



STRUCTURED AND UNSTRUCTURED RECOGNITION AS PREDICTORS OF TEACHERS' JOB COMMITMENT IN STATE PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined structured and unstructured recognition as predictors of teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study consist 33,570 teachers in 1,410 state public secondary schools in 21 education zones in South East, Nigeria. The sample of 1,678 teachers in 282 state public secondary schools in 21 education zones in South East, Nigeria was used for the study. Simple random sampling technique was used for the study. The instruments for data collection are questionnaire titled: Recognition Questionnaire (RQ) and Teachers' Job Commitment Questionnaire (TJCQ). The instruments were subjected to face and construct validation. Face validation was done by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was done using Cronbach Alpha method and the average coefficients were established at 0.80 for RQ and 0.84 for TJCQ. Simple linear regression statistical tool was used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that structured and unstructured recognition positively and significantly predicted teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. The study concluded that recognition is a positive and significant predictor of teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommended that teachers' hard work in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria should be adequately recognized and rewarded to keep their morale high for school activities in the region. Teachers who put in their best for the actualization of school goals and objectives should be given short or long term recognition, in line with the school policies, in order to encourage other staffs to be diligent, engaged and committed to their duties.

Keywords: Structured recognition, unstructured recognition, teachers' job commitment, state public secondary schools, South East, Nigeria



Introduction

Teachers are considered basic and very powerful instruments in any education system and as such they are the mainstay of the education system. They are however, charged with the responsibilities of ensuring that learning is sufficient and effective in order for students to discover their potentials maximally. Thus, the success and failure of educational activities highly depends on teachers' job commitment.

Teachers' job commitment is the level of loyalty and responsibility that teachers demonstrate towards their profession, their students and the educational institution they work for. It encompasses a range of attitudes and behaviours that reflect the teachers' strong belief in the importance of their role in shaping young minds and contributing to the overall growth and development of their students. Eze et al. (2024) explained that teachers' job commitment is the level of enthusiasm for tasks assigned to teaching staff in the school. When teachers are genuinely committed to their job, they are more likely to go above and beyond to create a positive learning environment, continually improve their teaching methods and support their students' individual needs. Adinna et al. (2024) explained that job commitment of teachers could be determined by their proper execution of basic tasks and additional responsibilities assigned by the principals, active involvement in school functions, punctuality to work, remaining in school till the closing hour and willingness to help students to learn. Manafa and Adinna (2023) submitted that motivated teachers appear to have a social connection with their coworkers, are intellectually prepared to contribute, are present and active and like exercising their individuality at work. Committed teachers are punctual and regular at work in such a way that they get to their schools on time and they are present on all working days, attendance at meetings and all other school functions such as assemblies, sports days and music festivities among others (Okaforcha et al., 2025).

Teachers' job commitment is crucial for fostering productive and supportive educational environment that benefits both students and the broader school community. Ifediorah Okeke and Okaforcha (2019) asserted that job commitment in teachers also encompasses their emotional and intellectual involvement in their teaching tasks, which directly affects students' outcomes and school effectiveness. A committed teacher is actively engaged in their work, showing a high level of involvement in planning lessons, delivering instruction and participating in school activities (Ughamadu et al., 2024). Teachers with high job commitment are focused on enhancing students' learning outcomes, often going beyond the standard curriculum to meet the needs of their students. Okoli et al. (2024) highlighted that committed teachers are more likely to engage in innovative practices, work beyond stipulated hours and take personal responsibility for students' success. This commitment area involves two essential components namely pride in one's being in the teaching job and a strong desire for professional development. In fact, after joining the profession they should fully understand as long as they are there, they have to develop pride knowing that this is a Nobel job charged with great responsibilities as the society hands over its students to this system



for their wholesome education. Obi et al. (2025) posited that job commitment in teachers involves a proactive approach in lesson delivery, students' mentoring and participation in school development activities. It is characterized by a teacher's continuous effort to fulfill their professional responsibilities and obligations, reflecting a strong attachment to their institution and students. In this study, teachers' job commitment referred to teachers' willingness to dedicate effort toward students' achievement and institutional goals. It is the dedication that teachers believe or perceive towards particular work and the job they carry out in the school. When committed teachers are rewarded for their positive input in the school in form of recognition, their commitment level increases.

The traditional approach of recognition is the type that is carried out through gifts and monetary appreciation. Recognition is good indication that the behaviour of the staff is valued. Agah and Yakubu (2024) observed that teachers' recognition is common in schools for principals to get more of the teachers' and students' behaviour they recognise and appreciate. They are capable of eliciting good work performance needed to maintain commitment in the school. Agah and Yakubu further averred that recognitions can be as candid as a pat-on-the-back and a genuine compliment. It can also be as simple as a 'thank you', praises, applause or a friendly greeting at work. They also listed various forms of recognition to include social recognition, public and private recognition, written and verbal praise, day-to-day recognition, gift cards, structured recognition, performance-based recognition and effort-based rewards, among others.

Recognition can also be in form of involvement in decision-making. Adeyemi and Afolakemi (2022) submitted that getting employees involved in decision-making is a sure shot way of making them feel important and boosting their morale. Adeyemi and Afolakemi further added classified recognition as structured and unstructured recognition to the participation of decision-making. Participation in the decision-making process gives each teacher the opportunity to voice their opinions and to share their knowledge with others. The expression of viewpoints opens dialogue between co-staff, with each staff bringing their individual strengths to a project (Obi & Ebelechukwu, 2024). It is also a good way to gather information about the employees as to how they work in a team environment and where training may be necessary, all of which leads to an increase in effectiveness, and ultimately an increase in good teamwork and commitment. Obi and Ebelechukwu categorized recognition as leadership recognition, performance recognition, formal recognition, unstructured recognition and managerial recognition. In this study, Adeyemi and Afolakemi (2022)'s types of recognition will be adopted which is structured and unstructured recognition.

Structured recognition, like the name implies, is a very deliberate and conscious approach to recognizing and rewarding individual teachers in schools. Adeyemi and Afolakemi (2022) argued that school authorities or school principals are most likely to be in charge of this type of praise. Think of awards like 'staff of the month' or awards given for years of service. There are several



benefits to structured awards. The main attraction is that these awards have a lot more weight to them. If a teacher wins an award like staff of the month or best staff of the year, they will likely want to make a big deal out of it. Teachers seek this kind of large-scale praise because they know that it truly validates their hard work. Thus, a programme to formalize peer recognition, like 'staff of the month' or 'most helpful colleague,' helps foster a culture of appreciation. It is also a good way to gather invaluable insights about team dynamics, individual strengths and the collective pulse of the school. On the other hand, Olaoye and Odunyemi (2023) submitted that structured recognition is scarce. For example, the principal can only make one teacher 'staff of the month' every month and this gives the principal limited chances to recognize other staff every month if that is the only form of appreciation. Teachers vying for that coveted spot will be frustrated if they are continually passed up for it.

Unlike structured recognition, unstructured recognition is casual and impromptu. It is typically handled top-down or peer-to-peer. Adeyemi and Afolakemi (2022) opined that an unstructured approach removes some of the unnecessary boundaries of traditional staff appreciation like staff of the month. Using peer-to-peer or even less official types of top-down recognition are all ways to accomplish this type. For example, one can praise their team when they do something amazing without giving them a formal award for it. Team members can recognize each other and build team camaraderie. Some common forms of unstructured recognition as portrayed by Adeyemi and Afolakemi (2022) include receiving daily praises, day-to-day encouragement, positive confirmations, regular acknowledgement, daily verbal praise, informal praise, and small compliments among others. Agah and Yakubu (2024) noted that unstructured recognition is well-loved by employees because it feels more authentic and genuine than structured recognition. Plus, it is easy to do and typically does not require much effort to carry out. Okwueze (2023) noted that unstructured recognition comes in so many forms, and it all pulls the organisation forward. Despite the fact that, not all recognition is created equal, each situation would feel good to a teacher for different reasons. To this end, a mix of both types of recognition (structured and unstructured) might be required to meet different teachers' needs and achieve a culture of appreciation which could promote job commitment of teachers in schools.

Teachers' level of commitment to their jobs among some state public secondary school teachers in South East, Nigeria appears to be fluctuating. The multiplier effects of the declining level of job commitment of teachers are visible in their level of dedication to their daily tasks as they engage in more responsibilities without adequate appreciation from the principals. The uncommitted attitude of teachers towards their job may be traceable to inadequate practices of work recognition and appreciation which might be demotivating factors among teachers in some state public secondary school teachers in South East, Nigeria. The inappropriate recognition in some state public secondary school teachers in South East, Nigeria may leads to teachers' low productivity and poor performance which may also breed misunderstanding, suspicion, mistrust, rumors, creates conflict between the management and members of teachers which might be bring out low



commitment of teachers. The study therefore sought to find out the predictive value of recognition on teachers' job commitment in state public secondary school teachers in South East, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine structured and unstructured recognition as predictors of teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. find out the predictive value of structured recognition on teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.
2. determine the predictive value of unstructured recognition on teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the predictive value of structured recognition on teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria?
2. What is the predictive value of unstructured recognition on teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Structured recognition does not significantly predict teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.
2. Unstructured recognition does not significantly predict teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

Research Methods

The study was carried out in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study consist 33,570 teachers in 1,410 state public secondary schools in 21 education zones in South East, Nigeria. The sample of 1,678 teachers in 282 state public secondary schools in 21 education zones in South East, Nigeria was used for the study. Simple random sampling technique was used for the study. The instruments for data collection are questionnaire titled 'Recognition Questionnaire (RQ) and Teachers' Job Commitment Questionnaire (TJCQ).' The instruments were subjected to face and construct validation. Face validation was done by three experts, one in Measurement and



Evaluation, two in the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus while construct validation was carried out with Principal Component Analysis approach using SSPS version 26 and the results showed that the construct validity was met. The reliability of the instrument was done using Cronbach Alpha method and the average coefficients were established at 0.80 for RQ and 0.84 for TJCQ. Direct method of data administration was utilized by the researcher together with nine research assistants. Out of 1,678 copies of the instrument administered, 1,597 copies representing 95% of the instrument were correctly completed and returned. Simple linear regression statistical tool was used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: What is the predictive value of structured recognition on teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria?

Table 1: Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on the Predictive Value of Structured Recognition on Teachers' Job Commitment in State Public Secondary Schools in South East, Nigeria

		Unstandardized	Std. Dev.	Standardized	Decision
		β	β	β	
Constant		34.942	3.151		
Structured Recognition		0.675	0.205	0.652	Positive
r	0.652				
r ²	0.608				
Adj. r ²	0.576				

The summary of the simple regression analysis as shown in Table 1 indicated that the regression line has a positive intercept as presented by the constant value of 34.942. This means that if all the variables are held constant or fixed (zero) at the expense of structured recognition, teachers' job commitment will be valued at 35%. The analysis showed that structured recognition positively predict teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria as shown by the regression coefficient ($r = 0.652$). Furthermore, the standardized beta was also values at $\beta = 0.652$ which revealed that structured recognition is a positive predictor of teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. This implied that a unit advancement in structured recognition led to 65% advancements in teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. The coefficient of determination (r^2) value



of 0.608 indicated that the explanatory power of the variable was moderately strong. This implied that 61% of the variations in teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria were accounted for by the variations in structured recognition. The adjusted r^2 supported the claim of the r^2 with a value of 0.576 indicating that 58% of the total variation in teachers' job commitment was explained by structured recognition. Thus, adjusted r^2 supported the statement that the explanatory power of teachers' job commitment moderately depends on structured recognition in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What is the predictive value of unstructured recognition on teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria?

Table 2: Summary of Simple Regression Analysis on the Predictive Value of Unstructured Recognition on Teachers' Job Commitment in State Public Secondary Schools in South East, Nigeria

	Unstandardized	Std. Dev.	Standardized	Decision
	β	β	β	
Constant	31.817	3.724		
Unstructured Recognition	0.646	0.226	0.621	Positive
r	0.621			
r^2	0.572			
Adj. r^2	0.533			

The summary of the simple regression analysis as shown in Table 2 indicated that the regression line has a positive intercept as presented by the constant value of 31.817. This means that if all the variables are held constant or fixed (zero) at the expense of unstructured recognition, teachers' job commitment will be valued at 32%. The analysis showed that unstructured recognition positively predict teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria as shown by the regression coefficient ($r = 0.621$). Nevertheless, the standardized beta is also values at $\beta = 0.621$ which revealed that unstructured recognition is a positive predictor of teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. This implies that a unit improvement in unstructured recognition led to 62% improvements in teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. The coefficient of determination (r^2) value of 0.572 indicated that the explanatory power of the variable was moderately strong. This implied that 57% of the variations in teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria were accounted for by the variations in unstructured recognition. The adjusted r^2 supported the claim of the r^2 with a value of 0.533 indicating that 53% of the total variation in



teachers' job commitment was explained by unstructured recognition. Thus, adjusted R^2 supports the statement that the explanatory power of teachers' job commitment moderately depends on structured recognition in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Structured recognition does not significantly predict teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

Table 3: Test of Significance on the Simple Regression Analysis on Significant Predication of Structured Recognition on Teachers' Job Commitment in State Public Secondary Schools in South East, Nigeria.

	Unstandardized β	Std. Dev. β	Standardized β	t-value	p-value	Decision
Constant	34.942	3.151		25.208	0.000	
Structured Recognition	0.675	0.205	0.652	28.435	0.000	Significant
r	0.652					
r ²	0.608					
Adj. r ²	0.576					
F	45.852				0.000	

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 3 showed that the regression line is held at constant at the value of 34.942(35%), the simple regression coefficient (r) is valued at 0.652(65%) while the r^2 is valued at 0.608(61%) and Adjust r^2 is valued at 0.576(58%). The F-ratio associated with regression is valued at 45.852, while the t-test is valued at 28.435 and the p-value = 0.000. Since p-value (0.000) is less than the specified level of significance 0.05, the study therefore rejected the null hypothesis that structured recognition does not significantly predict teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria and accepted the alternative hypothesis that structured recognition significantly predicts teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.



Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Unstructured recognition does not significantly predict teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

Table 4: Test of Significance on the Simple Regression Analysis on Significant Predication of Unstructured Recognition on Teachers' Job Commitment in State Public Secondary Schools in South East, Nigeria.

	Unstandardized	Std. Dev.	Standardized	t-value	p-value	Decision
	β	β	β			
Constant	31.817	3.724		23.108	0.000	
Unstructured Recognition	0.646	0.226	0.621	25.672	0.000	Significant
r	0.621					
r ²	0.572					
Adj. r ²	0.533					
F	42.829				0.000	

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 4 showed that the regression line is held at constant at the value of 31.817(32%), the simple regression coefficient (r) is valued at 0.621(62%) while the r² is valued at 0.572(57%) and Adjust r² is valued at 0.533(53%). The F-ratio associated with regression is valued at 42.829, while the t-test is valued at 26.672 and the p-value = 0.000. Since p-value (0.000) is less than the specified level of significance 0.05, the study therefore rejected the null hypothesis that unstructured recognition does not significantly predict teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria and accepted the alternative hypothesis that unstructured recognition significantly predicts teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Findings on the predictive value of structured recognition on teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria revealed that structured recognition has a positive predictive value of 0.652 on teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. This means that advancement in structured recognition will bring about 65% advancements in teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. The study also showed that structured recognition significantly predicted teachers' job



commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. The finding is in line with the findings of Sunoma et al. (2022) that the yearly evaluation of teachers' activities creates a culture where high standards are celebrated. Thus, performance awards empower teachers to perform their best at work. Olaoye and Odunyemi (2023) findings revealed that showcasing teachers' work performance is a good vibe for their commitment and create a great atmosphere for them to continue working hard. Teachers develop emotional connections to their workplace when recognized with their work input on regular basis. This is in agreement with the findings of Manafa and Adinna (2023) that structured appreciation, particularly from school leaders, significantly lowers teachers' burnout and emotional exhaustion, directly reducing turnover. Similarly, Obionu et al. (2024) findings indicated that monthly bonuses to teachers promote their desire to continue working hard. In the findings of Obi and Ebelechukwu (2024), teachers feel genuinely esteemed when management share with others their good work performance and congratulating teachers for a job well done on monthly basis reinforces their good behaviours in schools. The similarities found in these studies are as a result of the fact that structured recognition for teachers boosts job satisfaction, reduces burnout, and improves retention by fostering a sense of value and enhancing work engagement and commitment. It increases teachers' motivation, leading to better classroom engagement, enhanced students' performance and improved job commitment of teachers.

Findings on the predictive value of unstructured recognition on teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria revealed that unstructured recognition has a positive predictive value of 0.621 on teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. This means that improvement in unstructured recognition will bring about 62% improvements in teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. The study also showed that unstructured recognition significantly predicted teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. The positive and significant findings are as a result of the fact that providing unstructured recognition to teachers (informal, spontaneous and unscripted appreciation) serves as a crucial protective factor against burnout and a powerful motivator. Unlike formal awards, unstructured recognition (like, a handwritten note, verbal praise, or a spotlight in a meeting) acts as immediate validation of a teacher's hard work, enhancing job satisfaction and high work engagement. The finding is in line with the findings of Dashwep and Macha (2022) that teachers receiving daily praises make them to strive for even greater achievements. This is in agreement with the findings of Olaoye and Odunyemi (2023) that genuine appreciation for hard work reminds teachers why they love their profession, effectively combating feelings of being undervalued. In the findings of Manafa and Adinna (2023), they indicated that recognition reduces compassion fatigue and burnout, acting as a crucial emotional support mechanism in high-stress roles. Positive confirmations from their principal motivate their desire to continue working hard and positive comments when offering feedback from their principal creates an atmosphere of upliftment. Okwueze (2023) study revealed that regular acknowledgement from the principal boost teachers' morale for more good work. Small



compliments from colleagues create a culture where high standards are celebrated. Similarly, Obi and Ebelechukwu (2024) indicated that day-to-day encouragement from the school principal reinforces teachers' specific good behaviours and simple messages of expressing gratitude from principal keep teachers constantly assured. Agah and Yakubu (2024) established that daily verbal praise and constant sense of gratitude from the principal energize teachers for greater performance and creates a great atmosphere for their high performance. Teachers feel more supported to try new methods when they know their efforts will be appreciated, even if they are not part of a formal, structured award scheme. This finding agreed with Okaforcha and Ifediorah Okeke (2025) that teachers' motivation improves significantly in environments where recognition is valued. Teachers who received recognition intend to improve in punctuality, lesson preparation, classroom engagement and overall work engagement.

Conclusion

Recognition is necessary in an era of continuous change and improvement. It is seen as an opportunity to involve many teachers in solving the complex educational problems of modern times. A wider range of demands can be addressed by using a collaborative approach than by individual and isolated efforts. The study therefore concluded that recognition are positive and significant predictors of teachers' job commitment in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Teachers' hard work in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria should be adequately recognized and rewarded to keep their morale high for school activities in the region. Teachers who put in their best for the actualization of school goals and objectives should be given short or long term recognition, in line with the school policies, in order to encourage other staffs to be diligent, engaged and committed to their duties.
2. School authorities in conjunction with secondary school principals in state public secondary schools in South East, Nigeria should constantly motivate teachers by giving out awards and unstructured recognitions to high performing teachers in their respective schools to motivate them to be engaged and committed to their task.

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