

Lecturer–Student Relations and Working Hours as Predictors of Lecturer’s Commitment in State-Owned Colleges of Education in the North-West Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The quality of lecturer–student relations and the demands of working hours represent two dimensions of the academic work experience whose implications for lecturer commitment have received limited specific empirical attention in the Nigerian Colleges of Education context. This study examined: (i) the nature of lecturer–student relations; (ii) the level of working hours of lecturers; (iii) the level of lecturer commitment to work; and the relationships between each variable and lecturer commitment in state-owned Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. A correlational survey design was employed with 302 lecturers from four institutions. The Personnel Relations Lecturers Questionnaire (PRLQ, reliability = 0.85), the Condition of Service of Lecturers Questionnaire (CSLQ, reliability = 0.82), and the Lecturers Commitment Questionnaire (LCQ, reliability = 0.84) were used. Mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were applied at $\alpha = 0.05$. Lecturer–student relations were at a high level (mean = 3.35) with universal commitment to academic discussion and mentorship. Working hours were at a high level (mean = 3.58) but with a critical absence of reward for extra hours (mean = 2.06). Lecturer commitment was at a high level (mean = 3.38). Lecturer–student relations significantly predicted commitment ($r = 0.130$, $p = 0.048$), while working hours did not ($r = 0.050$, $p = 0.376$). Lecturer-student relations are a significant predictor of commitment; working hours though extensive and stressful are not, particularly in the absence of institutional recognition. The student-focused professional identity of lecturers is a resilient commitment source that institutions must actively sustain rather than merely assume.

Keywords: lecturer–student relations; working hours; lecturer commitment; level of commitment; personnel relations; condition of service; Colleges of Education; North-West Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The academic profession is defined by two relational and structural realities that sit at opposite ends of the professional experience: the deeply human, educationally purposive relationship between a lecturer and their students, and the often burdensome, institutionally imposed demands of working hours that accumulate far beyond formally prescribed limits. Both dimensions are lived realities for every lecturer in every Nigerian College of Education, and both are theoretically implicated in the quality and sustainability of lecturer commitment. Yet their specific effects on commitment as independent, empirically testable predictors have not been systematically examined in state-owned Colleges of Education in Nigeria's North-West geopolitical zone. This study addresses that gap.

Conceptually, lecturer–student relations encompass the totality of interpersonal interactions, professional engagements, and pedagogical relationships that develop between academic staff and the students they teach, advise, and mentor. These relations are not merely instrumental exchanges of knowledge for assessment; they constitute the relational space in which the institution's teaching mission is directly operationalised and in which the lecturer's professional identity finds its most proximate and meaningful expression (Krstić, 2015). The quality of these relations the degree of openness, mutual respect, mentorship effectiveness, and interpersonal compatibility shapes not only student learning outcomes but also the lecturer's own sense of

professional efficacy, purpose, and motivation. A lecturer who experiences the lecturer–student relationship as one of genuine professional engagement and meaningful human connection is relationally rewarded in ways that reinforce commitment to the institution in which that engagement takes place.

Working hours, by contrast, represent the structural and quantitative dimension of the academic work experience. In Nigerian Colleges of Education, the formally prescribed teaching load is between 14 and 18 hours per week (LSBU Agreement, 2016), but the actual working hours of lecturers consistently exceed these limits when the full scope of academic responsibilities is considered. Research preparation, student assessment and marking, project supervision, departmental meetings, administrative duties, and community service obligations collectively expand the working week well beyond any formal limit. Halidu (2015) identifies long working hours as a major cause of health problems among Nigerian lecturers, and the cumulative effect of uncompensated overtime in the absence of institutional recognition or financial reward creates conditions that are theoretically hostile to sustained organisational commitment.

Theoretically, the relationships between these two variables and lecturer commitment are grounded in complementary frameworks. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) posits that interpersonal and institutional relationships are governed by norms of reciprocity: where an individual invests professional effort and receives meaningful returns whether through relational satisfaction, institutional recognition, or financial reward commitment is sustained. Where the investment is unreciprocated, disengagement and alienation follow. Applied to the present study, this framework predicts that positive lecturer–student relational exchanges generate the relational returns that sustain commitment, while the absence of institutional recognition for extra working hours investment blocks the reciprocal pathway that would otherwise convert time investment into commitment. Meyer and Allen's (1990) three-component model of commitment distinguishing affective, continuance, and normative commitment further refines these predictions: affective commitment, the emotional identification with the institution, is most directly nourished by professionally rewarding relational experiences such as effective student engagement, and most directly eroded by institutionally inequitable conditions such as unrecognised overwork.

Empirically, the literature establishes both dimensions as theoretically significant. Krstić (2015) demonstrated that the lecturer–student relationship is crucial to inspiring students and reinforcing the lecturer's own professional engagement. Ayodele et al. (2014) proposed that regular, fruitful interaction between lecturers and students involving collaboration, mentorship, and a sense of institutional belonging constitutes the guiding principle of an educationally productive and professionally sustaining academic relationship. Abari and Adejor (2021) established that lecturer–student relationship quality has measurable implications for the development of both students and academic staff within the institutional environment. In relation to working hours, Akinfolarin and Ehinola (2014) argued that when extended working hours are neither recognised nor rewarded, they produce professional alienation rather than commitment, and that conditions of service enabling lecturers to perform their tasks with recognition and flexibility are necessary to convert time investment into institutional attachment.

Despite this theoretical and empirical foundation, the specific predictive relationships between lecturer–student relations, working hours, and lecturer commitment in state-owned Colleges of Education in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria have not been empirically tested. The North-West zone presents a distinctive institutional environment characterised by specific patterns of personnel management, workload distribution, and academic service conditions that differ materially from those documented in federal institutions or southern Nigerian higher education contexts. This study provides a geographically and institutionally specific empirical test of these relationships, using primary data from 302 lecturers across four state-owned Colleges of Education: Gumel, Dutsin-Ma, Sokoto, and Maru.

Statement of the Problem

The sustainability of high-quality lecturer commitment in state-owned Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria is a matter of institutional urgency. These institutions bear the primary responsibility for preparing qualified teachers for the region's basic education system, and the quality of that preparation is directly

dependent on the professional commitment of their academic staff. Yet the personnel and working conditions that shape this commitment remain poorly understood in their specific institutional context.

Two conditions are particularly conspicuous in the daily experience of lecturers in these institutions. First, the lecturer–student relationship theoretically the most professionally rewarding dimension of the academic role may or may not be functioning at levels that generate the relational satisfaction and professional efficacy that sustain commitment. Second, working hours in Nigerian Colleges of Education are anecdotally and structurally known to exceed formally prescribed limits, yet whether this overwork is recognised and rewarded by institutional management and whether, in the absence of such recognition, it contributes to or detracts from lecturer commitment has not been empirically established in this context.

Without evidence-based answers to these questions, institutional administrators cannot distinguish which aspects of the lecturer's daily experience require intervention to sustain commitment and which are already functioning as commitment resources. This study was designed to provide that evidence, by separately testing the predictive relationships between lecturer–student relations, working hours, and lecturer commitment in state-owned Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Investigate the relationship between lecturer–student relations and lecturer commitment to work in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria.
2. Investigate the relationship between working hours and lecturer commitment to work in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria.
3. Examine the level of lecturer commitment to work in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between lecturer–student relations and lecturer commitment to work in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between working hours and lecturer commitment to work in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria?
3. What is the level of lecturer commitment to work in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at $\alpha = 0.05$:

1. There is no significant relationship between lecturer–student relations and lecturer commitment to work in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria (Ho1).
2. There is no significant relationship between working hours and lecturer commitment to work in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria (Ho2).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A correlational research design was adopted for this study, following Creswell (2014). The design was appropriate because the study sought to determine the nature and direction of relationships between the independent variable lecturer–student relations and working hours and the dependent variable, lecturer commitment to work, without any manipulation of the variables under investigation.

The study population comprised 3,242 lecturers from state-owned Colleges of Education in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. An accessible population of 1,610 lecturers was drawn from four institutions: College of Education, Gumel; College of Education, Dutsin-Ma; College of Education, Sokoto; and College of Education, Maru. Proportional sampling was applied to yield a sample of 306 respondents, distributed as follows: Gumel (n = 41), Dutsin-Ma (n = 69), Sokoto (n = 157), and Maru (n = 39). A total of 302 questionnaires were returned and found usable, representing a response rate of 98.7%.

Three instruments were used for data collection. The Personnel Relations Lecturers Questionnaire (PRLQ; reliability = 0.85) measured lecturer–student relations. The Condition of Service of Lecturers Questionnaire (CSLQ; reliability = 0.82) measured the working hours dimension. The Lecturers Commitment Questionnaire (LCQ; reliability = 0.84) measured the level of lecturer commitment to work. All three instruments were validated by content experts in Educational Administration and in Measurement and Evaluation. Reliability coefficients were established via Cronbach's Alpha. All items used a four-point Likert rating scale (Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1). A decision criterion of mean 2.50 and above was interpreted as High Level; mean below 2.50 was interpreted as Low Level. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at alpha = 0.05, computed via SPSS Version 20.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data was presented and analyzed under the following headings:

Research Question 1: Nature of Lecturer–Student Relations

Research Question 1 sought to determine the nature of lecturer–student relations in state-owned Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Perception of Participants on Lecturer–Student Relations in Colleges of Education, North-West Nigeria (N = 302)

S/N	Item Statement	High Freq.	Low Freq.	Mean	SD	Decision
1	In my college lecturers are open to discuss academic issues with students.	302	0	4.00	2.00	High Level
2	In my college lecturers provide mentorship guidance to students.	302	0	4.00	2.00	High Level
3	In my college there is no preferential treatment of students by lecturers.	98	204	2.64	1.62	High Level
4	In my college lecturers and students usually get on well with each other.	209	93	3.37	1.83	High Level
5	In my college lecturers seem uncomfortable interacting with students.	113	189	2.74	1.65	High Level
	Weighted Mean			3.35	1.82	High Level

Table 1 reveals that lecturer–student relations were at a High Level with a weighted mean of 3.35 and standard deviation of 1.82. Two items achieved the maximum mean score of 4.00 — universal openness to academic discussion with students and universal provision of mentorship guidance — representing the highest item-level uniformity in the entire study dataset, indicating unanimous lecturer enactment of these two relational practices. General interpersonal compatibility between lecturers and students (mean = 3.37) and equitable treatment of students (mean = 2.64) were also at high levels. The item regarding lecturer discomfort in student



interaction (mean = 2.74) indicates that a minority of lecturers experience some relational discomfort, but the dominant pattern across all five items is one of open, supportive, and equitable engagement between lecturers and their students.

Research Question 2: Level of Working Hours

Research Question 2 sought to determine the level of working hours of lecturers in state-owned Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Perception of Participants on Working Hours of Lecturers in Colleges of Education, North-West Nigeria (N = 302)

S/N	Item Statement	High Freq.	Low Freq.	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	The excess workload in my college makes me work for long hours.	302	0	4.00	2.00	High Level
2.	I willingly work for long hours to help my students.	296	6	3.95	1.98	High Level
3.	I am rewarded for long hours working by the college management.	10	292	2.06	1.43	Low Level
4.	I don't have time for personal commitments; I am always occupied in the college.	290	12	3.91	1.97	High Level
5.	I have stress due to long working hours in my college.	302	0	4.00	2.00	High Level
	Weighted Mean			3.58	1.87	High Level

Table 2 shows that working hours were at a High Level with a weighted mean of 3.58 and standard deviation of 1.87. Excess workload driving long hours (mean = 4.00), willingness to work long hours for students (mean = 3.95), absence of personal time due to college demands (mean = 3.91), and working hours-related stress (mean = 4.00) all returned high or maximum scores. The critical exception is Item 3 — institutional reward for long hours working — which fell at Low Level with a mean of 2.06, indicating near-universal absence of management recognition for extra-hours effort. This single item represents the institutional reciprocity failure that emerges as the explanatory mechanism for the working hours-commitment hypothesis tested in Section 7.5.

Research Question 3: Level of Lecturer Commitment to Work

Research Question 3 examined the level of lecturer commitment to work as the dependent variable baseline. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Perception of Participants on Level of Lecturer Commitment to Work in Colleges of Education, North-West Nigeria (N = 302)

S/N	Item Statement	High Freq.	Low Freq.	Mean	SD	Decision
1	In my college lecturers have good knowledge in their subject matter.	221	81	3.45	1.85	High Level
2	In my college lecturers have freedom to initiate the	181	121	3.19	1.78	High Level

	goals of teaching.					
3	In my college academic staff have freedom to use their own judgement in academic and non-academic issues.	79	223	2.49	1.57	Low Level
4	I am satisfied with my professional ability to perform my job efficiently.	161	141	3.06	1.74	High Level
5	In my college I feel a sense of belonging to the lecturing profession.	250	52	3.65	1.91	High Level
6	In my college I am in lecturing because of a sense of loyalty to the profession.	165	137	3.08	1.75	High Level
7	In my college I voluntarily accept the role of the lecturing profession.	175	127	3.15	1.77	High Level
8	In my college I have attended development training and workshops in my area of specialisation.	46	256	2.29	1.51	Low Level
9	In my college lecturers are given permanent and pensionable appointment after two years.	302	0	4.00	2.00	High Level
10	In my college retirement benefits are paid promptly.	302	0	4.00	2.00	High Level
11	In my college lecturers are not arbitrarily dismissed.	302	0	4.00	2.00	High Level
12	In my college I have freedom of association.	298	4	3.96	1.98	High Level
	Weighted Mean			3.38	1.80	High Level

Table 3 confirms that lecturer commitment was at a High Level with a weighted mean of 3.38 and standard deviation of 1.80. The highest-scoring items were structural job security provisions: pensionable appointment (4.00), retirement benefits (4.00), non-arbitrary dismissal (4.00), and freedom of association (3.96), all of which anchor a strong institutional commitment baseline. However, professional development training attendance (mean = 2.29) and academic autonomy in judgement (mean = 2.49) both fell at Low Level, indicating that while structural security sustains commitment at a high overall level, its qualitative depth is limited by deficiencies in professional development opportunities and lecturer autonomy.

Test of Null Hypothesis One (Ho1)

Ho1 stated that there is no significant relationship between lecturer–student relations and lecturer commitment to work in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. The PPMC result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: PPMC Result for the Relationship between Lecturer–Student Relations and Lecturer Commitment (Alpha = 0.05).

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	r-Cal	p-value	Decision
Lecturer–Student Relations	302	3.35	1.82				

				318	0.130	0.048	Significant Rejected	Ho
Lecturer Commitment	302	3.38	1.80					

Table 4 shows a calculated r-value of 0.130 with a p-value of 0.048. Since the p-value (0.048) is less than the significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected. There is a statistically significant positive relationship between lecturer–student relations and lecturer commitment to work in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. The finding confirms that the quality of the relational connection between lecturers and their students characterised in this study by openness, mentorship, equity, and interpersonal compatibility is a significant predictor of the institutional commitment that drives high-quality teaching and research outputs.

Test of Null Hypothesis Two (H_0 2)

H_0 2 stated that there is no significant relationship between working hours and lecturer commitment to work in Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. The PPMC result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: PPMC Result for the Relationship between Working Hours and Lecturer Commitment ($\alpha = 0.05$)

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	r-cal	p-value	Decision
Working Hours	302	3.58	1.87				
				318	0.050	0.376	Not Significant H_0 2 Retained
Lecturer Commitment	302	3.38	1.80				

Table 5 shows a calculated r-value of 0.050 with a p-value of 0.376. Since the p-value (0.376) exceeds the significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, the null hypothesis H_0 2 is retained. Working hours do not significantly predict lecturer commitment in state-owned Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria. Despite extensive documented time investment including maximum workload stress scores and universal absence of personal time this investment does not translate into greater institutional commitment. The explanatory mechanism is the critical low-level score for institutional reward for extra hours (mean = 2.06): where effort is systematically unacknowledged, the reciprocal pathway from work investment to institutional commitment is blocked.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following findings emerged from this study:

1. Lecturer–student relations in state-owned Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria were at a high level (weighted mean = 3.35). Academic openness and mentorship guidance both achieved maximum unanimous scores (mean = 4.00), while general lecturer-student compatibility (mean = 3.37) and equitable student treatment (mean = 2.64) were also at high levels.
2. Working hours were at a high level (weighted mean = 3.58). Excess workload (mean = 4.00), working hours stress (mean = 4.00), willingness to work extra hours for students (mean = 3.95), and absence of personal time (mean = 3.91) all scored high. However, institutional reward for extra hours was at a critically low level (mean = 2.06), indicating a near-universal absence of management recognition.
3. The level of lecturer commitment to work was at a high level (weighted mean = 3.38). Structural job security provisions pensionable appointment, retirement benefits, non-arbitrary dismissal, and freedom of association all scored at the maximum (4.00). Professional development attendance (mean = 2.29) and

academic autonomy (mean = 2.49) fell at low levels, representing sub-dimensional commitment vulnerabilities.

4. There was a statistically significant positive relationship between lecturer–student relations and lecturer commitment to work ($r = 0.130$, $p = 0.048$). Ho1 was rejected.
5. There was no statistically significant relationship between working hours and lecturer commitment to work ($r = 0.050$, $p = 0.376$). Ho2 was retained. The absence of institutional recognition for extra-hours effort was identified as the mechanism blocking this relationship.

DISCUSSION

The finding that lecturer–student relations significantly predicted lecturer commitment ($r = 0.130$, $p = 0.048$) confirms Krstić's (2015) theoretical proposition that the lecturer–student relationship is crucial to inspiring students while simultaneously reinforcing the lecturer's own professional engagement and institutional attachment. The empirical evidence from this study adds specificity to that proposition: it is the operationally enacted relational practices openness to academic discussion, mentorship provision, equitable treatment, and interpersonal compatibility that generate the relational satisfaction from which commitment is sustained. The unanimous maximum scores on academic openness (mean = 4.00) and mentorship guidance (mean = 4.00) are analytically significant: they indicate that student-focused professional engagement is the most universally enacted and most resilient dimension of lecturer commitment in these institutions, sustained even under conditions of inadequate remuneration and unrecognised overwork.

This finding resonates strongly with Abari and Adejor's (2021) observation that the lecturer–student relationship has measurable implications for how lecturers themselves develop within the institutional environment. The professional reciprocity embedded in effective student engagement the sense of purpose, efficacy, and occupational meaning that emerges when teaching and mentorship are experienced as professionally rewarding — constitutes an intrinsic motivational resource whose institutional cultivation can deepen commitment rather than merely sustain it. Ayodele et al. (2014) similarly demonstrated that the collaborative, mentoring dimensions of the lecturer–student relationship are the guiding principles of productive academic engagement. The present study extends these findings into the specific context of North-West Nigerian state-owned Colleges of Education, where this relational commitment resource appears to function as a primary anchor of institutional attachment.

The non-significant relationship between working hours and commitment ($r = 0.050$, $p = 0.376$) is analytically important precisely because it is counterintuitive: working hours are at a high level (mean = 3.58), extensive by any standard, and yet this investment does not translate into higher commitment. The explanatory mechanism is clearly indicated by the data: the reward for extra hours item (mean = 2.06) is the lowest-scoring item in the entire working hours scale, reflecting near-universal institutional failure to recognise or compensate extra-hours effort. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) illuminates the dynamics at work: where the institution does not reciprocate the lecturer's time investment with recognition or reward, the investment cannot generate the felt obligation of institutional loyalty that would translate into commitment. Instead, unrecognised overwork becomes a source of stress confirmed by the maximum stress score (mean = 4.00) and the pathway from time investment to commitment is blocked.

Akinfolarin and Ehinola (2014) specifically argued that conditions of service enabling lecturers to perform their tasks with recognition, flexible work schedules, and respect are necessary to convert time investment into commitment. In their absence, extended working hours produce professional alienation rather than attachment. The present study provides empirical confirmation of this mechanism in the North-West Nigerian Colleges of Education context: it is not the quantity of working hours that determines commitment, but whether the institution acknowledges and reciprocates that investment. This finding carries direct implications for institutional policy: increasing commitment through working hours cannot be achieved by demanding more time, but only by creating the recognition and reward structures that make existing time investment institutionally meaningful.

Taken together, the two findings present a coherent picture of the commitment ecology in North-West Nigerian state-owned Colleges of Education. Commitment is sustained by what is relationally rewarding effective student engagement and it is not diminished by what is structurally burdensome overwork only because the structural burden has not yet crossed the threshold at which it extinguishes the relational reward. Institutional strategies that simultaneously deepen the lecturer–student relational experience and begin to reciprocate the working hours investment would operate on both dimensions of this ecology, strengthening commitment through positive reinforcement and removing the conditions that currently prevent extensive work effort from generating proportionate institutional attachment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Institutions must formally recognise and reward the mentorship and student support roles of lecturers through workload calculation inclusion, institutional commendation systems, and explicit performance appraisal recognition. Since lecturer–student relations are a significant predictor of commitment, sustaining and deepening the quality of these relations should be an explicit institutional strategy rather than an assumed professional default.
2. College management must create formal mechanisms for acknowledging and compensating extra-hours effort, including teaching load supplements, research time allocations, structured overtime recognition, or access to institutional resources proportionate to time investment. The blocked reciprocity mechanism identified in this study unrecognised overwork failing to generate commitment can only be activated through deliberate institutional response to the working hours investment lecturers currently make without acknowledgement.
3. Workload management policies must be reviewed to ensure that total academic workload, encompassing teaching, research, assessment, and administration, does not systematically exceed the professional standards prescribed in the NCCE revised conditions of service and the LSBU Agreement guidelines. The universal stress associated with current working hours levels represents an institutional risk to lecturer wellbeing and, by extension, to teaching quality.
4. Administrators should develop professional development programmes specifically designed to support lecturers in maintaining and improving the quality of their lecturer–student relations, including training in mentorship skills, student advising competencies, and pedagogical communication, to ensure that the most significant predictor of commitment identified in this study is continuously strengthened.
5. Future research should investigate the moderating role of institutional recognition culture in the working hours-commitment relationship, and should conduct qualitative case studies of lecturer-student relations dynamics in high-commitment versus low-commitment departments within Colleges of Education, to identify the relational practices most strongly associated with sustained commitment under conditions of resource constraint.

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