

Building a Culture of Innovation in Human Resource Management and Business Educators' Job Commitment in Universities in South-South Nigeria

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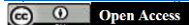
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ABSTRACT

This study examined Building a Culture of Innovation in Human Resource Management and Business Educators' Job Commitment in Universities in South-South Nigeria. The study was guided by three specific objectives, three research questions and three null hypotheses tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 309 Business Educators in eleven Federal and State universities offering Business Education programmes in South-South Nigeria. Since the population was manageable, a census (total enumeration) technique was adopted. Data were collected using two researcher-developed instruments titled Building a Culture of Innovation Questionnaire (BCIQ) and Human Resource Management for Business Educators' Job Commitment Questionnaire (HRMBEJCQ). The instruments were validated by three experts, comprising two specialists in Business Education and one specialist in Measurement and Evaluation. Reliability was established using the test-retest method, with Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) yielding reliability coefficients of 0.73 and 0.78. A total of 309 copies of the questionnaire were administered, of which 295 were retrieved and found suitable for analysis, representing a 95.47% retrieval rate. Data were analyzed using PPMCC to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested using t-transformation of the correlation coefficients at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that training innovation ($r = .72$), performance recognition ($r = .68$) and participatory decision-making ($r = .74$) each had a high positive and significant relationship with Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria. The study concluded that building a culture of innovation in Human Resource Management through training innovation, performance recognition and participatory decision-making is associated with stronger job commitment among Business Educators. It was recommended, among others, that university management should institutionalize continuous and needs-based training, establish fair and transparent performance recognition systems, and actively involve Business Educators in institutional decision-making processes to strengthen their commitment to university goals.

Introduction

Business Educators play an important role in developing the vocational, entrepreneurial and managerial competencies of university students. Their responsibilities extend beyond classroom teaching to include curriculum development, academic advising, research and community engagement. Through these functions, Business Educators contribute to students' professional development and to the broader socioeconomic development of society. Egbunefu and Nwosu (2021) described Business Education as a specialised phase of vocational education that equips learners with the knowledge, practical skills and competencies required for teaching, office occupations and participation in the business world. Amesi (2018) viewed Business Education as a broad field of education that encompasses preparation for office occupations, distribution and marketing occupations, accounting, business teaching, business administration and economic understanding. Similarly, Ubulom (2019) viewed Business Education as a broad discipline that develops the knowledge, attitudes, skills and competencies required for employment, entrepreneurship and career advancement. The effectiveness of Business

Educators in performing these responsibilities is therefore important to the quality and relevance of university education.

Business Educators' job commitment is important to effective university functioning because committed educators are more likely to demonstrate dedication, involvement and loyalty to their institutions. Job commitment reflects the extent to which employees remain psychologically attached and dedicated to their work and institutional responsibilities. When Business Educators are committed to their jobs, they are more likely to invest effort in teaching, research, curriculum development and other institutional activities. Conversely, low job commitment may contribute to reduced involvement, absenteeism, poor performance and withdrawal from institutional responsibilities. Previous studies have indicated that employee commitment can be influenced by organisational support, intrinsic rewards, leadership and employee well-being (Khuzwayo et al., 2023; Li et al., 2024). Strengthening Business Educators' job commitment is therefore important for sustaining effective teaching, research productivity and institutional development.

Human Resource Management (HRM) provides universities with mechanisms for developing, motivating and retaining competent academic staff. Through appropriate HRM practices, universities can influence employees' work experiences, professional development and commitment. In contemporary university environments, however, HRM needs to go beyond traditional administrative practices by creating conditions that encourage innovation, continuous improvement and employee participation. Building a culture of innovation in HRM involves creating an environment in which employees are encouraged to develop new ideas, acquire relevant competencies, contribute to institutional improvement and participate in decisions affecting their work. Such an environment may be particularly relevant to Business Educators because their professional responsibilities require continuous adaptation to technological, pedagogical and workplace changes.

One important dimension of an innovation-oriented HRM culture is training innovation. Training innovation involves the adoption of contemporary and flexible approaches to employee learning and professional development. For Business Educators, innovative training can provide opportunities to acquire current pedagogical, technological, research and professional competencies. Continuous and relevant training may also enable educators to respond effectively to changing educational requirements and workplace expectations. When universities demonstrate commitment to the professional growth of their employees, Business Educators may perceive greater organisational support and develop stronger commitment to their jobs.

Another dimension is performance recognition. Performance recognition involves acknowledging and appreciating employees for their contributions and achievements. Within universities, Business Educators contribute through teaching, research, curriculum development, student supervision, community engagement and other academic responsibilities. Recognition of these contributions through commendation, awards, professional opportunities or other appropriate forms of acknowledgement may communicate that employees' efforts are valued by the institution. Such recognition can strengthen positive work attitudes and encourage Business Educators to remain dedicated to their institutional responsibilities.

The third dimension is participatory decision-making, which involves providing employees with opportunities to contribute to decisions affecting their work and the institution. Participation may occur through consultation, committee involvement, collaborative planning, expression of professional opinions and contribution to policy implementation. For Business Educators, participatory decision-making can create a sense of ownership and demonstrate that their professional knowledge and opinions are valued by university management. Greater involvement in institutional decisions may therefore strengthen employees' attachment to their work and encourage greater commitment to institutional goals.

The South-South region of Nigeria provides an important context for examining these relationships because universities in the region operate within challenging institutional environments, including funding limitations, infrastructural constraints and changing demands for quality and relevance in higher education. These conditions make it important for universities to adopt HRM practices that support employee development, recognise valuable contributions and encourage staff participation. An

innovation-oriented HRM culture may provide a framework through which universities can create more supportive work environments and strengthen the commitment of Business Educators.

Although previous studies have examined the relationship between HRM practices and employee commitment, much of the existing literature has focused on broad HRM practices or employee groups in contexts different from the present study. Studies have also considered training and development, rewards, organisational support and other HRM practices in relation to employee commitment. However, limited attention has been given to the specific combination of training innovation, performance recognition and participatory decision-making as dimensions of an innovation-oriented HRM culture and their relationship with Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria. This represents a contextual and conceptual gap that requires further empirical investigation. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between training innovation, performance recognition, participatory decision-making and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Universities in South-South Nigeria require committed academic staff to effectively perform their teaching, research and institutional responsibilities. Business Educators are particularly important in preparing students with the knowledge and skills required for employment and entrepreneurship. However, sustaining Business Educators' job commitment may depend partly on how universities manage and support their academic staff.

An innovation-oriented Human Resource Management approach may provide opportunities for strengthening job commitment through training innovation, performance recognition and participatory decision-making. Where training opportunities are inadequate or outdated, employees' professional development may be affected. Similarly, inadequate recognition of academic contributions and limited opportunities to participate in decisions affecting their work may reduce employees' sense of value, involvement and institutional attachment.

Although previous studies have examined Human Resource Management practices and employee commitment, limited attention has been given to the specific relationships between training innovation, performance recognition, participatory decision-making and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria. This gap necessitated the present study, which examined these relationships among Business Educators in the region.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between Building a Culture of Innovation of Human Resource Management and Business Educators Job Commitment in Universities in South-South, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. ascertain the relationship between training innovation and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria;
2. determine the relationship between performance recognition and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria;
3. examine the relationship between participatory decision-making and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria;

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What is the relationship between training and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between performance recognition and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria?
3. What is the relationship between participatory decision-making and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

- 1:** There is no significant relationship between training and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria.

- 2: There is no significant relationship between performance recognition and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria.
- 3: There is no significant relationship between participatory decision-making and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Methods

The study adopted a correlational research design because it sought to determine the relationships between training innovation, performance recognition, participatory decision-making and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria.

The study was conducted in South-South Nigeria, comprising Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers States. It covered selected universities in the region where Business Education programmes are offered. The population comprised 309 male and female Business Educators in the selected universities in South-South Nigeria. The population was considered appropriate because Business Educators are directly involved in teaching, research and academic responsibilities and are therefore knowledgeable about Human Resource Management practices and job commitment. Census (total enumeration) sampling was adopted because the population of 309 Business Educators was manageable. Thus, all 309 Business Educators constituted the respondents for the study. Data were collected using two researcher-developed instruments titled Building a Culture of Innovation Questionnaire (BCIQ) and Human Resource Management for Business Educators' Job Commitment Questionnaire (HRMBEJCQ). The instruments contained items on training innovation, performance recognition, participatory decision-making and Business Educators' job commitment. Responses were measured on a four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA = 4), Agree (A = 3), Disagree (D = 2) and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1). The instruments were validated by three experts in the Faculty of Education, comprising two experts in Business Education and one experts in Measurement and Evaluation. The experts examined the instruments for clarity, relevance and adequacy, and their recommendations were incorporated into the final instruments. Reliability was established using the test-retest method. The instruments were administered to 20 Business Educators at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, outside the study area and re-administered after two weeks. The two sets of scores were correlated using PPMCC, yielding reliability coefficients of 0.73 and 0.78, indicating satisfactory stability. A total of 309 questionnaires were administered with the assistance of trained research assistants. Of these, 295 were retrieved and found suitable for analysis, representing a 95.47% retrieval rate, while 14 copies, representing 4.53%, were not retrieved. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). Correlation coefficients of 0.10–0.40 were interpreted as weak, 0.41–0.60 as moderate and 0.61–1.00 as strong relationships. The hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance using the p-value associated with the calculated correlation coefficients. A null hypothesis was rejected where $p < 0.05$ and retained where $p \geq 0.05$.

Analysis of Data and Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between training innovation and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria?

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) Analysis on the Relationship between Training Innovation and Business Educators' Job Commitment

Correlations	Training Innovation	Business Educators' Job Commitment	Level of Correlation
Training Innovation			
Pearson Correlation	1	.72	High
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
N	295	295	
Business Educators' Job Commitment			
Pearson Correlation	.72	1	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		



N	295	295
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Source: Researcher's SPSS Statistical Output (2026)

Table 1 revealed a strong positive relationship between training innovation and Business Educators' job commitment, with $r = .72$, $p = .000$, $N = 295$. This indicates that increased provision of modern, continuous and relevant training opportunities is associated with higher levels of job commitment among Business Educators. The result suggests that innovative training may strengthen professional competence, institutional support and educators' attachment to their universities.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between performance recognition and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria?

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) Analysis on the Relationship between Performance Recognition and Business Educators' Job Commitment

Correlations	Performance Recognition	Business Educators' Job Commitment	Level of Correlation
Performance Recognition	1		
Pearson Correlation		.68	High
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
N	295	295	
Business Educators' Job Commitment	.68	1	
Pearson Correlation			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
N	295	295	

Source: Researcher's SPSS Statistical Output (2026)

Table 2 indicates a strong positive relationship between performance recognition and Business Educators' job commitment, with $r = .68$, $p = .000$, $N = 295$. The finding implies that greater recognition of Business Educators' academic and institutional contributions is associated with stronger job commitment. Recognition of teaching, research and other professional contributions may therefore reinforce employees' sense of value, belonging and dedication to their universities.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between participatory decision-making and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria?

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) Analysis on the Relationship between Participatory Decision-Making and Business Educators' Job Commitment

Correlations	Participatory Decision-Making	Business Educators' Job Commitment	Level of Correlation
Participatory Decision-Making	1		
Pearson Correlation		.74	High
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
N	295	295	
Business Educators' Job Commitment	.74	1	
Pearson Correlation			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
N	295	295	

Source: Researcher's SPSS Statistical Output (2026)

Table 3 revealed a strong positive relationship between participatory decision-making and Business Educators' job commitment, with $r = .74$, $p = .000$, $N = 295$. This suggests that greater involvement of Business Educators in institutional and academic decisions is associated with higher job commitment. Participation may enhance employees' sense of ownership, recognition and attachment by allowing them to contribute their professional knowledge to decisions affecting their work.

Test of Null Hypotheses



H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between training innovation and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Table 4: Summary of t-Transformation on the Significant Relationship between Training Innovation and Business Educators' Job Commitment

Variables	N	Df	r	Std. Error (SE)	t-Trans.	t-Crit.	Sig.	Decision at p < 0.05
Training Innovation	295	293	0.72	0.0401	17.96	1.96	0.000	H ₀₁ Rejected; Significant Relationship Exists
Business Educators' Job Commitment	295							

Significant at 0.05 alpha level; N = 295.

Table 4 revealed that the calculated t-value of **17.96** was greater than the critical t-value of **1.96** at 293 degrees of freedom, while **p = .000 < .05**. Therefore, H₀₁ was rejected. This indicates a statistically significant relationship between training innovation and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between performance recognition and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Table 5: Summary of t-Transformation on the Significant Relationship between Performance Recognition and Business Educators' Job Commitment

Variables	N	Df	r	Std. Error (SE)	t-Trans.	t-Crit.	Sig.	Decision at p < 0.05
Performance Recognition	295	293	0.68	0.0421	16.15	1.96	0.000	H ₀₂ Rejected; Significant Relationship Exists
Business Educators' Job Commitment	295							

Significant at 0.05 alpha level; N = 295.

Table 5 indicates that the calculated t-value of **16.15** was greater than the critical t-value of **1.96** at 293 degrees of freedom, with **p = .000 < .05**. Consequently, H₀₂ was rejected. This indicates a statistically significant relationship between performance recognition and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between participatory decision-making and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Table 6: Summary of t-Transformation on the Significant Relationship between Participatory Decision-Making and Business Educators' Job Commitment

Variables	N	Df	r	Std. Error (SE)	t-Trans.	t-Crit.	Sig.	Decision at p < 0.05
Participatory Decision-Making	295	293	0.74	0.0403	18.34	1.96	0.000	H ₀₃ Rejected; Significant Relationship Exists
Business Educators' Job Commitment	295							

Significant at 0.05 alpha level; N = 295.

Table 6 revealed that the calculated t-value of 18.34 was greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 293 degrees of freedom, while $p = .000 < .05$. Therefore, H_{03} was rejected. This indicates a statistically significant relationship between participatory decision-making and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Training Innovation and Business Educators' Job Commitment

The finding for research question one revealed a high positive and significant relationship between training innovation and Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria. The result showed $r = .72$, while the corresponding hypothesis test confirmed a significant relationship at the 0.05 level. This implies that innovative training practices, continuous professional development and relevant capacity-building opportunities are associated with stronger job commitment among Business Educators. The finding is consistent with Akinwale and George (2020), who reported that human resource development practices improved employee commitment through enhanced competence, confidence and perceived organisational support. Similarly, Otoo and Mishra (2021) found that effective training and development enhanced employees' affective commitment, job satisfaction and willingness to contribute to organisational goals. These findings support the present study by indicating that investment in employee development can strengthen commitment.

The finding also agrees with Mousa and Alas (2022), who found that employee development initiatives significantly predicted organisational commitment and emphasized the importance of modern learning systems in helping employees adapt to changing work environments. Likewise, Aboramadan et al. (2023) reported that developmental HRM practices, including training opportunities, enhanced employees' psychological attachment to higher education institutions. However, the finding differs from Yusuf and Ibrahim (2024), who reported that training programmes alone did not significantly influence employee commitment where organisational support and other supportive conditions were inadequate. The difference suggests that the contribution of training innovation to commitment may depend partly on the broader institutional environment in which training is provided. The researcher therefore views training innovation as an important HRM practice for strengthening Business Educators' job commitment. In a changing university environment, continuous training can help educators develop relevant pedagogical, technological and professional competencies. Universities in South-South Nigeria should therefore provide regular and relevant training opportunities that respond to emerging educational and professional demands. Evidence from the region supports this directly, since Nwuke and Nwanguma (2024) found in public universities in Rivers State that capacity building raised staff job performance where the training given was matched to the particular demands of the role, and Wosu et al. (2024) established that continuous professional development shaped the working methods practitioners actually adopted rather than merely those they knew of. The form such provision might take has also been argued for by Sam-Kalagbor (2025), who made the case for cultivating a culture of lifelong learning among tertiary institution staff supported by digital technology, which speaks to the innovation dimension this study is concerned with. Taylor et al. (2025) examined the same relationship from the technological side, assessing the awareness and adoption of artificial intelligence tools for enhanced job performance among educators in Rivers State-owned universities and finding both to be uneven, which indicates that an innovation culture delivers its benefit only where staff have been brought to the point of actually using what is introduced.

Performance Recognition and Business Educators' Job Commitment

The finding for research question two revealed a high positive and significant relationship between performance recognition and Business Educators' job commitment, with $r = .68$. The hypothesis test further established that the relationship was significant at the 0.05 level. This indicates that recognition of Business Educators' teaching, research and institutional contributions is associated with stronger job commitment. The finding agrees with Eze and Okeke (2020), who found that recognition practices improved employee motivation, satisfaction and commitment in educational institutions. Similarly, Nwachukwu and Chijioke (2021) reported that appreciation, awards and acknowledgement of employee performance positively influenced organisational commitment. Recognition of this kind is carried by the routine systems an institution operates, and Yellowe and Nwuke (2024) found in public universities in Rivers State that institutional management practices are what translate stated standards into daily

administrative practice, while Amadi and Kobani (2025) established in the same setting that the deliberate management of lecturers' welfare bears directly on the job performance they are able to sustain. Kumar and Pansari (2022) also found that employee recognition enhanced loyalty, motivation and psychological attachment to organisations.

The finding further agrees with Aguinis and Burgi-Tian (2023), who reported that effective performance management and recognition practices improved employee motivation, performance and commitment. However, Ibrahim and Bello (2024) found that recognition practices alone may have limited effects on employee commitment where remuneration, leadership support and working conditions are inadequate. This difference suggests that performance recognition may be more effective when supported by other positive organisational conditions. The researcher therefore considers performance recognition an important dimension of an innovation-oriented HRM culture. When Business Educators' academic and institutional contributions are fairly acknowledged, they may develop a stronger sense of value and belonging. Universities should consequently adopt fair, transparent and consistent recognition practices that acknowledge teaching excellence, research productivity and other meaningful contributions.

Participatory Decision-Making and Business Educators' Job Commitment

The finding for research question three revealed a high positive and significant relationship between participatory decision-making and Business Educators' job commitment, with $r = .74$. The corresponding hypothesis test also confirmed a significant relationship at the 0.05 level. The finding implies that involving Business Educators in decisions affecting academic programmes, departmental activities and institutional policies is associated with stronger job commitment. This finding agrees with Ogunnaike and Kehinde (2020), who found that participatory management improved employee commitment by promoting trust, respect and inclusion. Similarly, Abasilim et al. (2021) reported that participative leadership practices positively influenced employee attachment and willingness to support organisational goals. Khan et al. (2022) also found that employee involvement in decision-making enhanced trust, satisfaction and organisational commitment. The same principle has been applied within Nigerian education by Nwanguma and Nwuke (2024), whose study of school based management committees found that governance improved where decision-making responsibility was deliberately shared among the parties affected rather than retained at the top, which supports the case for drawing Business Educators into decisions on academic programmes and institutional policy. Whether such arrangements operate in practice is a separate question from whether they are stated, since the wider Nigerian record is one in which policy intentions have repeatedly outrun the arrangements made for carrying them out, so that a participatory structure engages staff only where something obliges the institution to use it (Alikor & Orlunga, 2023).

The finding is further consistent with Adebayo and Oladimeji (2023), who reported that participatory management improved commitment, cooperation and institutional effectiveness among academic staff. However, the result differs from Mensah and Owusu (2024), who found that participation in decision-making did not significantly influence employee commitment where management maintained centralized control and employee suggestions were rarely implemented. This difference indicates that participation may have greater value when employees' contributions are genuinely considered in institutional decisions. The researcher therefore views participatory decision-making as an important HRM practice for strengthening Business Educators' job commitment. Since academic staff possess professional knowledge relevant to university development, providing opportunities for meaningful participation can promote trust, ownership and cooperation. Universities in South-South Nigeria should therefore create effective channels through which Business Educators can contribute to decisions affecting their academic and institutional responsibilities.

Conclusion

The study concludes that training innovation, performance recognition and participatory decision-making have significant positive relationships with Business Educators' job commitment in universities in South-South Nigeria. The findings indicate that providing relevant training opportunities, recognising employees' contributions and involving Business Educators in institutional decisions can strengthen their commitment to their universities. Therefore, universities should promote these three HRM practices

to create a supportive and innovative work environment that enhances educators' commitment and contribution to institutional development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The study found that training innovation has a high positive and significant relationship with Business Educators' job commitment; therefore, university management should institutionalize continuous, technology-driven and needs-based training programmes, workshops and professional development opportunities to enhance educators' competencies and sustain their commitment to institutional goals.
2. The study established that performance recognition has a high positive and significant relationship with Business Educators' job commitment; therefore, university management should implement transparent, fair and merit-based recognition systems that acknowledge outstanding teaching, research, innovation, community service and other academic contributions through awards, commendations and appropriate incentives.
3. The study revealed that participatory decision-making has a high positive and significant relationship with Business Educators' job commitment; therefore, university administrators should actively involve Business Educators in policy formulation, curriculum development, departmental administration and other institutional decisions affecting their work to promote trust, ownership, belonging and commitment to university objectives.

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