EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION OF DOWNSIZING AND THEIR COMMITMENT TO WORK IN SELECTED FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHMENTS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study identified and assessed the extent of the implementation of downsizing policy in the affected public establishments. It also determined the impact of downsizing on employees' commitment to work in selected public sector establishments in Nigeria. The study employed descriptive cross-sectional design and a Multi- stage sampling technique was adopted. Purposive sampling technique was used to select six Federal government establishments in Abuja and Lagos State. Using stratified random sampling, a total of 604 respondents comprising (58.9%) males and (41.1%) females were selected from the six federal government establishments affected by downsizing. Data were collected through the administration of standardized psychological tests: General Perception of Downsizing (GPD) and Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). Data collected were analysed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics.

The results showed that implementation of downsizing policy carried out between year 2005 and 2007 was total in the affected ministries and parastatals. For instance, 349 (35%) members of staff were laid off in the Ministry of Finance Headquarters, Abuja, and 1,350 (41%) were affected in the Ministry of Solid Minerals Development Headquarters. One hundred and twenty-eight (15%) members of staff were laid off in the Federal Character Commission, Abuja. And In the Nigeria Port Authority, Tin Can Island, Apapa Wharf and Marina Headquarters Lagos, 3000 (42.3%) workers were affected by downsizing exercise. The results showed a significant positive relationship between employees' perception of downsizing and their work commitment (r = 0.17; p< 0.05). That is employees' perception of downsizing exercise influenced their commitment to work. The study concluded that employees' perception of downsizing influenced their commitment to work.
Keywords: Perception, Downsizing, Commitment, Employees,

INTRODUCTION

Commitment could be considered as hallmark of a healthy organization. Yet, it has recently become a contentious issue in most of the organizations, especially, in the events of organizational change such as downsizing, restructuring or re-engineering. The study of employees' commitment becomes important because organizations are required to maintain a core of committed individuals who will sustain life in organizations after a reduction in the work force. Those who remain represent the "heart, brain, and muscle" of the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Therefore it is important to know the attributes that should be possessed by those employees who are retained. On the other hand, workers who become less committed to an organization, especially, after the major shake up, tend to route their

experience and envisage what probably lies ahead of them. Consequently, they tend to start to evaluate their skills and experience in terms of their marketability outside of the organization, rather than by the implication for their current or future jobs in the organization. Thus, it becomes imperative to determine the level of organizational commitment to ensure that the better employees are those that were retained.

Meanwhile, in the period of radical changes such as mergers, outsourcing, and downsizing, employees may feel that their attachment to the organization has changed, usually decreased. The main reason leading to decreased commitment during these organizational changes is strongly connected to factors such as feelings of job insecurity, decreased trust, job redesign, and increased stress (Dordevic, 2004). Some authors conceptualize job insecurity as the perception of a potential threat to continuity (Greenhalgh and Rosenglatt, 1984). As regards decreased trust, employees may express decreased trust in management when they consider management behaviour as unethical. On job redesign, a significant concern of many employees during the radical changes is their inability to absorb and cope with increased work loads. Radical organizational changes often lead to increased stress, which consequently leads to reduced commitment in organization. It is obvious that employees are mindful of all these factors and this development has tendency to affect their dispositions in the aftermath of downsizing.

The phenomenon of downsizing has lately become a recurrent issue in the public sector (Lloyds & Weissman, 2001). Over the past decades, the public service had been dramatically transformed through downsizing at a great human cost (Frederickson & Perry, 1998). The government's modernization initiatives were processes used to reduce cost through workforce reduction and organizational restructuring (Mhone, 2003). Cases of the public service downsizing exercises and staggering figures of downsizing causalities in some countries of the world were recorded. In1992, about 2,800 workers were laid-off out of 5,800 workers of the Central Bank of Ecuador (Rama & Donna, 1999). Canadian government announced in 1995 that the Federal Public service would be reduced by 45,000 positions over the next three years (Frater, 2004). Japan, which has been noted for its tradition of life time employment, as her human resource management philosophy, has adopted employee lay offs as a result of a decade of economic turmoil (Zuris, Kando, Weinger & Weeks, 2003).
Downsizing, even though, appears as a new terminology within the context of the public sector of Nigeria, but it has all the indications of retrenchment, which is a familiar terrain in the nation's civil service. The spate of mass retrenchment that accorded the civil service reforms of 1975 and 1984 in Nigeria, coupled with cases of staff dismissal that followed minimum wage increment in 1999/2000 can attest to this fact. For instance, States like Osun and Lagos embarked on mass retrenchment exercise, where 15,000 and 12,000 public servants including teachers were dismissed from both states (Socialist Democracy, 2002). At the Federal Government level, organizational restructuring/downsizing is the first on the list under operation and system, which is the fourth cardinal point of the public service reforms in Nigeria (Adegoroye, 2006). The other three are; privatizations, liberalization, and restructuring of government spending. The reforms were targeted at improving service

delivery and promoting good governance. The fallout of restructuring are the cases of lay offs, which include the over 1,000 staff of the National Bureau of Statistics whose appointment were terminated, and the 1,350 staff of the Ministry of Solid Minerals Development who were relieved of their jobs on 31st December 2005 (Adegoroye, 2006). A host of other Government establishments such as Nigeria Port Authority, (NPA) Lagos, Federal Character Commission (FCC) Abuja etc. have also disengaged substantial number of workers from service, while many are still compiling names of those to be laid off.

Moreover, as the goal of revamping the economy is unfolding in Nigeria, the government downsizing policy and the likely psychological trauma that may accompany the exercise may have begun to take its hold on the people. The retrenched workers, as well as those who were are left behind, may have started to witness career destruction as a result of changes in work environments, and job redesign created by downsizing exercise. While the laid-off workers may quickly accept their fate and, to a greater extent, pose no problem to their immediate past organizations, the changes in work environment created by the exercise may affect the retained workers' commitment to work.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Evaluation of employees' commitment to work in the aftermath of downsizing becomes important in view of the fact that when downsizing occurs, employees who are laid off as well as those who remain (survivors) could be adversely affected. This should be of concern to organizations, given that those who survived downsizing may have just had their world turned upside down. Consequently, they may experience a change in their commitment to the organization. Bragg (2002) distinguishes between two types of employees commitments in the aftermath of downsizing, i.e. 'want to' commitment and 'have to' commitment. Those employees who want to work for their employers outperformed those who have to work for them (Bragg, 2002). It appears that employees who survived downsizing constitute majority of workers in many of the establishments after restructuring. The implication is that employees who do stay are not necessarily loyal by choice and they are not sometimes committed employees, but employees who are trapped in their jobs.

Organizational health depends on the continued commitment of those individuals remaining with the organization after downsizing has occurred (Kaye, 1998). If this group of workers have their morale dampened, it may spell doom for such organization. In the same way, downsizing in the public service of Nigeria may have dealt a great blow to the morale of an average civil servant who survived the exercise. This may also affect their commitment to work in the long run. Given these conditions, the problem of achieving the objectives (reinvigorating the public service and improving service delivery) with the latest downsizing exercise becomes inevitable. The problem becomes more pronounced in view of the peculiar nature of the public service in Nigeria. Downsizing exercise is likely to pose a special problem in Nigeria in the sense that an average Nigerian civil servant has a different conception of job, unlike their counterparts in corporate environment. A worker in the public service often feels secured, believing that his or her job is tied to retirement and is 'pensionable'. But with

the recent government' public service reforms, this may no longer be guaranteed. Thus, negative trend in employees' commitment may ensue in the aftermath of downsizing exercise. More so, Nigeria public institutions need employees who will be committed to work on their volition. That is, employees, who 'want to' work not those who 'have to' work in the wake of downsizing exercise.

Studies of downsizing have always revolved around three basic themes, which include; effect of downsizing on financial performance of organizations, effect of downsizing on its 'victims', and its effect on those who remain after it has taken place. Those researchers (Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002; Guiniven, 2001; Wanberg, Bunce & Gavin,1999) who concentrate on 'survivors' had only analysed employees perception of downsizing along the single dimension such as perceived fairness in the process or perceived procedural justice of downsizing, and perceived breach of psychological contract, and these have often been in the private sector. Few empirical investigations had analyzed employees' perceptions of downsizing in relation to employees' commitment to work in the public sector. While all the factors examined by earlier researchers (Anderson-Connolly & Greenberg 2000; Turnley & Feldman 1998) on perception of downsizing are more in the private establishments and aimed at determining the acceptability status of downsizing to the employees, the present research represents an effort to determine the influence of employees' perception of downsizing on their commitment to work.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Downsizing and Employee's Perception
Perception is a psychological construct, which has been regarded as the process by which an organism receives or extracts certain information about the environment (Robbins, 1996). The way the individual gains knowledge about his environment in his quest for adaptive behaviour is of prime importance. The gaining of such knowledge necessitates the extraction of information from the vast array of physical energy, which stimulates the organisms' senses. Considering the universal laws, which underlie the perceptual process, it seems that human beings cannot help but search for meaning and understanding in our environment.

The process of perception explains the manner in which information (stimuli) from the environment around us is selected and organized to provide meaning for the individual. Through perceptual processes, the receiver assimilates the varying type of incoming information for the purpose of interpreting it (Starbuck & Mezias, 1996). Perception thus becomes the mental function of giving significance to stimuli. It gives rise to individual behavioural responses to particular situations (Mullins, 1999). Perception in the context of this study implies that an employee becomes aware, categorizes and organizes information regarding downsizing experiences in preparedness for his/her response(s). Perception has been listed as part of the employee's natural reaction in the aftermath of downsizing exercise (Macky, 2005). Brockner, Grover, Reed and Dewitt (1992) state that a person's level of job insecurity depends on two perceptions, i.e. perceived threat and perceived control. The former consists of employees' perceptions that they, too, will lose their jobs in the future.

The latter refers to the degree of control employees believe they or the organization has in reducing the negative results of job loss. Perception in relation to the study of the plight of survivors in public service downsizing exercise could be best understood when it is substituted for the word 'framing" or "conceptualization of issues'. Gray (2003) claims that framing is based on an individual's perception of events in an organization. Frames, according to Gray (2003) are used to guide interpretations of new experiences. People use frames to make sense of the situations and form opinion and positions about the situations. Through it, individuals place themselves in relation to the issue or event, which literally means that he/she takes stance on the basis of our conceptualization of the situation.

Framing or conceptualization of issues are co-constructed or determined collectively through the way individuals make sense of their situation (Putman & Holmer, 1992). This sense making process is usually expressed in behaviour such as naming, blaming, claiming and explaining, which Putman and Holmer (1992) claimed can help individuals and groups identify a problem, locate the causes of it, and address or confront it. Employees, naturally, may use naming or blaming in conceptualization of their downsizing experience, while the managements may settle for claiming or explaining in their conceptualization of the same experience. For instance, Winker (2003) observes that managers characterize their experiences of downsizing through capitalism, using it to explain the reasons for the downsizing and attribute the causes for the layoffs to the economy, the markets, and business results etc. But employees, especially the survivors, are apt to view downsizing as an attempt to cut cost even at the expense of human inputs thereby resorting to blaming and 'name calling'.

Influence of Downsizing on Commitment

Employees' commitment can be influenced by many factors. But the greatest impact might come from organizational characteristics. The most researched among the organizational characteristics is organizational change, which is sometimes referred to as reorganizing. Reorganizing simply means changes in organizational structure. This change serves as a means of adapting to environment. Therefore, when the environment is changed, it is common for the organization's structure to change in response to it. Changes in the structure of organization may take the form of expansion or reduction. For instance, an organization may choose to expand because of greater opportunity to sell its products or services. It therefore requires more staff to serve its needs. On the other hand, an organization may also believe that it needs to reduce the number of its employees to be effectively responsive to its environment. However, any decision taken by the organization in this regard reflects structural change, which has implication on human resource matter. St. Amour (2000) contends that a shift in the organizational structure can be extremely exhilarating for some, but it can also cause confusion, low morale, turnover and decreased productivity. For the purpose of this study, the reorganization that tends toward reduction of the number of employees (Downsizing) is of great concern. Downsizing as a term in organizational structural change has been found to have a great influence on the organizational commitment (Bennett & Durkin, 2000).

Worrall, Cooper and Campbell–Jamison (2000) state that one of the most devastating effects of a structural change could occur when the nature of the relationship between the employee and the employer is damaged. Other notable effects include reduced job satisfaction and distrust (Bateman & Strasser, 1984), absenteeism (Mowday et al, 1982), job insecurity (Worral et al, 2000), and a decline in motivation (Bennett & Durkin, 2000). All of these effects, whether acting independently or collectively, have an enormous influence on organizational commitment. Many of these effects have been found to have correlation with organizational commitment (Muchinsky, 2000). Several other studies have confirmed that organizational downsizing adversely influences organizational commitment of survivors. Appelbaum, Delage, Labib and Gault (1997) find that organizational commitment reduced after downsizing. Noer (1993) concludes that most downsizing effort end up in low productivity due to the way in which the exercise is carried out. The report says that the morale, skills and job satisfaction of the surviving employees reduce.

Theoretical Framework

Organizational justice theory is concerned with the fair treatment of people in organizations. It can be thought of as a more limited application of social justice, a concept that has been debated by philosophers for hundreds of years (Muchinsky, 2000). In an organizational context, there are always competing goals and objectives. A case in point is an organization's decision to downsize in the face of intense pressure to `survive' and to gain competitive advantages. An organization might need to reduce its workforce as a result of the reasons mentioned above. But problems may arise as to how to manage this process of change so that fairness is reflected in all ramifications. In the same vein, problems may also arise from the management of the outcome of such decision to guarantee employees' perception of fairness in the process as well as the outcome of downsizing exercise. The assumptions above justify the development of "Organizational Justice Model" to explain several forms of organization's behaviour. Muchinsky (2000) notes that organizational justice is a useful concept in examining a wide range of important organizational issues among which are organizational restructuring and downsizing. Justice has been claimed to be "the first virtue of social institutions" (Rawls, 1971). Therefore, organizational justice model, through its different components, seems useful to explain some interactional relationships between employer(s) and employees. Most importantly, it provides the avenue to understand the basic consideration of fairness in the way both parties are discharging their mutual obligations in an employment relationship.

The precise dimensionality of justice perceptions is still debated. Although various cotemporary theorists have argued that justice is anything from a single dimension to four dimensions but two of these dimensions have been re-occurring in most of the literature. For instance, Muschinsky (2000) argues for two predominant perspectives of justice, which include: distributive and procedural justice. Distributive justice refers to the fairness of outcomes, results or ends achieved. The outcome here is thought of as some decision that has been rendered regarding the employees. Typical examples include hiring decision

outcome of performance appraisals and decisions about downsizing/layoffs (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). Distributive justice is heavily predicated upon values/rules. Three of such rules have been identified as the basis for distributive justice: equity, equality and need rules. The second major type of justice is procedural justice, which refers to the fairness of the means used to achieve the results. As the name suggests, it deals with the perceived fairness of the policies and procedures used to make decisions. This is most useful in the present study, because it explicitly explains the procedural components of downsizing policy such as downsizing strategies. Folger and Greenberg (1985) submit that there are two approaches to conceptualizing procedural justice. One emphasizes the role of the individual's "voice" in the process. That is, a procedure is perceived to be fairer when affected individuals have an opportunity to either influence the decision process or offer input. The other approach emphasizes the structural components of the process, whereby procedural justice is a function of the extent to which procedural rules are satisfied or violated.

These procedural rules suggest that decisions should be made consistently without personal biases with as much accurate information as possible, and with an outcome that could be modified. Also included in procedural justice is the treatment that the individual receives during the process, which reflects issues of personal respect and organizational supports. Theories of organizational justice propose that people attend to the processes used to determine outcomes as well as to the end result in determining "fairness." For example, Brockner et al (1987) in a study report that the remaining employees considered the way in which their co-workers were treated during the downsizing process as well as the outcome (i.e., losing their jobs). From this perspective, layoff survivors can be expected to exhibit the most negative reactions when they identify with the layoff victims and feel the victims have not been well compensated. "When survivors perceived that those laid off had been dismissed with little or no compensation, they reacted more negatively (from an organizational perspective) to the extent that they felt some prior sense of psychological kinship with the laid-off parties" (Brockner et al., 1987).

What Brockner's study would indicate is that employees are affected by more than just the fact of layoffs. They are affected by how the layoffs are managed and by what is done for the individuals in the position. Brockner found that negative attitudinal changes were reflected in survivors' reduced work performance and lowered commitment to the organization. Conversely, the study showed that employees' commitment could actually increase during a layoff process when the company shows some commitment to displaced workers. "The post-layoff setting provides organizations with a rather unique situation in which to express their commitment to employees; that is, if organizations show commitment to their dismissed workers (through caretaking activities of providing severance pay and outplacement counseling), even as they are in the process of becoming uncommitted to them by laying them off, the more committed to the organization are survivors apt to be" (Brockner et al., 1987).

Implications of Organizational Justice for the Present Study

The present study focuses on the employees' perception of downsizing exercise in relation to organizational commitment. Therefore, application of the concept of organizational justice (Distributive and Procedural) to the study centers on employees' perception of fairness in all aspects of downsizing exercise. These include the reasons advanced for decision to downsize, processes involved (downsizing strategies), and outcome, which is the actual implementation of downsizing strategy. As noted earlier, the extent to which the organization manages all these aspects will determine the employees' perception of fairness or otherwise in the exercise. A clear explanation of procedures in layoff situations is also associated with a perception of the layoff process as fair and a willingness to endorse the organization (Wanberg, Bunce & Gavin, 1999).

However, by using the `template' of organizational justice, one could advance various assumptions about how the employees gauge and their likely reaction to downsizing outcome. For instance, in the case of Nigeria, the reason advanced for downsizing according to Bureau of Public Service Reform (2006) is to improve service delivery and promote good governance. The method is involuntary workforce reduction (early retirement, termination of appointment on the basis of the officers considered as medically unfit, without entry qualifications and officers whose line of duties had been outsourced and redundant etc.) and the outcome is several thousands of worker losing their jobs while others remain as the survivors. Brockner and Weisenfeld (1996) agree that procedural justice becomes' important when the outcome is unfavourable. Since downsizing exercise in most cases is not favourable, especially to the workers, people tend to question the rationale behind it and judge the outcome as being fair or unfair. It is expected that employees' perception (fair/ unfair) of recent federal government downsizing exercise will determine their organizational commitment. Several findings have established that employees' perception of fairness in downsizing exercise can be associated with positive organizational outcomes. For instance, Procedural justice aspects of the layoff process include the organization providing valid reasons for layoffs, treating terminated employees decently (providing organizational support), having a fair selection procedure for determining those to be laid-off, and having effective communication about the layoffs (Greenberg, 1990).

Moreover, studies have posited that employees are more likely to report trust (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996) and commitment (Anderson-Connolly & Greenberg, 2000) toward the organization where there have been fair procedures. A sense of low procedural justice is associated with low loyalty to the organization (Turnley & Feldman, 1998). People respond favourably to fair procedures (Brockner, Wiesenfeld & Martin, 1995), and those who perceive a decision to be fairly or well handled are less inclined to sue (Bies & Tyler, 1993) and are more willing to endorse the organization (Konovsky & Folger, 1991). Many of these findings have linked perception of fairness in layoff with commitment and loyalty. Thus, it is proposed in this study that employees' perception of downsizing will significantly related to their commitment to work.

Methods

Descriptive survey is employed specifically to examine the relationship between employees' perception of downsizing exercise and organizational commitment. The order of the research variables is as follows; the independent variable is Perception of downsizing, while the dependent variable for the study is employees' commitment to work. The study population consists of civil servants in the Federal Ministries, Parastatals and Agencies. The Federal Civil Service as at the year 2005 (the year preceding the commencement of downsizing exercise), consists of 307,566 staff. The figure is total sum of 145,195 (47%) workers from the 31 Ministries/Extra-Ministerial Departments and 162,371 (52%) workers from 158 Federal Parastatals and Agencies (Federal Character Commission, Tenth Annual Report 2005).

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The study adopted a multi-stage sampling technique in the process of the selection and the collection of data. These sampling techniques include; the purposive, and stratified sampling method. The purposive sampling technique was used in selection of six Federal Government's establishments. These consist of two Ministries (Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Mines and Steels Development), two Parastatals (Nigeria Port Authority and National Council for Museums and Monuments) and two Agencies (National Orientation Agency and Federal Character Commission), all in Abuja and Lagos State. The selection was based on the following criteria: firstly, that the establishments selected belong to the public sector, secondly, the establishments were among the public institutions where downsizing had been carried out. The stratified sampling technique, which specified that the sample be first classified along specific criteria, was also used. The selected establishments were stratified into ministries, parastatals and agencies, from which a total number of 604 participants who responded to the research instrument were selected.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used for the collection of data in this study is divided into three-section comprising scales that are already in use.

Section A: Demographic Data

This section contains seven-item, which sought information on respondents' demographic characteristics. These include, age, sex, marital status, education, job position/status, and length of service. It is important to collect information on such variables in order to gain a better understanding of how they contribute to employees' perception of downsizing and their levels of commitment to work. Age has no specific range or categories; respondents are to write their age. Although most feasible age to join the Federal Civil Service in Nigeria for non-graduate is 18 years, while 25 years is adopted as the optimal age for basic degree graduate entry (BPSR, 2006). Sex variable has two options; male or female. Marital status also has four categories; single, married, divorce, and others. Education has no specific category; respondents were asked to indicate their educational qualifications.

General Perception of Downsizing Scale

This section sought to determine respondents' general perception of downsizing exercises in their respective establishments. The instrument was close-ended questionnaire using the combination of items adapted from Multi –Item Perception of Downsizing Scales developed by Sronce and McKinley (2006), and Perceived Fairness of Downsizing Exercise Scale developed by Brockner et al (1992). The former has four dimensions. It measures the degree to which downsizing was perceived as financially effective; the degree to which downsizing is perceived as inevitable; the degree to which downsizing is perceived as liberating for laid-off employees, and the degree to which downsizing was perceived as a breach of the implied employment contract. But two dimensions whose items conformed to the objective of this study were adapted. These are the degree to which downsizing is perceived as inevitable; and the degree to which downsizing is perceived as liberating for laid-off employees.

Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)

The survey instrument used to measure employee's commitment to work in this study is eighteen-item scale, which measures the three components of commitment. These components include, affective, normative and continuance commitment. A revised version of the instrument by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) and Meyer and Allen (1997), only contained 18-items of 6 items on each of the three components. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) is a self-scoring questionnaire, and response to each of the items is rated using a 5-point Likert scale with anchors labeled 1 -strongly disagreed, 2 -disagree, 0 -undecided, 3 -agree, 4 -strongly agree,

Procedure

The data were collected in batches. The first batch of data were collected within the last seven days in the month of March, 2009 in one of the establishments i.e. Nigerian Port Authority (NPA) in Lagos, while the remaining batch of data were collected between April and early May 2009 in the five establishments, which are located in the Federal capital Territory, Abuja. In Nigerian Ports Authority's, Marina Headquarters, Tincan Island and Apapa Wharf, a total of 350 questionnaires' were distributed out of which only 292 were returned and 284 were duly completed. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed in five different establishments in Abuja. The order of the distributions is as follows: Ministry of Finance- 125, Ministry of Mines and Steels Development- 100, Federal Character Commission- 75, National Orientation Agency- 100, National Council for Museums and Monuments-100. On the whole, a total number of 850 questionnaires were distributed out of which 702 were returned. Out of these, 604 were found to be duly completed and useful for analysis. 148 were not returned, while 98 were either not filled or not completed and thus rejected. Altogether, a response rate of 71% was recorded.

Treatment of Data

Data were generated for this study through questionnaire administration. The scores of each respondent were compiled into contingency tables according to the main variables being

examined. Data generated were further analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, which include: Simple Percentage, Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

RESULTS

Demographic Analysis

Six hundred and four (604) employees in the six federal government establishments responded to the research instrument, (M= 37.6, S.D =7.77). They were mostly between 31 – 50 years of age.

Table 1: Percentage Distributions of Respondents' Scores on General Perception of Downsizing Exercise

NO	ITEM	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL
1.	Downsizing enhances decision making and helps to recreate organizational value system.	71 (11.8)	144 (23.8)	60 (9.9)	207 (34.3)	122 (20.2)	604 (100)
2.	Downsizing is something government has to do.	63 (10.4)	159 (26.3)	74 (12.3)	191 (31.6)	117 (19.4)	604 (100)
3.	Downsizing is an inevitable by-product of our economy system.	69 (11.4)	190 (31.5)	47 (7.8)	217 (35.9)	81 (13.4)	604 (100)
4.	Downsizing is good for public corporation's lower cadres.	35 (5.8)	81 (13.4)	83 (13.7)	214 (35.4)	191 (31.6)	604 (100)
5.	Downsizing should be within the confine of corporate circle.	50 (8.3)	255 (42.2)	47 (7.8)	165 (27.3)	87 (14.4)	604 (100)
6.	Downsizing helps the government reconfigure the work process.	68 (11.3)	195 (32.3)	39 (6.5)	232 (38.4)	70 (11.6)	604 (100)
7.	Downsizing frees employees to pursue new opportunities.	84 (13.9)	195 (32.3)	41 (6.8)	199 (32.9)	85 (14.1)	604 (100)
8.	Downsizing releases employees to explore new careers.	93 (15.4)	228 (37.7)	30 (5.0)	187 (31.0)	66 (10.9)	604 (100)
9.	Downsizing frees laid-off workers to learn new skills.	78 (12.9)	222 (36.8)	48 (7.9)	191 (31.8)	65 (10.8)	604 (100)
10.	Downsizing frees laid-off employees to realize their full potentials.	76 (12.6)	160 (26.5)	35 (5.8)	255 (42.2)	78 (12.9)	604 (100)
11.	One can say that the last downsizing exercise was fair to those who were let go.	197 (32.6)	255 (42.2)	66 (10.9)	63 (10.4)	23 (3.8)	604 (100)
12.	Government was fair to	211	251	50	72	20	604

	those who were relieved of their work.	(34.9)	(41.6)	(8.3)	(11.9)	(3.3)	(100)
13.	In my opinion, the criteria used to accomplish the exercise were fair.	176 (29.1)	221 (36.6)	65 (10.8)	101 (16.7)	41 (6.8)	604 (100)

The recent Federal government's downsizing exercise means many things to different people. While a relatively good number of respondents (54.5%) disagreed with the notion that downsizing exercise enhances the decision making and helps to recreate organisational value systems, another half of them (45.5%) agreed with this notion. Three hundred and eight (51.0%) of the respondents also disagreed with the notion that downsizing is a must step for the Federal government to take, whereas a few number of them (36.7%) endorsed the Federal government's decision. Respondents were not totally different in their perception of downsizing as an inevitable by- product of the nation's economy, as a fairly good number of respondents (49.3%) disagreed with this notion, compared to the fairly good number of them (42.9%) who agreed with the notion.

As regards whether downsizing exercise should be within the confines of the corporate circle, a good number of respondents (50.3%) supported this assertion while only a few respondents (31.7%) had a contrary opinion. Meanwhile, respondents were not favourably disposed to the idea that downsizing exercise may be a sort of "blessing in disguise" to those who were let go as a relatively large number of respondents (55.1%) disagreed totally with the notion that downsizing frees the laid-off workers to fully realise their potentials, while a few number of respondents (39.1%) agreed with this notion. Considering the employee's (survivor) perception of the treatment meted to those who were laid off from the Federal government service, four hundred and fifty-two (74.8%) of the respondents disagreed completely that the procedures used during the last downsizing exercise was fair to those who were let go, while only few of them (14.2%) had a contrary opinion. Moreover, an overwhelming number of respondents (76.5%) disagreed strongly that government was fair to those who were relieved of their work during the last exercise, while only few of them (15.1%) agreed with the notion.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis, which, states that employees' perception of downsizing will be significantly related to their commitment to work was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The result is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis Showing the Direction of Relationship between Perception of Downsizing and Organizational Commitment.

CORRELATION	R	R²	df	P
Perception of downsizing and Organizational commitment	0.17	0.03	602	<0.05

P< 0.05

The result in Table 2 above shows that the hypothesis was supported i.e. hypothesized independent variable, perception of downsizing significantly and positively relates to organizational commitment, which is the dependent variable (1; 603) =0.17; p<0.05). In percentage term, the strength of the relationship between the two variables can be interpreted as the squared correlation coefficient (r^2) which is 0.03. So, 3% of the variance of organizational commitment could be explained by variance in employees' perception of downsizing. This means that Federal workers who had a positive perception of downsizing are likely to score high on organizational commitment, while Federal workers who had a negative perception of downsizing are likely to record low organizational commitment.

DISCUSSION

The primary focus of the present study is to contribute to the knowledge in the area of understanding the relationship between organizational downsizing/retrenchment and employees' commitment to work in general and specifically, in the public sector. The result of analysis provides significant support for the hypothesized relationship among all the variables of interest in this study. With regard to the hypothesis formulated to guide this study, the hypothesis, which sought to examine the direction and strength of relationship between employees' perception of downsizing (independent variable) and their commitment to work (dependent variable), revealed a significant relationship between the two variables. Even though the strength of the relationship was low, it implies that employees' perception of downsizing exercise has something to do with their commitment to work. This finding was in line with the finding of Knudsen, Johnson, Martin and Roman (2003) who found that the model in which downsizing was directly and indirectly associated with commitment was generally supported. Also corroborating this result is the work of Brockner, Grover, Reed, Dewitt, and Malley (1987) who posit that survivors experienced negative attitudinal changes in reduced work performance and lowered commitment to the organization. Also sharing this view are Bennett and Durkin (2000) who report that downsizing as a term in organization structural change has been found to have a great influence on the organizational commitment. Other scholars who have demonstrated the relationship between downsizing and organizational commitment include Turnley and Feldman (1998), Amstrong-Stassen (1998), Kets de vries and Balazs (1997) and Spreitzer and Mishra (2002).

A plausible reason for this relationship may be explained from two different perspectives. Naturally, downsizing/ retrenchment has tendency to create an atmosphere of apprehension and uncertainty in the work environment. This may bring about psychological fear that could dampen workers' morale and result in lower commitment, which is a negative trend. On the other hand, downsizing may spur higher organizational commitment since the action may serve as a mean to an end. This invariably means that workers may resolve to put in their best in the aftermath of the exercise in order to escape being laid-off in the subsequence exercise. In practical term, employees in the public service of Nigeria are left with fewer choices of gainful employment (given the current level of employment opportunity in the country). Consequently, they may deicide to work hard to retain their jobs, an action, which

portends a positive trend. However, the general picture of the descriptive analysis indicates that the federal civil servants were not favourably disposed to the recent government's downsizing exercise. This is evident in the number of workers (55%) who disagreed with what may be the contextual values of downsizing exercise. The reason for this negative perception may be attributed to unpalatable history of the previous retrenchment exercises in the public service of Nigeria. Adamolekun (1986) argues that the purge in the public service in 1975 is a severe disciplinary action, which contradicted the concept of security of tenure which is the cornerstone of career civil service. Adedeji (2000) also asserts that the practical effect of the previous retrenchment exercises is the creation of an atmosphere of apprehension and uncertainty in the public service.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study have very relevant and important implications for the employees of the Federal Government themselves in that it will help them to gain insight into those important factors within and outside of them, which are required for successful coping and better adjustment to an event like downsizing exercise. It also has implications for the stake holders such as Federal Civil Service Commission, Ministry of Labour and Productivity in Nigeria. This study will inform those who are at the helm of affairs in these establishments on employees' general perception of the recent downsizing exercise. It will also afford them the opportunity of understanding the level of commitment among employees that were left behind in the aftermath of downsizing exercise.

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