



# EXPLORING THE PREDICTIVE ROLE OF PERCEIVED EMPLOYABILITY ON ATTITUDE TOWARDS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND AFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: A SOCIAL EXCHANGE PERSPECTIVE

<sup>1</sup>Henry Samuel Edosomwan, <sup>2</sup>Chiyem Lucky Nwanzu and <sup>1</sup>Tochukwu Matthew Oguebe

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Psychology, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

**Abstract:** The study examined the predictive role of perceived employability on attitude towards organizational change and affective organizational commitment via social exchange process. The cross-sectional research design was used and data were collected with self-report measure. One hundred and ninety - four employees were drawn from 8 organizations in Lagos State, Nigeria. The sample consisted of 131 (67.5%) males and 63 (32.5%) females whose age ranged from 20 to 52 years with a mean age of 34.45 years (SD, 6.26). Five hypotheses were tested with the simple and standard multiple regression analysis. Data analysis revealed that perceived employability positively and significantly predicted attitude towards organizational change ( $\beta = 0.21, p < 0.01$ ), and affective organizational commitment ( $\beta = 0.77, p < 0.01$ ). Affective organizational commitment was also found to be a significant predictor of attitude towards organizational change ( $\beta = 0.11, p < 0.01$ ). It was recommended that organizations should carry-out extensive programmes and training that promote employability among its staff because employability is important to the exchange relationship between the employee and the organization.

**Keywords:** perceived employability, affective organizational commitment, attitude, organizational change, social exchange.

## 1. Introduction

Perceived employability, organizational commitment and attitude towards organizational change have been the subject of numerous publications in the past decade. This is mainly because of the importance of these constructs to the employee-employer relationship, and the consistent change in the nature of work. The main aim of organizations around the world is to maximize the resources at their disposal to achieve their desired

goals and objectives. The human resources remain the most important means to do this because an organizations' success depends largely on employee attitude and behaviour (Ogedegbe, 2014). Thus, it is important to understand how perceived employability influences attitude towards organizational change and affective commitment.

Everything around us is constantly changing, these changes also occur in organization. With the emergence



of new technologies and socio-economic changes around the world, the business world is increasingly becoming competitive. As a result of these changes, private and public firms have experienced downsizing, outsourcing, off-shoring and the computerization of work activities in order to achieve maximum business effectiveness (Nwanzu & Babalola, 2019). Organizations have to continually implement changes in order to stay competitive in the global environment; changes in the structure and process within the organization are well planned and implemented in order to stay relevant and meet up with global demands (Fuch & Prouska, 2014). Organizational change happens mostly because of some environmental forces. According to Murthy (2007), organizational change drivers include: economic forces, changing customer need and preference, technological forces, increase in global competition and new government regulations guiding businesses. For example, an organization can experience change as a result of recession in the economy. This is likely to push the organization into restructuring and possibly layoff some workers to stay competitive. Another example would be technological change. Introduction of new technological tools would require workers to learn how to use them effectively to achieve organizational aim. The acceptance of these changes both by the employer and the employee is crucial to organizational success. Employers easily accept and introduce these changes but the same cannot be said of the employees who are mostly affected by these recurring changes in the work environment. Thus, attitude towards organizational change becomes a significant part of this process.

Attitude is defined as individual held and evaluative beliefs about a particular behaviour, people, events, object or ideas and its consequences (Fishbein, 1963; Robbin & Judge, 2007). Attitude influences behaviour. This notion is supported by the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1991) which is based on the premise that individual actions (behaviour) are best predicted by intentions; and that intentions are

determined by a person's attitude. Empirical evidence to support the claim that attitude influences workplace behaviour exists in the literature. Study by Uchenna (2013) and Zhao et al. (2013) observed that perception of organizational support influences counterproductive work behaviour such that the more favourable the perception of organizational support, the lower the tendency to engage in counterproductive work behaviour. Theoretical and empirical evidence has demonstrated the link between attitude and behaviour, therefore it has become imperative to understand how this influences other factors in the organization.

Attitude towards organizational change can be described as the employee evaluative belief towards change in the organization. Attitude towards change could be positive (acceptance of change) or negative (resistance to change) both of which have implications for the overall success of the change in the organization (Nwanzu & Babalola, 2019). Positive attitude towards change stands to benefit the organization because it promotes employee commitment to the success of organizational change while negative attitude to change signals lack of commitment and anti-change behaviour (Nwanzu & Babalola, 2019). An employee commitment to the organizational process has implications for attitude towards organizational change.

Affective organizational commitment is another important construct to consider when discussing attitude towards organizational change. Commitment in general is defined as "a stabilizing and obliging force that gives direction to behaviour" (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001, p. 301). Organizational Commitment is a multidimensional concept and therefore somewhat difficult to define. Employee commitment in the organization is a psychological state that describes the employee relationship with the organization and which have implications on the decision to continue as a part of the organization (Mayer & Allen, 1991; Newstrom & Davies, 2002). The multi-dimensionality of the concept has led to the development of a three-component model of



organizational commitment, namely; affective, continuance and normative commitment (Dunham, Grube & Castaneda, 1994; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment is the emotional and psychological attachment employees have towards the organization, continuance commitment has to do with the possible cost or implications associated with leaving the organization, and normative commitment is the feeling of obligation the employee has towards the organization (Dunham et al., 1994; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Studies that reveal the positive impact of organizational commitment on organizational citizenship behaviour (Allen & Rush, 1998), job satisfaction (Memari, Mahdiah & Marnani, 2013; Qaisar, Rehman & Suffyan, 2012) and innovative work behaviour (Zhou & George, 2001) exist in the literature. This study is focused on affective organizational commitment built under the three-model of organizational commitment.

Perception is considered as a major driver of human behaviour as it is the way an individual perceives a situation, rather than the situation itself, that affect feelings, thoughts and subsequently behaviour (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Therefore, perceived employability - the perceived ability to maintain the job one has or obtain the job one desires in the future (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007) could have a possible impact on attitude towards organizational change and affective organizational commitment.

Perceived employability is important for career goal setting and management, and for how employees behave, think and feel about their jobs. It therefore has an impact on the behaviour of workers in an organization. Rothwell and Arnold (2007) grouped perceived employability into two dimensions: internal and external. Internal perceived employability happens when the employee believes the employer will continue to retain their services because they are highly skilled, resourceful and valuable to the overall success of the organization while external perceived employability denotes the capacity of an employee to get a job in the

external labour market i.e. outside their current organization (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007; De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011). Both of these dimensions cover the overall employability of an individual in the organization. That is, perceived employability expresses an individual perceived ability to maintain and obtain employment (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). To achieve this, employees have learnt to be adaptable to the changes around them by increasing their chances of maintaining and obtaining employment through skill development and training that cut across organizational boundaries (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). The flexibility that comes with having skills and training that cut across organizational boundaries has given workers the capacity to be in control while also providing organizations with flexible high performing employees (Acikgoz, Sumer & Sumer, 2016; Van Harten, Knies & Leisink, 2016). The employees become more focused and committed to life-time employability rather than life-time employment within an organization (Forrier & Sels, 2003; Froelich, Beausaert, Segers & Gerken, 2014).

Increased in the employability of workers has been reported to have both negative and positive consequences on the organization especially as it relates to workers behaviour towards organizational processes. Negative consequences of perceived employability include increased turnover intention (Barachenko, Xie, Lin, Lau & Ma, 2020; De Cuyper, Mauno, Kinnunen & Makikangas, 2011) and counterproductive work behaviour (De Cuyper, Baillien & De Witte, 2009; De Cuyper et al., 2014). De Cuyper et al. (2014) noted that perceived employability is positively related to optimal-functioning directed at the organization (in role performance) and individuals that work for the organization (helping behaviour).

## **2. Theoretical Framework and Review of Related Literature**

This study is anchored in the social exchange theory which is built on the premise that human relationship is based on reciprocity (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano &



Mitchell, 2005; Gouldner, 1960). Social exchange theory holds that human relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives. Human relationship is based on the evaluation of value we can get from each other. An exchange starts with one party giving a benefit to another. If the recipient reciprocates, and consequently a series of beneficial exchanges occurs, feelings of mutual obligation between the parties are created (Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006). The study proposes that Employers investment in the employability of workers through programmes and training that enhances employees' job-related skills across organizational boundaries could be important to fostering other positive behaviour in the organization. Positive human resource practices that enhance employability provides a mutual win for the employees and the organization as support for increased employability may lead to a committed workforce (Akkermans, Tim, Beijer & De Cuyper, 2019), and positive attitude towards change in the organization.

The literature on the predictive role of perceived employability and attitude towards organizational change is in dearth. Only one study has related employability (although with different conceptualization and perspective-dispositional employability) with change in the organization (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008). Their findings indicated that dispositional employability promotes positive change-related emotions in the organization. Studies on perceived employability and affective organizational commitment showed that employees high in perceived employability are less likely to be committed to the organization since there focused will be on their career and possible opportunities outside the organization (De Cuyper et al., 2009; De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011; Philippaers, De Cuyper, Forrier, Vander Elst & De Witte, 2016). The findings in this studies is in agreement with ideas that higher perceived employability is likely to make workers more focused on opportunities in the external labour market and being

committed to the organization can be perceived as a threat to achieving this goal (Direnzo & Greenhaus, 2011; Hobfoll, 1989). More recently, a new study broke the paradox by confirming the claim that when human resources (HR) invest in increasing the employability of workers, workers tend to benefits from this, and view it as a form of support from the organization which ultimately relate positively with organizational commitment via social exchange processes (Akkermans et al., 2019). According to this study, this creates a mutual win situation for both the employer and the employee.

With regards to the dimensions of perceived employability (internal and external), study on internal perceived employability and affective organizational commitment indicates that there is a direct effect of internal perceived employability on organizational commitment i.e. employees high in internal perceived employability are more likely to be committed to the organization (Usmani, 2016). Akkermans et al. (2019) found similar results for internal and external employability respectively.

Similarly, the relationship between organizational commitment and attitude towards organizational change is well documented in the literature. For instance, Iverson (1996) observed that employee acceptance of organizational change is largely dependent on organizational commitment. Kamudin (2006) found a similar result while investigating organizational commitment, culture and attitude towards organizational change. A positive relationship was found between organizational commitment and attitude towards organizational change. In investigating the impact of employee job satisfaction, and organizational commitment on attitudes towards organizational change and organizational citizenship behaviour, Chih, yang and Chang (2012) discovered that organizational commitment has the most significant and direct impact on attitudes towards organizational change. This study is further supported by Neifer (2014) and Yousef (2017) who found similar evidence that supports the



claim that organizational commitment has a direct impact on attitude towards change in the organization. The literature on perceived employability and organizational commitment indicates that an increase or decrease in perceived employability has an impact on employee organizational commitment. Also, in the literature, organizational commitment was found to be a significant determinant of attitude towards organizational change whereby an increase in organizational commitment promotes positive attitudes towards organizational change compared to when organizational commitment is low. Literature on the relationship between organizational commitment and attitude towards change in the organization is appreciable while literature on perceived employability and its relationship with attitude towards organizational change and affective organizational commitment is in dearth. Thus, this study became necessary because during the literature search, they were contradictory results with regards to the impact of perceived employability on affective commitment (Akkermans et al., 2019; De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011; Philippaers et al., 2016) and also no previous study has directly link perceived employability to attitudes towards organizational change. Therefore, the aim of this study is to contribute to the extant literature by providing empirical evidence on the predictive role of perceived employability on attitude towards organizational change and affective organizational commitment. In line with the review above, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Perceived employability will positively and significantly predict attitude towards organizational change.

H2: Perceived employability will positively and significantly predict affective organizational commitment.

H3: Internal and external employability will positively and significantly predict attitude towards organizational change.

H4: Internal and external employability will positively and significantly predict affective organizational commitment.

H5: Affective organizational commitment will positively and significantly predict attitude towards organizational change.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Participants**

Participants for the study were 194 employees selected from 3 organizations involved in service delivery, 3 manufacturing organizations and 2 educational institutions in Lagos state, Nigeria. The sample consisted of 131 (67.5%) males and 63 (32.5%) females whose age ranged from 20 to 52 years with a mean age of 34.45 years (SD, 6.26). With regards to the marital status, 119(61.3%) were married, 73(37.7%) were single while 2(1.0%) were separated. 115(59.3%) accounted for participants in the manufacturing organizations, 55(28.4%) accounted for participants in the organizations involved in service delivery while 24 (12.4%) were from educational institutions. All the participants had a formal education with a large proportion holding a first degree or its equivalent. Also, 12 (6.2%) of the research participants hold a postgraduate degree. This accounted for the efficient response to the scale items and also the high return rate of the questionnaires. Based on participant's inclusion criterion, the year spent across all the organizations ranged from 3 – 22 years with a mean of 9.38 (SD, 5.12). Across the organizations, a large proportion of the participant 46(23.7%) had spent five years in their organizations.

#### **3.2 Instruments**

This study utilizes self-report questionnaire for the collection of data from participants. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section elicited responses for the demographic characteristics of the participants which include age, gender, marital status, educational attainment, designation and the number of years spent in the organization. The second section contains items from the scales adopted for the study.





Three scales were adopted in the study for data collection; self-perceived employability scale (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007), attitude towards organizational change scale (Dunham et al., 1989), and affective organizational commitment scale (Allen & Mayer, 1990). The scales are discussed below.

**Perceived employability:** perceived employability was measured with the self-perceived employability scale developed by Rothwell and Arnold (2007). The self-perceived employability scale is a 10-item scale measuring an employee's perceived ability to keep or obtain employment. The scale captures two specific dimensions of perceived employability (i.e. 4 items for internal perceived employability and 6 items for external perceived employability) and the scale is highly suitable for generic use. The measure was based on a 5-point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Sample items for the scale include: "among the people who do the same job as me, I am well respected in this organization" and "the skills I have gained in my present job are transferable to other occupations outside this organization." The cronbach alpha for the scale as reported by the developers is .83 for the overall scale, .72 for internal perceived employability and .79 for external perceived employability. Barenchenko et al. (2020) reported a .86 Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale; Cronbach's alpha for the internal and external employability dimensions were .84 and .84, respectively.

**Attitude towards organizational change:** attitude towards organizational change was measured with Dunham et al. (1989) scale on attitude towards change in the organization. It is an 18-item scale built on the three components of attitude- cognitive, affective, and behavioural. The scale captures these three components of attitude with six items measuring each component. The measure was based on a 5-point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Sample items on the scale include: "I look forward to change at work" and "I usually support new ideas". Satisfactory psychometric properties exist for the scale (Faghihi &

Allameh, 2012; Nwanzu & Babalola, 2019; Rashid Sambasivan & Rahman, 2004).

**Affective organizational commitment:** this was measured with the affective organizational commitment scale by Allen and Meyer (1990). It is an 8-item scale measuring employee emotional attachment to the organization. The measure was based on a 5-point likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). Philippaers, De Cuyper and Forrier (2019) selected 4 items from the original 8-item scale on the basis of adequate factor loading ( $> 0.60$ ) and a lack of content overlap. This was done in order to reduce the questionnaire length as too many items can sometimes distort responses. Sample items for the scale include: "I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization" and "I feel emotionally attached to my organization". Allen and Meyer reported a coefficient alpha of .85 for the 8-item scale while Philippaers et al. (2019) found satisfactory psychometric properties for the 4-item with adequate factor loading.

Two factors informed the selection of the scales utilized in the present study. First, there is sufficient evidence on the psychometric properties (validity and reliability) of the scale and second the scales have a moderate number of items. The 5-point likert scale format was utilized making it easy to get response from the participants. This is supported by Krosnick and Presser (2010) who noted that the length of a scale has the tendency to affect the process by which respondents map their attitude onto the response alternatives. For the current study a coefficient alpha of .74, .62 and .83 were obtained for perceived employability, attitude towards organizational change and affective organizational commitment respectively while coefficient alpha of .71 and .70 were attained for internal and external dimensions of perceived employability respectively. Also a coefficient alpha of .60, .56 and .58 were obtained for the cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions of attitudes towards organizational change respectively.

### 3.3 Procedure



The researcher enlisted organizations involved in service delivery, manufacturing and education that had a considerable number of staff and consistently promoted employability through consistent training of their staff on new technological tools, innovation and skill development that cut across organizational boundaries. The researcher sought permission from the management of each of this organization before the selection of participants and distribution of questionnaires. Because of the size and number of employees in each organization, an inclusion criterion was developed and the purposive sampling method was used to reach participants who met the inclusion criterion. For example, the participants would need to have spent a minimum of 3 years in the organization to be allowed to take part in the study. The numbers of years selected (3 years) was based on the assumption that it is enough time for an employee to understand the prevailing situation in the organization and develop behaviours towards this situation or occurrences. A total number of 230 questionnaires were distributed across all the participating organizations within an interval of six weeks, 218 questionnaires were retrieved. This accounted for a 94.78% return rate which is largely satisfactory. However, after sorting out

the questionnaire with adequate responses, 194 were used for the analysis of data.

### 3.4 Design and Statistics

The study adopted the cross-sectional research design. The design was selected on the basis of the following characteristics: data was collected at one point in time (Rogelberg, Fisher, Maynard, Hakel & Horvath, 2001) and the hypotheses developed for the study were in generalize and sweeping form (e.g. perceived employability will positively and significantly predict attitude towards organizational change). The simple and standard multiple regression analysis was utilized for the data analysis. The data analysis was carried out in two stages. The first was on the predictor and the criterion variables while the second was on the predictor and the dimensions of attitude towards organizational change and affective organizational commitment. The four assumptions of the regression analysis were strictly adhered to in the process of designing the study. For example the requirement for interval scale was achieved through likert scale design and for linearity; the scatter plot indicated linear relationship between the predictors and the criterion variable. The IBM\_SPSS statistics version 26 was utilized for the analysis of data.

## 4. Results

**Table 1: Reliability analyses of the research variables.**

| Variables                               | No. of items | Cronbach's alpha |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Perceived employability                 | 10           | .74              |
| Internal perceived employability        | 4            | .71              |
| External perceived employability        | 6            | .70              |
| Attitudes towards organizational change | 18           | .65              |
| Attitudes (cognitive dimension)         | 6            | .60              |
| Attitudes (affective dimension)         | 6            | .56              |
| Attitudes (behavioural dimension)       | 6            | .58              |
| Affective organizational commitment     | 4            | .83              |

**Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and the correlation coefficient**

| Variables                 | $\bar{x}$ | SD   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---------------------------|-----------|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Perceived employability | 3.89      | 0.49 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |



|                                     |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |      |       |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| 2 Internal perceived employability  | 4.28 | 0.65 | .70** |       |       |       |       |      |       |
| 3 External perceived employability  | 3.65 | 0.57 | .81** | .19** |       |       |       |      |       |
| 4 Attitude                          | 3.61 | 0.42 | .24** | .16*  | .23** |       |       |      |       |
| 5 Attitudes (cognitive dimension)   | 3.74 | 0.51 | .16*  | -.003 | .24** | .59** |       |      |       |
| 6 Attitudes (affective dimension)   | 3.18 | 0.69 | .07   | -.01  | .12   | .64** | .19** |      |       |
| 7 Attitudes (behavioural dimension) | 3.90 | 0.57 | .34** | .33** | .21** | .62** | .20** | .15* |       |
| 8 Affective commitment              | 4.13 | 0.86 | .44** | .48** | .25** | .23** | .14   | -.01 | .37** |

Notes: \* $p < 0.05$  level (two-tailed), \*\* $p < 0.01$  level (two-tailed).

Table 1 above showed Cronbach's alpha of all the scales utilized in the study. The reliability of a scale is an important part of every study. Cronbach's alpha is widely used to assess the internal consistency of a research instrument. In the literature, a Cronbach's alpha of .70 or above is largely considered to be satisfactory (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). Previous reliability analysis of the scales using Cronbach's alpha was largely satisfactory and the values were above the satisfactory value. The test for internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was carried out and the result yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of .74, .71, .70, .65, .60, .56, .58, and .83 respectively. This indicates that the scales, except for the attitude towards organizational change and its dimensions were largely satisfactory.

Table 2 presented mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficient of the variables under consideration. Using a five-point likert scale, the following mean values were observed for perceived employability  $\bar{x} = 3.89$  (SD, 0.49), internal perceived

employability  $\bar{x} = 4.28$  (SD, 0.65), external perceived employability  $\bar{x} = 3.65$  (SD, 0.57), attitudes towards organizational change  $\bar{x} = 3.62$  (SD, 0.42), and affective organizational commitment  $\bar{x} = 4.13$  (SD, 0.86). As shown in table 1, the Pearson correlation statistics revealed a positive significant relationship between the variables under consideration in the study. The absence of multicollinearity in the model was found in the study through observing the correlation between the predictor variables and the criterion. The correlation was found to be modest, indicating the absence of multicollinearity. The highest degree of correlation was found between internal perceived employability and affective organizational commitment ( $r = .48, p < 0.05$ ) and this is followed by the correlation between perceived employability and affective organizational commitment ( $r = .44, p < 0.05$ ).





**Table 3: Simple regression analysis of perceived employability (dimensions included) and affective organizational commitment on attitudes towards organizational change and its dimensions**

|                       |                           | Employability                               | Internal<br>employability                  | External<br>employability                   | Affective<br>commitment                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Attitudes             | <i>R</i>                  | .24**                                       | .16*                                       | .23**                                       | .23**                                       |
|                       | <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>     | .06                                         | .02                                        | .05                                         | .05                                         |
|                       | <i>Adj R</i> <sup>2</sup> | .05                                         | .02                                        | .05                                         | .05                                         |
|                       | <i>β</i>                  | .21                                         | .10                                        | .17                                         | .11                                         |
|                       | <i>SE</i>                 | .60                                         | .05                                        | .05                                         | .03                                         |
|                       | <i>DW</i>                 | 1.46                                        | 1.35                                       | 1.44                                        | 1.40                                        |
| Cognitive dimension   | <i>R</i>                  | .16*                                        | .003                                       | .24**                                       | .14                                         |
|                       | <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>     | .02                                         | .00                                        | .06                                         | .02                                         |
|                       | <i>Adj R</i> <sup>2</sup> | .02                                         | -.01                                       | .05                                         | .01                                         |
|                       | <i>β</i>                  | .17                                         | -.02                                       | .22                                         | .08                                         |
|                       | <i>SE</i>                 | .07                                         | .06                                        | .06                                         | .04                                         |
|                       | <i>DW</i>                 | 1.60                                        | 1.56                                       | 1.57                                        | 1.62                                        |
| Affective dimension   | <i>R</i>                  | .07                                         | .01                                        | .12                                         | .01                                         |
|                       | <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>     | .01                                         | .00                                        | .01                                         | .00                                         |
|                       | <i>Adj R</i> <sup>2</sup> | .00                                         | -.01                                       | .01                                         | -.01                                        |
|                       | <i>β</i>                  | .10                                         | -.01                                       | .14                                         | -.01                                        |
|                       | <i>SE</i>                 | .10                                         | .08                                        | .09                                         | .06                                         |
|                       | <i>DW</i>                 | 1.51                                        | 1.48                                       | 1.56                                        | 1.47                                        |
| Behavioural dimension | <i>R</i>                  | .34**                                       | .33**                                      | .21**                                       | .37**                                       |
|                       | <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>     | .11                                         | .11                                        | .04                                         | .14                                         |
|                       | <i>Adj R</i> <sup>2</sup> | .11                                         | .10                                        | .04                                         | .13                                         |
|                       | <i>β</i>                  | .39                                         | .29                                        | .21                                         | .24                                         |
|                       | <i>SE</i>                 | .08                                         | .06                                        | .07                                         | .04                                         |
|                       | <i>DW</i>                 | 1.75                                        | 1.75                                       | 1.58                                        | 1.74                                        |
|                       |                           | <i>F</i> (1; 193)=<br>12.03, <i>p</i> <0.01 | <i>F</i> (1; 193)=<br>4.89, <i>p</i> <0.05 | <i>F</i> (1; 193)=<br>10.41, <i>p</i> <0.01 | <i>F</i> (1; 193)=<br>10.93, <i>p</i> <0.01 |

Notes: \*\**p* < 0.01 level (two-tailed), \**p* < 0.05 level (two-tailed)

Table 3 showed the simple regression analysis predicting attitude towards organizational change from perceived employability. The Durbin-Watson test for all the variables in the table were between 1.35 and 1.75 which were within the acceptable level with reference to positive autocorrelation. As shown in the table, the

relationship between perceived employability and attitude towards organizational change was positive and significant (*R* = .24, *P* < 0.01). The analysis of variance test also indicated that the regression was statistically significant (*F*(1; 193) = 12.03, *p* < 0.01) in predicting attitude towards organizational change. The *R*<sup>2</sup> statistics



indicated that the perceived employability accounted for 6% variance in attitudes towards organizational change. On the basis of Cohen's d criterion (Cohen, 1988),  $R^2 = .06$  indicates a small effect size. The  $\beta = .21$  indicates that for every one unit increase in perceived employability, attitudes towards organizational change increases by 0.21%. The relationships between the dimensions of perceived employability; internal perceived employability ( $R = 16, P < 0.05$ ) and external perceived employability ( $R = 23, p < 0.01$ ) were also found to be positive and significant with attitudes towards organizational change.

The table also presented the simple regression analysis predicting attitude towards organizational change from affective organizational commitment. As presented in the table, the relationship between affective organizational commitment and attitude towards organizational change was positive and significant ( $R = .23, P < 0.01$ ). The analysis of variance test also indicated that the regression was statistically significant ( $F(1; 193) = 10.93, p < 0.01$ ) in predicting attitude towards organizational change. The  $R^2$  statistics indicated that the affective commitment accounted for

5% variance in attitudes towards organizational change. On the basis of Cohen's d criterion (Cohen, 1988),  $R^2 = .05$  indicates a small effect size. The  $\beta = .11$  indicates that for every one unit increase in affective organizational commitment, attitudes towards organizational change increases by 0.11%.

The dimensions of attitudes towards organizational change were also tested for relationships. The results showed that cognitive dimension has a significant impact on perceived employability ( $\beta = 0.17, p < 0.01$ ), and affective organizational commitment ( $\beta = 0.22, p < 0.05$ ). Also behavioural dimension was also found to have significant influence on perceived employability ( $\beta = 0.39, p < 0.05$ ); internal perceived employability ( $\beta = 0.29, p < 0.05$ ); external perceived employability ( $\beta = 0.21, p < 0.05$ ), and affective organizational commitment ( $\beta = 0.24, p < 0.05$ ). Affective dimension of attitude towards organizational change had no significant impact on perceived employability (dimensions included) and affective organizational commitment.

**Table 4: Simple regression analysis of perceived employability (dimensions included) on affective organizational commitment**

|                                     | <i>R</i> | <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> | Adjusted<br><i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> | $\beta$ | <i>SE</i> | <i>Durbin-Watson</i> |
|-------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|-----------|----------------------|
| Affective organizational commitment |          |                       |                                   |         |           |                      |
| Employability                       | .44**    | .19                   | .19                               | .77     | .11       | 1.53                 |
| Internal employability              | .48**    | .23                   | .22                               | .63     | .08       | 1.59                 |
| External employability              | .25**    | .06                   | .06                               | .38     | .11       | 1.39                 |

\*\* $p < 0.01$  level (two-tailed).

Table 4 showed the simple regression analysis predicting affective organizational commitment from perceived employability, internal perceived employability and external perceived employability. As shown in the table the relationship between perceived employability and affective organizational commitment was found to be positive and significant ( $R = .44, P <$

$0.01$ ). The analysis of variance test also indicated that the regression was statistically significant ( $F(1; 193) = 45.66, P < 0.01$ ) in predicting affective organizational commitment. The  $R^2$  statistics indicated that the perceived employability accounted for 19% variance in affective organizational commitment. On the basis of Cohen's d criterion (Cohen, 1988),  $R^2 = .192$  indicates



a large effect size. The  $\beta = .77$  indicates that for every one unit increase in perceived employability, affective organizational commitment increases by 0.77%. The relationships between the dimensions of perceived employability were also found to be positive and

significant with affective organizational commitment. The Durbin-Watson test for all the variables in the table were between 1.39 and 1.59 which were within the acceptable level and these values indicate positive autocorrelation.

**Table 5: Standard Multiple regression analysis of internal and external employability on attitudes towards organizational change and affective commitment.**

|                                  |               | Attitude                                                      | Affective commitment                                           |
|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Perceived Employability          |               |                                                               |                                                                |
| Internal perceived Employability | <i>b</i>      | .08                                                           | .60**                                                          |
|                                  | <i>SE</i>     | .05                                                           | .08                                                            |
|                                  | $\beta$       | .12                                                           | .44                                                            |
|                                  | <i>t</i>      | 1.65                                                          | 6.90                                                           |
|                                  | <i>PC</i>     | .12                                                           | .44                                                            |
|                                  | 95% <i>CI</i> | (-.02, .17)                                                   | (.42, .76)                                                     |
| External perceived Employability | <i>b</i>      | .15**                                                         | .25*                                                           |
|                                  | <i>SE</i>     | .05                                                           | .10                                                            |
|                                  | $\beta$       | .20                                                           | .17                                                            |
|                                  | <i>t</i>      | 2.86                                                          | 2.61                                                           |
|                                  | <i>PC</i>     | .20                                                           | .16                                                            |
|                                  | 95% <i>CI</i> | (.05, .26)                                                    | (.06, .44)                                                     |
|                                  |               | <i>F</i> = 6.62, <i>R</i> = .25, <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .06, | <i>F</i> = 32.60, <i>R</i> = .50, <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .25, |
|                                  |               | <i>Adj. R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .05, <i>P</i> < .01              | <i>Adj. R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .24, <i>P</i> < .01               |

PC = part correlation, \*\**p* < 0.01 level (two-tailed), \**p* < 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Multiple regression analysis in table 5 showed attitude towards organizational change predicted from internal and external employability. The findings indicated that only external employability ( $\beta = 0.20$ , *P* < 0.01) statistical and significantly contributed to attitude towards organizational change, while internal employability ( $\beta = 0.12$ , *p* > 0.05) was not statistically significant. Part correlation also indicated that internal employability explained 1% and external employability explained 4% variance in attitude towards organizational change. The tables also showed the affective organizational commitment predicted from internal and external employability. The findings

indicated that both internal ( $\beta = 0.44$ , *P* < 0.01) and external employability ( $\beta = 0.17$ , *P* < 0.05) statistical and significantly contributed to affective organizational commitment Part correlation also indicated that internal employability explained 19% and external employability explained 3% variance in affective organizational change.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

The study was carried out to probe the predictive role of perceived employability on attitude towards organizational change and affective organizational commitment based on the dearth discovered in the literature. The two dimensions of the predictor variable



were also used to examine the criterion variables. The hypotheses tested in the study were supported, indicating that perceived employability largely contributes to attitudes towards organizational change and affective organizational commitment. The findings also supported the premise on which the social exchange theory was built and previous empirical studies (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008; Akkermans et al., 2019). The first hypothesis which stated that perceived employability will positively and significantly predict attitude towards organizational change was confirmed. The result supported the claim that organizations' investment in employability has a positive role to play on attitude towards organizational change. The result was further supported by an earlier study carried out by Fugate and Kinicki (2008) on dispositional employability, where dispositional employability was found to promote positive change-related emotions among employees. This is made possible through the investment organizations make on their employees to enhance employability. Via social exchange process, the employees are likely to return this favour by demonstrating positive attitude towards organizational change as indicated in the research findings.

The second hypothesis which stated that perceived employability will positively and significantly predict affective organizational commitment was also confirmed. This finding was not in line with studies that propose that employees high in employability are less likely to show commitment to the organization because they will be more focused on the external labour market and being commitment can be perceived as a threat (De Cuyper et al., 2009; De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011; Philippaers et al., 2016). These studies did not consider the possible exchange that may occur when organizations invest in employability. Using social exchange perspective, a recent study by Akkermans et al. (2019) broke the paradox by confirming that investing in employability may have the capacity to benefit the organization as well as the employees via the social exchange process. When

employability of workers is enhanced by the organization, employees tend to benefit from this, and perceive this gesture as a form of support from the organization, and this ultimately relates positively with organizational commitment. This finding is consistent with the current study.

Further analysis with the aid of the standardized multiple regression indicated the unique contribution of each dimension of employability on the criterion variables. More specifically, for the third hypothesis, although the combined influence of the predictor was statistically significant, only external employability positively and significantly predicted attitude towards organizational change while internal employability did not. This implies that enhancing the employees' ability to obtain employment in the external labour market influences their attitude towards change in the organization via social exchange process. And for the fourth hypothesis, internal and external perceived employability positively and significantly predicted affective organizational commitment. This result is consistent with the extant literature (Usmani, 2016; Akkermans et al., 2019). Also, internal employability has the largest contributory influence on affective commitment. Therefore, effectively promoting employability among employees in the organization enhances affective commitment via the social exchange process which is built on reciprocity.

Lastly, the hypothesis that affective organizational commitment will positively and significantly predict attitude towards organizational change was also confirmed. The result was expected and in line with the extant literature i.e. it supported the claim that is largely documented in the literature; that as employee commitment in the organizational increases, attitude towards organizational change also increases (Iverson, 1996; Kamudin, 2006; Chih et al. 2012; Neifer, 2014; Yousef, 2017). This implies that affective organizational commitment has a direct impact on attitude towards organizational change.



Based on the results, a few conclusions could be drawn from the study. From the results, it could be concluded that investing in employability ultimately increases employees' perceived employability and through the social exchange process, employees are likely to give back to the organization. Therefore, perceived employability (dimensions included) is an important predictor for attitude towards organizational change and affective organizational commitment. The effect size observed for the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables was largely meaningful. Finally, internal employability has the largest influence on affective organizational commitment while external employability has the largest influence on attitude towards organizational change.

### **5.1 Managerial Implications**

The findings of this study have some key implications for practice in management. Perceived employability is observed to have practical implications on attitude towards organizational change and affective organizational commitment. And also affective organizational commitment has implications for attitude towards organizational change. The social exchange theory is built on the premise that human relationship is an exchange process where risk and reward are highly considered. Through this process, investing in employability can promote positive attitude towards organizational change (indicating acceptance of the change process) and affective organizational commitment (indicating emotional attachment to the organization). It is recommended that organizations should carry-out extensive programmes and training that promote employability among its staff as it has implications for attitude towards organizational change and affective commitment among employees. This training could be based on the use of new technologies, building communication skills, leadership, and talent management and development. Also, organizations can adapt employability programmes in their recruitment process to help the long-term employability of new employees in the organization. This is necessary

because the organization also stands to make significant gains from this investment in the form of positive attitude towards change and affective commitment among employees.

### **5.2 Limitations and Future Studies**

This study is not without limitations. It is important to highlight some of the limitations of the study as it will help in providing recommendations for future studies. A major limitation to the study is the design. The cross-sectional research design does not give a strong claim for causal relationship between two variables. Therefore, it is recommended that to enable causal interpretation, future related studies should use field experimentation and longitudinal design. Also, the study utilizes self-reports measures for the collection of data which is prone to method bias and social desirability. Future studies should control this social desirability through the inclusion of scale items that can help identify participants that might demonstrate this trait, excluding such participants in the study will help provide a better result (Dodd-McCue, 2010). A method bias that can also be controlled is same source variance. Future studies could address this by separating the questionnaires that contains the predictor and criterion variables (Podsakoff, Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012)

Another limitation relates to sampling. The sample was from a small number of organizations and is largely dominated by privately owned organizations. The sample is fairly homogenous and unique, hereby limiting the possibilities for generalization. Future related studies should use a more balanced sample that cuts across private and public owned organizations. Finally, it has been established in the literature that correlation does not always mean causation (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). Other factors not mentioned in this study that exist in the work environment could be the reason for the existing relationship between the variables. However, it is well noted in organizational research that the relationship between two variables could be mediated or moderated by other variables not actively included in a study. Therefore, for a better





understanding of the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables, future studies could include other variables that are empirically and theoretically supported to mediate or moderate the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables.

## References

- Acikgoz, Y., Sumer, H.C. & Sumer, N. (2016). Do employees leave just because they can? Examining the perceived employability-turnover intentions relationship. *The Journal of Psychology*, 150(5), 666-683.
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1977). Attitude-behaviour relations: a theoretical analysis and review of empirical literature. *Psychology Bulletin*, 84, 888-918
- Akkermans, J., Tims, M., Beijer, S., & De Cuyper, N. (2019). Should employers invest in employability? Examining employability as a mediator in the HRM- commitment relationship. *Frontiers in psychology*, 10: 717. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00717>
- Allen, N. J., & Meyer, J. P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 63(1), 1-18.
- Allen, N. J., & Rush, M. C. (1998). The effects of organizational citizenship behaviour on performance: A field study and a laboratory experiment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 83(2), 247-260.
- Baranchenko Y, Xie Y, Lin Z, Lau, M.C.K., & Ma, J. (2020). Relationship between employability and turnover intention: The moderating effects of organizational support and career orientation. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 26, 241–262. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2019.77>
- Blau, P. (1964). *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Chih, W.-H. W., Yang, F.-H., & Chang, C.-K. (2012). The study of the antecedents and outcomes of attitude toward organizational change. *Public Personnel Management*, 41, 597–617. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009102601204100402>
- Cohen, J (1988). Statistical power analysis for the behavioural science. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Lawrence Erlbaum: Hillsdale, NJ.
- Coyle-Shapiro, J. A. M., & Morrow, P. C. (2006). Organizational and Client Commitment among Contracted Employees. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 68, 416-431.
- Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management*, 31, 874-900. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ddg.13605>
- De Cuyper, N., & De Witte, H. (2011). The management paradox: self rated employability and organizational commitment and performance. *Personnel Review*, 40(2), 152-172.
- De Cuyper, N., Baillien, E., & De Witte, H. (2009). Job insecurity, perceived employability and targets' and perpetrators' experiences of workplace bullying. *Work and Stress*, 23(3), 206-224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02678370903257578>
- De Cuyper, N., Mauno, S., Kinnunen, U., & Mäkikangas, A. (2011). The role of job resources in the relation between perceived employability and turnover intention: A prospective two-sample study. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 78(2), 253-263.
- De Cuyper, N., Sulea, C., Phillippears, K., Fischmann, G., Illiescu, D., & De White, H. (2014). Perceived employability and performance: moderation for job insecurity. *Personnel Review*, 43(4), 536-552.
- Direnzo, M. S., & Greenhaus, J. H. (2011). Job search and voluntary turnover in a boundaryless



- world: a control theory perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(3), 567-589.
- Dodd-McCue, D. (2010). Self-report response bias: Learning how to live with its diagnosis in chaplaincy research. *E Journal of the Association of Professional chaplains*, 26(1), 1-7.
- Dunham, R. B., Grube, J. A., & Castañeda, M. B. (1994). Organizational commitment: The utility of an integrative definition. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79(3), 370–380. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.79.3.370>
- Dunham, R.B., Grube, J. A., Gardner D.G., Cummings, L.L., & Pierce J.L. (1989). The development of an attitude towards change instrument. In: Academy of Management Annual Meeting, 49th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, Washington, DC, 1989.
- Faghihi, A., & Allameh, S. M. (2012). Investigating the influence of employee attitude towards change and leadership style on change readiness by SEM: case study Isfahan Municipality. *International Journal of Academic Research, Business and Social Sciences*, 2(11), 215–227.
- Fishbein, M. (1963). An investigation of the relationship between beliefs about an object and the attitude towards that object. *Human Relations*, 16(3), 233-239.
- Forrier, A., & Sels, L. (2003). The concept of employability: A complex mosaic. *International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management*, 3(2), 102–124.
- Froehlich, D., Beausaert, S., Segers, M., & Gerken, M. (2014). Learning to stay employable. *Career Development International*, 19(5), 508–525.
- Fuch, S., & Prouska, R. (2014). Creating positive employee change evaluation: the role of different levels of organizational support and change participation. *Journal of Change Management*, 14(3), 361-383.
- Fugate, M., & Kinicki, A. J. (2008). A dispositional approach to employability: development of a measure and test of its implications for employee reactions to organizational change. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Change*, 81, 501-527.
- Gouldner, A.W. (1960). The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement. *American Sociological Review*. 25, 161-178.
- Hillage, J., & Pollard, E. (1998). *Employability: Developing a Framework for Policy Analysis* (Report No.RR85). London: United Kingdom
- Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: A new attempt at conceptualizing stress. *American Psychologist*, 44, 513-524.
- Howitt, D. & Cramer, D. (2011). Introduction to SPSS statistic in psychology for version 19 and earlier. 5<sup>th</sup> ed., Pearson, New York
- Iverson, R. D. (1996). Employee acceptance of organizational change: The role of organizational commitment. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 7, 122–149. <https://doi:10.1080/09585199600000121>
- Kamudin, N. (2006). The influence of organizational commitment and organizational culture on attitude towards organizational change (MBA Thesis). Malaysia: Open University of Malaysia.
- Krosnick, J. A., & Presser, S. (2010). Question and questionnaire design. In: Marsden PV, Write JD, editors. *Handbook of Survey Research*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited; pp. 263-313.
- Lazarus, R.S. & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress Appraisal and Coping*, New York: Springer.
- Memari, N., Mahdieh, O., & Marnani, A.B. (2013). Impact of organizational commitment on employee job performance. A Study of Meli



- Bank. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 5(5): 164-171.
- Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, 1(1), 61-89.
- Meyer, J. P., & Herscovitch, L. (2001). Commitment in the workplace: Towards a general model. *Human Resource Management Review*, 11, 299-326.
- Murthy, C. (2007). *Change management*. Mumbai, IND: Global Media.
- Nafei, W. A. (2014). Assessing employee attitudes towards organizational commitment and change: The case of KingFaisal hospital in Al-Taif Governorate, kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Management and Sustainability*, 4, 204–219. <https://doi:10.5539/jms.v4n1p204>
- Newstrom, J. W. & Davis, K. (2002). Organizational behaviour. "Human Behaviour at Work." 11th Edition: New Delhi Tata Mcgraw - Hill Publishing Company Limited.
- Nwanzu, C. L., & Babalola, S. S. (2019). Examining psychological capital of optimism, self-efficacy and self-monitoring as predictors of attitude towards organizational change. *International Journal of Engineering Business Management*, 11, 1-12.
- Ogedegbe, R. J. (2014). Achieving organizational success through human resource management practices. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 6(16), 18-22.
- Phillips, K., De Cuyper, N., Forrier, A., Vander Elst, T., & De Witte, H. (2016). Perceived employability in relation to job performance: A cross-lagged study accounting for a negative path via reduced commitment. *Scandinavian Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 1(1), 1-15.
- Philpps, K., De Cuyper, N., & Forrier, A. (2019). Employability and performance: The role of perceived control and affective organizational commitment. *Personnel Review*, 48(5), 1299-1317. <https://doi:10.1108/PR-04-2017-0098>
- Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B., & Podsakoff, N.P. (2012). Sources of method bias in social science research and recommendation on how to control it. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65, 539-569.
- Qaisar, M.U, Rehman, M.S & Suffyan.M (2012). Exploring Effects of Organizational Commitment on Employee Performance: Implications for Human Resource Strategy. *Interdisciplinary Journal Of Contemporary Research In Business*, 3(11), 248 – 255.
- Rashid, A. Z. M., Sambasivan, M. & Rahman, A. A. (2004). The influence of organisational culture on attitude towards organisational change. *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal*, 25(2), 161–179.
- Robbins, S. P., & Judge, T. (2007). *Organizational behaviour*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Rogelberg, G. S., Fisher G.G., Maynard D.C., Hakel, M. D., & Horvath, M. (2001). Attitude towards surveys: development of a measure and its relationship to respondent behaviour. *Organizational Research Methods*, 4(1): 3–25.
- Rothwell, A., & Arnold, J. (2007). Self-perceived employability: Development and validation of a scale. *Personnel Review*, 36(1), 23–41.
- Sullivan, S. E., & Arthur, M. B. (2006). The evolution of the boundaryless career concept: Examining physical and psychological mobility. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 69(1), 19-29.
- Uchenna, C. O. (2013). Counterproductive work behaviour among employees in emotionally demanding jobs: the roles of perceived organizational support, job burnout and age.



*Nigeria Journal of Applied Behavioural Sciences*, 1, 105-114.

Usmani, S. (2016). Perceived internal employability and leader member exchange as a way to reduce intention to quit via commitment. *Humanities and Social Science Review*, 5(2), 17-32.

van Harten, J., Knies, E. & Leisink, P. (2016). Employer's investments in hospital workers' employability and employment opportunities. *Personnel Review*, 45(1), 84-102.

Yousef, D. A. (2017) Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction and Attitudes toward

Organizational Change: A Study in the Local Government, *International Journal of Public Administration*, 40(1), 77-88. <https://doi:10.1080/01900692.2015.1072217>

Zhao, H., Peng, Z., & Sheard, G. (2013). Workplace ostracism and hospitality employees' counterproductive work behaviours: the joint moderating effect of proactive personality and political skill. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 33, 219-227.

Zhou, J., & George, J. M. (2001). When job dissatisfaction leads to creativity: Encouraging the expression of voice. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(4), 682-689.