011; Innocenti, Profili & Sammarra, 2013) have related age to employee commitment. For example, Angelis et al. (2010) sought to provide insights into the role specific work practices played in relation to employee commitment. In their study, they used a questionnaire survey on employees from assembling industries in the UK that were namely, machinery, appliances and electronics and motor vehicles. Using regression analysis, they established a significant positive relationship between age and affective commitment. However, Bayona-Sáez et al. (2009) in a study on how to raise commitment of teachers at the Public University of Navarra in Spain, using logit models of analysis found out that age had no significant relationship with employee commitment.

Dick (2011) studied the influence of managerial and job variables on organisational commitment using a whole population survey of a county police force in the UK. Using correlation, Dick indicated that age had a small influence on organisational commitment. Innocenti et al. (2013) carried out a study relating human resource (HR) development practices and employees' positive attitudes, using employees of 37 Italian multinational and domestic companies. Using regression analysis, they revealed that employees who were younger reported lower levels of affective commitment. This suggested that age was positively related to employee commitment. However, in the studies above there are some contextual and empirical gaps that call for further exploration of the relationship between age and employee commitment. At contextual level, the studies were carried out in the Western World and in assembling industries (Angelis et al., 2010), Police (Dick, 2011) and industrial and service sectors (Innocenti et al., 2013). At the empirical level, whereas Dick (2011) found out that age had a small influence on organisational commitment, Angelis et al. (2010) and Innocenti et al (2013) suggested that age was positively related to employee commitment. These gaps called for this study to investigate the hypothesis to the effect that:

H1: Age was a predictor of employee commitment.

3.2 *Sex as a Predictor of Employee Commitment.* Studies (e.g. Bayona-Sáez et al., 2009; Dick, 2011; Giffords, 2009) examined the relationship between the sex and employee commitment. Bayona-Sáez et al. (2009) in a study whose context has already been given used two ordered logit models to establish that gender was not a significant predictor of employee commitment. Dick (2011) in a study whose context has already been given used correlation analysis to reveal that gender was a weak predictor of employee commitment. Giffords (2009) studied organisational commitment and professional commitment in relation to work environment, demographic and organisational factors with staff of the National Association of Social Workers, New York State Chapter as the units of analysis. Via regression, they found gender to be a statistically insignificant predictor of organisational commitment. All the above studies suggested that gender had a weak or no correlation with employee commitment. However, all the above studies were carried out in the context of the Western World. The above gaps made it imperative for this study in the context of universities in Uganda to seek to find out whether:

H2: Sex was a predictor of employee commitment

3.3 *Educational Level as a Predictor of Employee Commitment.* Prior scholars (e.g. Bayona-Sáez et al., 2009; Benligiray & Sonmez, 2013; Innocenti et al., 2013) related education levels to employee commitment. Bayona-Sáez et al. (2009) in a study whose context and methodology has already been given, revealed that possession of a doctorate was a positive antecedent of continuance commitment. Benligiray and Sonmez (2013) studied demographic and work life variables which affected the occupational commitment of nurses in Turkey. Using correlation, they established a positive relationship between educational status and occupational commitment. Innocenti et al. (2013) in a study whose context and methodology are already given, established that managers and employees with a higher degree of education had higher levels of affective commitment. However, from the studies above, some gaps emerge. For instance, the studies by Benligiray and Sonmez (2013) related education to continuance commitment, the studies by Innocenti et al. (2013) and Bayona-Sáez et al. (2009) related it to affective commitment. Besides, all the above studies were carried out in western world. Thus,

with respect to universities in the Ugandan context, it was still imperative for this study to find out whether:

H3: Educational level was a predictor of employee commitment.

3.4 Marital Status as a Predictor of Employee Commitment. A number of studies have related marital status and employee commitment. For instance, Cohen and Veled-Hecht (2010) examined the relationship between organisational socialisation and commitment in the workplace with nurses in nursing care facilities in the north of Israel as the units of analysis. Their regression results revealed that marital status had no significant relationship with employee commitment. Gurses and Demiray (2009) carried out a study on employees of TV production in Turkey. Using Student's t test they found that there was no significant difference between the singles and the married in regard to continuance and normative commitment but affective commitment was higher in the married when compared to singles. However, as the two studies (Cohen & Veled-Hecht, 2010; Gurses & Demiray, 2009) suggest, studies have been carried out more in the Western World. Such a gap made it incumbent for this study to establish whether in the context of academic staff in universities in Uganda, the following hypothesis held:

H4: Marital status was a predictor of employee commitment

3.5 Length of Service as a Predictor of Employee Commitment. Studies (e.g. Benligiray & Sonmez, 2013; Dick, 2011; Karakus & Aslan, 2009) have related length of service and employee commitment. Benligiray and Sonmez (2013) analysed experience and work life variables which affected occupational commitment of nurses in Turkey, and using correlation analysis, they showed a negative correlation between tenure and occupational commitment. Dick (2011) in their study whose context has been given already, used correlation to establish a significant positive relationship between experience (length of service) and employee commitment with constables with more than 20 years service demonstrating higher levels commitment than those between six to 19 years of service. Karakus and Aslan (2009) in a study of commitment focuses made a survey on teachers working in public and private high schools in Elazig City, Turkey. Using one-way ANOVA, they established that teachers who had served for more than 21 years were the least affectively committed because, it seemed, they looked to their retirement. However, teachers that had served between 16-20 years had the highest level of affective commitment.

Teachers that had served between one and five years were the least affectively committed because, being new, they had some problems in the processes of vocational and organisational socialisation and had not properly integrated with their work groups. However, the studies above which were carried out in Europe leave some unanswered gaps. Whereas Dick (2011) found that constables with more than 20 years service demonstrated higher levels of employee commitment, conversely Karakus and Aslan (2009) established that teachers who had served for more than 21 years were the least affectively. Still, Benligiray and Sonmez (2013) found a negative correlation between tenure and occupational commitment. These controversies besides differences in sectors from which samples were drawn, such as the Police (Dick, 2011) and nurses (Benligiray & Sonmez, 2013) called for this study to investigate whether the following hypothesis held with respect to the academic staff in universities in Uganda:

H5: Length of service was a predictor of employee commitment.

3.6 *Job Status as a Predictor of Employee Commitment.* Several studies (Dick, 2011; Shore, Bommer, & Shore, 2008; Turunen, 2011) have demonstrated that job status positively correlated with employee commitment. Dick (2011) in a study whose context and methodology were given already, found out that rank seniority significantly positively related with organisational commitment for police officers. Shore et al (2008) studied managerial perceptions of employee commitment in a survey of employees of a publicly owned US manufacturing firm. Basing on regression analysis, they established that job position contributed to social workers' organisational and professional commitment. Turunen (2011) carried out a study comparing employment and organisational commitment among employees in Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Spain and Sweden. Using correlation and regression analyses, they found out that in Spain, there was no statistically significant difference in the commitment of the middle and the highest occupational classes. However, in the other countries, at least the lowest occupational class displayed lower organisational commitment than those in the highest class. However the studies above carried out in the context of the Western World and with the Police Officers (Dick, 2011) and employees in manufacturing industries (Shore et al., 2008) as the units of analysis, suggested the need in the context of academic staff in universities in Uganda to test the hypothesis to the effect that:

H6: Job status was a predictor of employee commitment.

3.7 *Self-efficacy as a Predictor of Employee Commitment.* Studies pertaining to self-efficacy and employee commitment (e.g. Bayona-Sáez et al., 2009; Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink & Hofman, 2012; Suman & Srivastava, 2012) are many. Bayona-Sáez et al. (2009) in a study whose context and methodology are already given, established that ability (self-efficacy) had a positive significant relationship with employee commitment. In their study, Canrinus et al. (2012) investigated how relevant indicators of teachers' sense of their professional identity (job satisfaction, occupational commitment, self-efficacy and change in level of motivation) were related in a survey on Dutch teachers. Via correlation, they established that teachers' classroom self-efficacy positively significantly related to teachers' affective occupational commitment. Suman and Srivastava (2012) investigated the impact of various personal and organisational characteristics on organisational commitment of employees working at different hierarchical levels. The survey involved employees of a steel plant in India. Using regression analysis, they found out that locus of control (self-efficacy) had a significant positive contribution in determining the organisational commitment of the workers. However, the studies above carried out in the Western World (Bayona-Sáez et al., 2009; Canrinus et al., 2012) and Asia (Suman & Srivastava, 2012), left room for this study to be carried out in the context of university academics in Uganda to investigate the hypothesis that:

H7: Self efficacy was a predictor of employee commitment.

4. Method

4.1 *Sample.* Using a self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) – see Appendix, data were collected from 301 academics from four public and three private chartered universities. In the Central Region, Kyambogo University represented the public universities, while Kampala International and Ndejje represented the private chartered ones. From the Eastern Region, the universities chosen were Busitema, the only public university therein, and Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) the only private chartered one in the region. From the Northern and Western Regions, Gulu and Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) were selected, they

being the only public universities in the regions, and no private university was chosen there from since the two regions by the time of sampling had no private chartered universities.

4.2 *Instrument.* The SAQ used in data collection comprised three sections, namely A through C. Section A was on the background characteristics of the respondents with questions on the name of the university the respondent worked in; and its owner (public or private); the position of the respondent on first appointment in the current university; and his/ her current appointment in the university; and his/ her terms of employment (permanent, probation, contract or part-time). Sections B was on the dependent and independent variable (DV), namely employee commitment, and covered three aspects of the same, namely affective commitment (seven items: $\alpha = 0.87$); continuance commitment (five items: $\alpha = 0.75$); and normative commitment (six items: $\alpha = 0.79$), all adapted from Allen and Meyer (1990). Section C was on the independent variables (IVs), namely the personal characteristics, and covered seven of them namely; age, sex, highest level of education attained, marital status, length of service and position in the hierarchy (nominal questions) and self-efficacy (eight questions from Chen, Gully & Eden, 2001: $\alpha = 0.86$). All the numerical variables were adapted from measures already used by other scholars basing on the premise that their validities and reliabilities could be taken for granted initially (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). However, still after the data collection, the respective items were subjected to confirmatory factors analysis and reliability test to reconfirm validity and reliability.

4.3 *Data Management.* The data analysis at univariate level was based on percentages from the frequency tables and descriptive statistics, specifically the mean. At the multivariate level, a predictive model was built by regressing the numerical index on the dependent variable (DV) on the numerical indexes of the seven respective independent variables (IVs). The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) facilitated the data analysis.

5. Findings

5.1 *Background Characteristics of the Respondents.* The data on background characteristics of the respondents of the study in Table 1 show that a typical respondent was a staff of Islamic University in Uganda, IUIU (26.2%); from a private university (57.5%); first appointed in the current university as a Teaching Assistant/ Assistant Lecturer (50.5%); currently serving as a Lecturer (51.5%); on permanent contract terms (43.5%).

Table 1: Respondents Background Characteristics

Item	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Name of the University a respondent worked in	Busitema University	25	8.3
	Gulu University	33	11.0
	Islamic University in Uganda	79	26.2
	Kampala International University	67	22.3
	Kyambogo University	39	13.0
	Mbarara University	31	10.3
	Ndejje University	27	9.0
	Total	301	100.0
Ownership of the University the respondent worked in	Public	128	42.5
	Private	173	57.5
	Total	301	100.0
Position of the respondent on first appointment to the	Teaching Assistant/ Assistant Lecturer	152	50.5

current University	Lecturer	134	44.5
	Senior Lecturer	13	4.3
	Associate Professor	02	0.7
	Professor	00	0.0
	Total	301	100.0
Current appointment of the respondent in the current University	Teaching Assistant/ Assistant		
	Lecturer	100	33.2
	Lecturer	155	51.5
	Senior Lecturer	40	13.3
	Associate Professor	03	1.0
	Professor	03	1.0
Terms of employment of the respondent in the current University	Total	301	100.0
	Permanent	131	43.5
	Probation	17	5.6
	Contract	129	42.9
	Part-time	24	8.0
Total	301	100.0	

5.2 *The Dependent Variable: Employee Commitment.* The dependent variable, DV, employee commitment (EC) was broken into three components, namely; affective (AC), continuance (CC) and normative (NC). All the items under each component were scaled using the five-point Likert scale from a minimum of 1 for the worst case scenario (strongly disagree) to a maximum of 5, which is the best case scenario (Strongly agree). Table 2 gives the resultant respective means, factors and Cronbach alphas. Therein it is illustrated that the respondents overall rated themselves highly on the first component of EC, namely AC (overall mean = 3.76 \approx 4, corresponding to Agree); while they rated themselves averagely on the other two respective components of EC, namely CC and NC (overall means = 3.06 and 3.26 \approx 3, corresponding to Undecided). Further according to Table 2, Factor Analysis suggested that the items on each of the three components of AC could be reduced to only one factor, with the respective three factors having eigenvalues of 4.575, 3.188 and 2.674 respectively.

The respective three factors explained over 65%, almost 64%, and almost 45% of the joint variation in the respective items constituting a factor. Considering a factor loading of at least 0.5 as high (Demo, Neiva, Nunes & Rozzett, 2012), Table 2 shows that each item loaded highly on the corresponding factor, meaning that all items were valid measures of the corresponding construct (AC, CC & NC). Finally Table 2 illustrates that the Cronbach alphas of 0.910, 0.810 and 0.745 for the respective components of AC were above the recommended 0.7 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). This means that each cluster of items was a reliable measure of the corresponding construct (AC, CC & NC). Finally, an average index of employee commitment from all the items of the three aspects namely, affective (AC), continuance (CC) and normative (NC), had an overall mean = 3.36 meaning that overall the academic staff in the universities were undecided about their levels of job commitment.

Table 2: Means, Factors and Cronbach Alphas on Components of Employee Commitment

a) AC	Mean	Overall Mean	Factor on AC	Cronbach (α)
AC1	4.06	3.76	0.768	0.910
AC2	3.78		0.776	
AC3	3.45		0.739	
AC4	3.76		0.859	

AC5	3.77		0.817	
AC6	3.69		0.856	
AC7	3.79		0.836	
Eigenvalue			4.575	
% variance			65.360	
a) CC	Mean	Overall Mean	Factor on CC	Cronbach (α)
CC1	3.00	3.06	0.761	0.850
CC2	2.92		0.853	
CC3	3.00		0.907	
CC4	2.93		0.882	
CC5	3.46		0.530	
Eigenvalue			3.188	
% variance			63.763	
b) NC	Mean	Overall Mean	Factor on NC	Cronbach (α)
NC1	2.90	3.26	0.530	0.745
NC2	3.92		0.697	
NC3	3.16		0.748	
NC4	3.77		0.670	
NC5	2.78		0.676	
NC6	3.06		0.665	
Eigenvalue			2.674	
% variance			44.567	

AC = Continuance Commitment, CC = Continuance Commitment, NC = Continuance Commitment

5.3 *The independent Variables.* The independent variables in the study were seven constructs that defined personal characteristics, namely; age, sex, highest level of education attained, marital status, length of service and position in the hierarchy (nominal questions) and self-efficacy. On the part of results for nominal variables, Table 3 shows that the typical respondent was aged 30 but below 40 years (50.5%); a male (61.5%); holding a masters degree (61.0%) as the highest qualification; married (78.7%); having served between five and 10 years in the current university (45.2%); and strictly an academic staff (79.2%).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Unidimensional Personal Characteristics Items

Item	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Age group of the respondents in years	Up to 30 years	61	20.3
	30 but below 40	152	50.5
	40 and above	88	29.2
	Total	301	100.0
Sex of the respondent	Male	182	61.5
	Female	114	38.5
	Total	296	100.0
Highest level of education attained by the Respondent	Bachelor's degree	33	11.0
	Post graduate diploma	14	4.7
	Master's degree	183	61.0
	PhD degree	70	23.3

	Total	300	100.0
Marital status of the respondent	Single never married	49	16.3
	Married	237	78.7
	Widowed	9	3.0
	Divorced	6	2.0
	Total	301	100.0
The number of years the respondent has been employed in the University	Less than 1 year	26	8.6
	1 but less than 5 years	93	30.9
	5 but less than 10 years	136	45.2
	More than 10 years	46	15.3
	Total	301	100.0
Position of the respondent in the hierarchy of the University	Administrative position*	62	20.8
	Strictly academic staff only	236	79.2
	Total	298	100.0

* (e.g. Principal of a college, dean of a faculty, head of institute or head of department)

The seventh independent variable, IV7, self efficacy (SE) was a multi-item construct made up of eight items (SE1 – SE8). Each item was scaled using the five-point Likert scale from a minimum of 1 for the worst case scenario (strongly disagree) to a maximum of 5, which was the best case scenario (Strongly agree). Table 4 gives the resultant respective means, factors and Cronbach alphas. Therein it is illustrated that the respondents overall rated themselves highly on most items of SE (overall mean = 3.83 \approx 4, corresponding to Agree). Further according to Table 4, Factor Analysis suggested that the items on SE could be reduced to two factors, which factors had eigenvalues of 3.978 and 1.169 respectively.

The respective two factors explained almost 50%, and almost 15% of the joint variation in the respective items constituting a factor. Considering a factor loading of at least 0.5 as high (Demo et al, 2012), Table 4 shows that each item loaded highly on the first factor, while only the third item (SE3) also loaded on the second factor. Item SE3 was complex (Moore & Benbasat, 1991) on account of loading highly on two factors, and hence had to be dropped. Finally Table 4 illustrates that the Cronbach alpha dropped to 0.823 from 0.844 after dropping SE3, meaning that dropping the item made the measure more valid but less reliable. However the final alpha 0.823 was above the recommended 0.7 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). This meant that the cluster of the remaining seven items was a reliable measure of the construct (SE). Finally, an average index of the valid seven items had an overall mean = 3.84 \approx 4 corresponding to “agree” meaning that overall the academic staff in the universities rated themselves highly on self-efficacy.

Table 4: Means, Factors and Cronbach Alphas for Components of Self Efficacy

Constructs	Mean	Overall Mean	Components		Cronbach (α)
			1	2	
Self-efficacy					
SE1	3.87	3.84	0.684	0.205	0.844*
SE2	3.42		0.690	0.412	0.823**
SE3	3.84		0.698	0.534	

SE4	4.01	0.659	0.352
SE5	3.87	0.744	-0.222
SE6	4.12	0.784	-0.388
SE7	4.09	0.773	-0.384
SE8	3.43	0.588	-0.448
Eigenvalue		3.978	1.169
% variance		49.731	14.615

* Before dropping SE3

** After dropping SE3

5.4 Statistical Model for Predicting Employee Commitment using the Personal Characteristics. To establish whether the dependent variable (DV), namely employee commitment could be predicted using the independent variables (IVs), the personal characteristics, the DV was regressed on the IVs. However, because of the categorical nature of most of the IVs (see Table 3), dummies were created for them as follows: An age group dummy was created for the age groups using the older respondents as the comparison group (1 = 40 and above) and the young respondents as the reference group (0 = below 40). The logic behind this was that the older employees were expected to be more committed to their jobs than the young ones because the age of an individual is an indicator of them getting a better position in the organisation or profession, gaining tenure and the investments an individual has made in his or her organisation or profession (Benligiray & Sommez, 2013). A sex dummy was created for the sexes using the males as the comparison group (1 = Male) and the females as the reference group (0 = Female). The rationale behind this was the gender model in the study of EC, which presumes that women accept family roles as a chief source of their identity and fulfilment leading to a different orientation to work for men for whom work is paramount (Khalili & Asmawi, 2012).

Another dummy was created for the highest level of education attained by a respondent using the highly educated respondents as the comparison group (1 = Masters and PhD) and the less educated respondents as the reference group (0 = Bachelors and Postgraduate diploma). The basis for this was that as the qualifications of an individual get better, their sense of belongingness is improved (Khan, Khan, Khan, Nawaz & Yar, 2013). A marital status dummy was created using the unmarried respondents as the comparison group (1 = Single never married, Widowed and Divorced) and the married respondents as the reference group (0 = Married). The justification for this was that marital status negatively affects occupational and career commitments because time is needed to keep a marriage stable which has a negative effect on work life and occupational commitment (Benligiray & Sommez, 2013). A length of service dummy was created for the “number of years the respondent has been employed...” using the long term employees as the comparison group (1 = More than five years) and the new employees as the reference group (0 = Less than five years). The logic behind this was that employees with long organisational tenure may be tied to their organisation because of the high costs of leaving (e.g. losing pension benefits and seniority) (Shore et al., 2008).

A position in the hierarchy dummy was created for the position of the respondent in the hierarchy of the University using those respondents in administrative positions as the comparison group (1 = Administrative position) and those respondents who were strictly academic staff as the reference group (0 = Strictly academic staff only). The logic behind this was that an individual considering a new job opportunity may be deterred because the move may cost the

person their seniority in the hierarchy (Wood & Rowe, 2011). Self efficacy (SE from Table 4), being a numerical variable was used in the regression model without any modification. The pertinent results are in Table 5.

Table 5: Regression coefficients of employee commitment on the personal characteristics

Personal Characteristic	Standardised β	Significance p
Age group dummy (1 = 40 and above; 0 = Below 40)	0.104	0.042
Sex dummy (1 = Male; 0 = Female)	0.058	0.245
Highest level of education dummy (1 = Masters and PhD; 0 = Bachelors and Postgraduate diploma)	0.113	0.037
Marital status dummy (1 = Single never married, Widowed and Divorced; 0 = Married).	0.154	0.004
Length of service dummy (1 = More than five years; 0 = Less than five years)	0.133	0.012
Position in the hierarchy dummy (1 = Administrative position; 0 = Strictly academic staff only)	0.074	0.138
Self efficacy	0.532	0.000
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.314$ F = 19.607, p = 0.000		

The results in Table 5 show that the seven personal characteristics explained 31.4% of the variation in employee commitment (adjusted $R^2 = 0.314$). This means that 68.6% of the variation was accounted for by extraneous variables, that is, other factors not considered in this study. The regression model was significant (F = 19.607, p = 0.000 < 0.5). While all the seven personal characteristics were positive predictors of employee commitment, only five of them, namely, the age group dummy, highest level of education dummy, single marital status dummy (not being married), length of service dummy and self efficacy (p < 0.05) proved to be statistically positive significant predictors while the sex dummy and position in the hierarchy dummy did not. Thus H1, H3 – H5 and H7 were upheld, while H2 and H6 were not. However, of the five positive significant predictors, self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.532$, p = 0.000) was most significant followed by the (single) marital status dummy ($\beta = 0.154$, p = 0.004); length of service dummy ($\beta = 0.133$, p = 0.012); highest education level dummy ($\beta = 0.113$, p = 0.037); and age group dummy ($\beta = 0.104$, p = 0.042) respectively.

6 Discussion

The study supported the first research hypothesis (H1) to the effect that age was a predictor of employee commitment (EC). This finding was similar to findings by Angelis et al. (2010) who found a significant positive relationship between age and the affective aspect of EC. However, the finding was contrary to the findings by Bayona-Sáez et al. (2009) who found out that age had

no significant positive relationship with EC and Dick (2011) who indicated that age had a small influence on EC. However, this study did not uphold the second hypothesis (H2) that gender was a predictor of EC. The finding yet concurred with previous studies such as Bayona-Sáez et al. (2009) that gender was not a significant predictor of EC. Also Dick (2011) found out that sex was a weak predictor of EC as was Giffords (2009) who established that gender was a statistically insignificant predictor of EC. The finding from third hypothesis (H3) that, educational level was a positive significant predictor of EC agreed with the finding by Bayona-Sáez et al. (2009) that possession of a doctorate was a positive predictor of continuance commitment. Also Benligiray and Sonmez (2013) established a positive relationship between educational status and occupational commitment and Innocenti et al. (2013) indicated that employees with a higher degree of education had higher levels of affective commitment.

Consistent with the fourth hypothesis (H4), the study revealed that that marital status was a predictor of EC. This agreed with the finding by Bayona-Sáez et al. (2009) that marital status had a significant relationship with EC. However, the finding was contrary to the studies by Cohen and Veled-Hecht (2010) and Gurses and Demiray (2009) that marital status had no significant relationship. Also consistent with the fifth hypothesis (H5) the study found out that job experience was a predictor of EC. This agreed with the findings of the studies by Dick (2011) who established significant positive relationship between experience and EC with constables with more than 20 years service demonstrating higher levels of EC than those between six to 19 years of service. However, the finding was contrary to the findings by scholars such as Benligiray and Sonmez (2013) who found a negative correlation between tenure and occupational commitment; and Karakus and Aslan (2009) that established that teachers who had served for more than 21 years were the least affectively committed because it seemed they looked to their retirement.

The sixth hypothesis (H6) that length of service/ job experience was an antecedent of EC was not upheld by this study. This finding was in agreement with the study by Turunen (2011) which found out that in Spain, there was no statistically significant difference in the commitment of the middle and the highest occupational classes except that the study by Turunen to the contrary indicated that in Finland, Germany, Great Britain and Sweden at least the lowest occupational class displayed lower EC than those in the highest class. The study was also contrary to the findings by Dick (2011) who found out that rank seniority significantly positively related with EC for police officers, and Shore et al (2008) who established that job position contributed to organisational and professional commitment. Lastly, conforming to the seventh hypothesis (H7), the study established that self-efficacy was a predictor of EC. This finding concurred with study by Bayona-Sáez et al. (2009) which established that ability (self-efficacy) had a positive significant relationship with EC. Canrinus et al. (2012) also established that teachers' classroom self-efficacy positively significantly related to teachers' affective occupational commitment, and Suman and Srivastava (2012) found out that locus of control (self-efficacy) had significant positive contribution in determining the EC of the workers.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Summary. This paper has reported on a survey on the employee commitment of the academic staff in public and private universities in Uganda. The survey was carried out with the purpose of checking whether employee commitment could be predicted using seven personal characteristics, namely; namely age, sex, highest level of education attained, marital status, length of service and position in the hierarchy and self-efficacy. In this effort the study closed

gaps such as the study being carried out in the context of universities in the developing world context that so far had been ignored by earlier studies. The main findings of the study were that age, education level, single marital status, length of service and self-efficacy were probable pre-requisites for the commitment of the academic staff to their jobs, while sex and positions in the hierarchy were not.

7.2 Implications. The findings of this study have practical significance to human resource managers in universities in Uganda and other similar institutions of higher learning. Particularly, the findings that age, education level, single marital status, length of service and self-efficacy were significant positive predictors of employee commitment imply that they should be given due consideration in the management of universities. Hence this study recommends that stakeholders such as the directorates of human resource in the respective universities should encourage retention of long serving staff, support staff further education, families and develop staff efficacy to enhance academic staff commitment. However, the finding that sex and positions in the hierarchy were not significant antecedents of academic staff commitment means that they should not be given much emphasis.

7.3 Limitations. Whereas this study makes significant contributions in as far as promoting employee commitment is concerned, there are a number of limitations in this study that cannot be ignored. For instance, the study considered only personal characteristics as independent variables yet there is evidence that many other variables could have been taken into account as independent variables. Future studies should take account of more variables that were not considered in this study. The study was also based on data collected from academic staff from a few public and private chartered universities as the respondents. Therefore, the generalisation of the research findings to all universities should be taken with care. Besides, the study having taken the positivist paradigm may have limited the reliability of the findings which calls for future studies to consider a pragmatic paradigm for broader findings about the variables studied.

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Appendix Study Instrument

Construct	Item	Measure
Section A	Background Characteristics	
Background	BV1	Name of the University a respondent worked in (Busitema, Gulu, Islamic University in Uganda, Kampala International, Kyambogo, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Ndejje)

BV2	Ownership of the University the respondent worked in (Public, Private)
BV3	Position of the respondent on first appointment to the current University (Teaching Assistant/ Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor, Professor)
BV4	Current appointment of the respondent in the University (Teaching Assistant/ Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor, Professor)
BV5	Terms of employment of the respondent in the current University (Permanent, Probation, Contract, Part-time)

Section B	Dependent Variable: Employee Commitment *	
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Affective Commitment (AC)	AC1	I am very happy being a member of this University
	AC2	I enjoy discussing about my University with the people outside it
	AC3	I really feel as if this University's problems are my own
	AC4	I am deeply attached to this University
	AC5	I am part of the family of this University
	AC6	I feel emotionally attached to this University
	AC7	This University has a great deal of personal meaning for me
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Continuance Commitment (CC)	CC1	I am afraid of what might happen if I quit my job in this University without having another one lined up
	CC2	It would be very hard for me to leave my job in this University right now, even if I wanted to
	CC3	Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided to leave my job in this University now
	CC4	It would be too costly for me to leave this University now

	CC5	Right now, staying on my job in this University is a matter of necessity
Normative Commitment (NC)	NC1	I think that people these days rarely move from job to job too often
	NC2	I believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her University
	NC3	Jumping from this University to another seems unethical to me
	NC4	One of the major reasons I continue to work in this University is that I feel a sense of moral obligation to remain
	NC5	Even if I got another offer of a better job elsewhere I would feel it is right to stay in this University
	NC7	Things were better in the days when people stayed in one institution for most of their career
Section C	Independent Variables: Personal Characteristics	
	PC1	Age group of the respondent in years (Up to 30, 30 but below 40, 40 and above)
	PC2	Sex of the respondent (Male, Female)
	PC3	Highest level of education attained by the respondent (Bachelors degree, Postgraduate diploma, Masters degree, PhD degree)
	PC4	Marital status of the respondent (Single never married, Married, Widowed, Divorced)
	PC5	Tenure in years of employment attained by the respondent in the current University (Less than one, One but less than five, Five but less than 10, 10 and more)
	PC6	Position of the respondent in the hierarchy of the current University (Administrative position e.g. Principal of a college, Dean of a faculty, head of institute or Head of dept.; Strictly academic)
Self-efficacy *	SE1	I can always manage to solve difficult problems of my job in this University

SE2	If someone opposes me, I can find the means to get what I want in this University
SE3	I am confident that I can deal efficiently with unexpected events in this University
SE4	I remain calm when facing difficulties in this University
SE5	I feel confident that my abilities equal or exceed those of my colleagues in this University
SE6	My past experiences increase my confidence that I perform successfully in this University
SE7	My past accomplishments increase my confidence that I perform successfully in this University
SE8	My job in this University satisfies my expectations

* All the items in Sections B and Self Efficacy (SE1 - SE8) were scaled from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree. Other items (PC1 – PC7) in Section C were nominal questions.