THE INFLUENCE OF INTERNAL MARKETING ACTIVITIES ON EMPLOYEES' COMMITMENT TO WORK IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY SECTOR: A QUALITATIVE EVALUATION OF EMPLOYEES' OPINIONS

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Information of Article	ABSTRACT
	Purpose: This study aims to understand the perception of employees of internal marketing practices in a public university. Design/Method/Approach: The interpretive paradigm and specifically the constructive social face to face and e-mail interview strategies was chosen to understand the diverse perception and shared experiences of employees about this internal marketing practices and how it influences their commitment to work. Our population are teaching, and non-teaching staff in the case University and our unit of discussants was a non-teaching staff of senior cadre and teaching staff between the ranks of assistant lecturers and senior lecturers. Findings: Findings show that internal marketing practices were perceived differently in the case University and four key themes: religious affiliation, staff placement, ethnicity nepotism and internal politics shows influences on IM practices within this case. Research Limitations: This study adopted a single research design in an only higher institution and provided opportunities for future studies to adapt mixed methods with larger samples from multi-institutional perspectives. Practical Implication: This study makes two key contributions in theory and practice. First, it validates Psychological Contract Theory (PCT) as this study reveals that PCT supports fair distribution of reward and responsibilities amongst employees. Second, in practice, because the emerging themes of research provide a strong basis for effective implementation of IM practices and positive management of commitment of employees to work.

1. Introduction

Evident growing global, business challenges and market uncertainties make it pertinent for organisations to ensure employees are satisfied and commitment to carrying assigned task. Further, organisations are required to consistently engage in research that will result in innovating ideas to ensure they remain competitive and satisfy increasing consumers demand for new products and improved quality service. Globally, the university system has been instrumental to most organisations product innovations and research and has contributed immensely to societal growth. They have been at the front-line in providing innovative ideas and engaging in investigations that have helped businesses gain market value and increase the capital base. Consequently, it has become imperative that focus should be placed on the welfare of employees of universities to improve their commitment and approach to their job. That is explicitly the pillar of internal marketing, treating internal customers with dignity, thereby making it easy to satisfy external customers. According to Saad, Ahmed, &Rafiq, (2002) internal marketing (IM) is a strategic and conscious effort of organisations aimed at satisfying its employees with the motive of ensuring that they develop a commitment to meet the satisfaction of the external customers. The success of organisations drive for improved performance begins with the level of dedication and commitment the employees show to the organisations strategic and operational policies. Therefore, internal marketing practices that focus on employees can help influence their belief and trust, which will also be reciprocated (Robinson, 1996).

Rafiq and Ahmed (1993) stated that the evolution of internal marketing as a concept could be traced to growing research and attention on employee satisfaction and the need to treat them as customer and jobs as products. Consequently, there have been several studies with increasing literature on the concept. However, there is a gap in the practice of internal marketing because most of the researches on internal marketing are normative with no evidence on how it exists in practice. Further, the review shows the focus has been improving commitment for profit-making in the organisations, thereby making the goal of internal marketing to be productivity in terms of input to output. Subsequently, this study approaches the concept of internal marketing practice and commitment of employees from a qualitative perspective away from most researches that are quantitative. Furthermore, there are limited, and possibly no evident qualitative studies geared towards examining internal marketing practices and commitment of employees in 21st-century public universities in Nigeria, which is the core of the study. It is on the merit of the above-identified gaps that this study seeks to examine

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internal marking practices and employees' commitment and this has led to ask the following question as a precursor to the

1.1 research questions

1. Is IM initiative practised in the public University under investigation?
2. What are the influences of IM practices in the public University under investigation?
3. How do these influences shape commitment of employees?

1.2 significant of the study

The dynamic approach of the study makes it an immense contribution to the scholarly literature on internal marketing practices in publicly owned institutions that are usually not profit-focused and exploring the links qualitatively between internal marketing practices and commitment of employees. Consequently, a deliberate search of the existing literature has shown emphasis more on quantitatively identifying themes of internal marketing practices. There is an absence of studies carried out qualitatively among public universities, where the focus is not about improving the commitment of employees for profit-making or of the universities but for dedication to duty and public image. The study makes for a better understanding of internal marketing practices and its influence on the commitment of employees in public universities in the 21st centuries as attention are on them to be instrumental in contributing to societal growth and development in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

This study is underpinned by the Psychological Contract Theory (PCT). PCT has long been a source of interest to researchers in different fields as it emphasises the need to understand the functioning of the relationship between employer and employee beyond legally sanctioned responsibilities (Koskina, 2013). The PCT was introduced in by Argyris (1960) and was later elaborated (Levinson et al. in 1962; Anderson & Schalk, 1998; Linde, 2015). Rousseau & Parks (1993) describe the Psychological Contract Theory as beliefs of an individual regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between one party and another and that these. "Rousseau (1995) beliefs are shaped by rituals practised within the organisation." According to Shore & Barksdale (1998), the psychological contract is a perception that an individual holds, expecting another in an agreement to keep to the terms of their agreement. Raeder (2005) stated that psychological contract is the perception of obligations of employees that are based on the employers perceived promises. Shruthi, and Hemanth (2012), defined a psychological contract as the absolute unwritten expectation that employees have towards the organisation. Linde (2015), on the other hand, has defined the psychological contract as "the experience of employee and obligations of the employer through perceived promises made in the reciprocal employee-organisation relationship."

2.1 Internal Marketing

Employees are a vital resource for achieving organisational goals and objectives as they are responsible for translating all corporate strategies and programmes into actions that serve the interest of the costumers. Employees and organisations have reciprocal responsibilities and mutual commitments, both explicit and implicit that define their relationships (Iqbal, Tufail, & Lodhi, 2015). These reciprocal and mutual commitments constitute exchanges that must be managed for the good of the organisation and these employees. Apart from the exchanges between the organisation and its employees, there are also exchanges that take place between employees. Internal marketing can be considered the internal equivalent or counterpart to external marketing, which is necessary for managing and enhancing these exchanges (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Anosike & Ahmed, 2006).

Internal marketing has its origin in service marketing literature. It was proposed as a means of solving the problem of delivering high-quality services by employees of service organisations (Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000). Internal marketing is based on the understanding that no single business management function is effectively useful on its own. Quality service delivery is not the responsibility of the marketing function alone; it requires the involvement of all functions and groups of people within the organisation. Hence, managers must ensure that all employees in every part of the organisation are involved. That is the focus of internal marketing (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Roberts-Lombard, 2010). The introduction of internal marketing relies on two basic principles: a) it is essential to satisfy the needs of employees before the business can satisfy the needs of its customers (b) the rules that apply in the market area of the business can also be applied to its internal market (Roberts-Lombard, 2010). This is supported by Gounaris (2008) who opines that: (i) the scope of internal marketing is to increase the service effectiveness and ability of the company to attain objectives like customer satisfaction (ii) to achieve such goals as customer satisfaction, the purposes of an internal marketing program are increasing employee satisfaction and improving interdepartmental integration, and finally, (iii) fulfilment of internal marketing objectives requires various employee-related actions including employee empowerment to take on-the-spot decisions, increase employee participation in decision-making and to decrease the formality of communication between subordinates and supervisors.

From literature, while there seems to be a general agreement about the importance of internal marketing to the organisation, the point of contention has continued to be a clear definition of the construct, what constitutes dimensions of internal marketing or what constitutes internal marketing practices (Gounaris, 2008; Braimah, 2016). Rafiq and Ahmed

(2000) presented one of the most comprehensive and widely accepted definitions of internal marketing. They define IM as "a planned effort using marketing like approach to overcome organisational resistance to change and to align, motivate and inter-functionally co-ordinate and integrate employees towards the effective implementation of corporate and functional strategies to deliver customer satisfaction through a process of creating motivated and customer-oriented employees." Their definition suggests that internal marketing involves using; (i) marketing-like approaches or methods to (ii) educate and align all employees with organisational strategies and goals (iii) motivate employees towards customer-orientedness (iv) reduce inter-functional conflict and increase cross-functional co-operation and co-ordination which would result in effective implementation of policy and also, (v) result in better service delivery and ultimately customer satisfaction.

Several attempts have been made in the literature to translate these "marketing-like approaches and methods" into specific dimensions, behaviours or practices that can deliver the stated benefits of internal marketing. Roberts-Lombard (2010) opines that internal marketing activities revolve around researching the needs and preferences of the employees of the firm and making efforts to satisfy those needs. Accurately, the organisation must examine: (i) the personal training and development of employees, continuous communication to employees (ii) the empowerment and participation of employees, internal consumer segmentation (iii) performance appraisal systems (iv) the acknowledgement and rewarding of employees and supportive work relationships. According to (Braimah, 2016) the dimensions of internal marketing are (i) internal communication (ii) staff development (iii) information and communication technology (iv) fairness (v) empowerment (vi) teamwork.

(Lings &Greenley, 2005) conceptualise internal marketing as the internal equivalent of external market orientation which they referred to as internal market orientation. Internal market orientation or internal marketing involves the generation and dissemination of intelligence about the wants and needs of employees and the design and implementation of appropriate responses to meet these needs. Accurately, they identify the following activities as internal marketing practices; (i) formal written information generation (ii) structured face-to-face information generation (iii) informal face-to-face information generation (iv) information dissemination (internal communications) and (v) responsiveness to the internal market which could include job redesign, development of appropriate reward systems etc. (Gounaris, 2006) building on the work of (Lings &Greenley, 2005), conceptualised IMO as a firm culture or philosophy that drives internal marketing practices. His work was different from the work of (Lings & Greenley, 2005) because rather than seeing IMO as synonymous with internal marketing practices he conceptualised, it has a philosophy that underpinned the practices. IMO is made up of three dimensions and ten sub-dimensions, which reflect the areas of focus of internal marketing practices. These are (i) internal market intelligence generation (identification of exchanges of values, awareness of labour market conditions,); (ii) internal intelligence dissemination (communication between managers and employees, communication among managers) and (iii) response to intelligence (job description, remuneration system, management concern and training, internal segment market, target internal market segments).

Gaber and Khalid (2018) found that organisation that does not practice internal managerial empowerment may affect its employees' performance and would have a negative impact on the young ability of employees to attain leadership ranks in the institutions. That implies that internal marketing practices could boost employees' commitment to work. Al-Refael et al. (2019) reported that, organisational affective and continence commitment effect higher education service quality. This show that positive internal marketing practices create affective and continence which in turn affects employees' commitment and improves the quality of service delivery

Martensen & Gronholdt (2006) identified six areas of internal marketing practice. These are (i) leadership (ii) human relations and values (iii) personal development and competencies (iv) job contents (v) creativity and innovation and (vi) customer orientation. Chang & Chang (2008) identified six elements or dimensions of internal marketing. These are (i) education and training (ii) performance acknowledgement system (iii) manager's support and participation (iv) talent training plan (v) listening to the employee (vi) authorising and empowering the employee. Al-Hawary, Al-Qudah, Abutayeh, Abutayeh, & Al-Zyadat (2013) in their study of Internal marketing practices and job satisfaction, used four dimensions of internal marketing (i) motivation (ii) empowerment (iii) communication and(iv) training and development.

Saad, Ahmed, & Rafiq (2002) identified eleven elements of what they described as the internal marketing mix. These elements were categorised into three groups namely: (i) top management support mix (empowerment, senior leadership, strategic reward, physical environment), (ii) business process support mix (staffing, selection and succession; process changes, incentive system) and (iii) cross-functional co-ordination mix (internal communication, inter-functional co-ordination, training and development). Farzad, Nahavandi, & Caruana (2008) identified five elements of the internal marketing mix. These are (i) inter-functional coordination and integration (ii) training (iii) motivation (iv) understanding and differentiation and (v) job satisfaction. Kaur & Sharma (2015) conducted a study in India to identify the dimensions of IM, develop, and test a valid instrument for measuring the construct. They found that the IM construct is made up of 11 significant dimensions namely, senior leadership and vision, inter-functional co-ordination, internal communications, organisation structure and changes, staffing, training and development, incentive systems, physical environment, strategic rewards and empowerment. Based on the review of the literature, we identify eight basic elements of internal marketing practice that would be used in our study. These are (i) employee empowerment (ii) employee training and development (iii) employee participation (iv) internal communications (v) management support (vi) performance appraisal systems (vii) reward and incentives and, (viii) inter-functional/inter-departmental co-ordination and integration.

2.2 Employees' commitment

Employee commitment is one of the most critical areas of research in organisational psychology. Organisations realise that just as they are seeking to recruit the best and the brightest available, so are employees looking for the best companies to work. Best companies here do not just refer to companies that pay high salaries, allowances, perks, etc., it goes beyond that. La Malfa (2007) in Mehta, Singh, Bhakar, & Sinha (2010) opines that employee's attachment to a firm is based on factors that go beyond salaries, training, and benefits. That means that organisations must also put in a lot of effort into retaining their good employees in the same way they may seek to maintain their right customers. The competition between organisations has gone beyond just customers. It has also moved into competition for good employees. Jalal (2016) opined that employees' commitment is fundamental and should be a frontal aim of any organisation that wants to remain relevant in any business environment. Dixit & Bhati (2012) studied the relationship between employee commitment and sustained productivity. They found that the three types of commitment, i.e. affective, normative and continuance, where all significantly related to sustainable productivity. Affective component tends to relate positively to employee well-being and negatively to job strain (Meyer & Maltin, 2010). Irefin & Mechanic (2014) found in their study that employee commitment strongly correlated with organisational performance. Also, they found that employee commitment was negatively correlated with employee turnover. The level of employee commitment highly determines the employee turnover rate.

What is employee commitment? Udu and Ameh (2016) opined that employee commitment is a sense of dedication, a sincere desire to goal attainment, and the desire to share a level of attachment to the organisation for a long time. Khaliq, Naeem and Khalid (2016) stated that commitment has three components; (i) a confident belief and understanding of organisational goals and value system (ii) a determined concise effort to ensure the attainment of organisational goals (iii) dedication that is founded on loyalty with the intention to be active and stay long with an organisation. Meyer and Allen (1993) state that commitment is a psychological state that characterises the employees' relationship with the organisation and has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organisation. Meyer& Maltin (2010) define commitment as "a force that binds an individual to a target (social or non-social) and to a course of action of relevance to that target." This binding force can be experienced in different ways or mindsets. These mindsets are what Meyer and Allen (1991) refer to as the three forms of organisational commitment. These are (i) affective commitment, i.e. an affective attachment and involvement with the organisation; normative commitment, i.e. a felt obligation to the organisation and continuance commitment, i.e. an awareness of the costs associated with discontinuing participation with the organisation. Employees with a strong affective commitment remain with the organisation because they want to, those with strong continuance commitment remain because they need to while those with a strong normative commitment remain because they feel they ought to do so. In other words, employees with high levels of affective commitment are more likely to stay with the organisation even in the face of offers from other organisations than employees who have higher levels of continuance commitment. Employee commitment, especially affective commitment, can be considered synonymous with employee loyalty (Mehta, Singh, Bhakar, & Sinha, 2010; Baoguo& Xia, 2011; Northcraft(1996) in Iqbal, Tufail, &Lodhi, 2015; Martensen&Gronholdt, 2006) as commitment is seen as a reflection of an employee's loyalty to the organisation. Employees with high affective commitment tend to perform at a higher level than those who do not, i.e. they are willing to give in extra, make sacrifices for the good of the organisation. On the other end, employees with high continuance commitment stay primarily to avoid losing something of value and are not willing to give in more than the minimum that is required (Meyer & Allen, 2004). That clearly shows that some forms of commitment are more desirable than others with affective commitment being the most sought-after form of commitment (Meyer & Maltin, 2010). (Meyer and Allen (1993) also argue that employees can experience varying degrees of all three forms of commitment. In other words, the three types of commitment are not mutually exclusive; instead, they exist together but at different levels with one form being stronger in the employee. Hence it can be said that at any point in time, the organisation should aim to have employees with higher levels of affective commitment than other forms of commitment.

Some studies on employee commitment have focused on the antecedents of commitment. That is important to our research as we are looking at internal marketing as a predictor of employee commitment. Example: N.Nguyen, Mai, & Nguyen (2014) found in their study that HR practices of banks were related to employee commitment. Specifically, they found that, beyond salary, teamwork spirit, interpersonal relationship, and other psychological aspects of the job affected commitment. They also found that there is a strong relationship between job satisfaction and employee commitment. Job satisfaction was found to be a mediator between HR practices and commitment of the employees. Lee & Chen (2013) studied employee commitment, job attitude and their effects on service quality. They found a significant relationship between commitment and job attitude. They also found that gender, age, job status, job level had significant relationships with employee commitment. However, it was found that level of educational attainment was not significantly related to commitment. Lok& Crawford (2001) studied the effect of organisational culture and sub-culture on organisational commitment and found that organisational sub-culture and organisational culture were predictors of organisational commitment. They, however, found that sub-culture was a stronger predictor of commitment that organisational culture. They also found that age, experience, education, and job tenure where predictors of organisational commitment. Suman& Srivastava (2012) studied the antecedents of organisational commitment among workers at different hierarchical levels and found that for executive-level employees organisational characteristics (perceived job characteristics and organisational structure) and internal locus of control had a significant and positive impact on commitment while age and length of service were found to be insignificant predictors of commitment. Length of service and organisational structure

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were found to be dominant predictors of commitment for lower-level staffs. Harrison & Hubbard (2010) studied commitment amongst Mexican workers and found that job satisfaction, participative decision making, age, leader behaviours, organisational effectiveness were predictors of organisational commitment. Joiner &Balkis (2006) studied employee commitment amongst casual academic staff of Australian universities and found that personal characteristics (gender, marital status, family responsibilities and education), job-related characteristics (supervisor support, co-worker support, role charity and resource availability) and job involvement characteristics (tenure, second job, post-graduate study at the University employing them) all impacted on employee commitment. Park & Rainey (2007) found that transformational leadership style, empowerment, goal clarity, procedural equity perceptions, public-service-oriented motivation and objective appraisal systems all have direct and indirect effects on commitment.

2.3 Internal marketing practices and employee commitment

Organisations, especially for-profit organisations, undertake marketing activities, which are aimed at not only attracting new customers but also retaining valuable customers. In the same way, internal marketing is needed to retain valuable employees of the firm. Martensen and Gronholdt (2006) argue that the firm must make conscious and well thought out plans to know what creates a satisfied and loyal employee and actively work towards creating these kinds of employees. Internal marketing has been linked with employee commitment in quite a several studies. We present just a few of these studies here. Ting (2010) found that there is a direct and positive relationship between internal marketing and employee commitment. He used training, support, communication, and motivation as dimensions of internal marketing. He also found that job involvement and job satisfaction mediated the relationship between internal marketing and employee commitment. Shabnam&Sarker (2012) opines that good relationships with employees allow a company to gain additional benefits, including improving their public image, increasing employee morale and support from the community. An organisation can exhibit a better image in the minds of people if it is seen as an excellent employer, which cares for its people. They viewed internal marketing as the internal dimension of CSR, which deals with employees' relations. They found that CSR with IM as the internal dimension has a positive and significant relationship with employee commitment. They concluded that employees who considered their companies high on CSR would be more committed to the organisation. They studied internal marketing and employee loyalty and found that leadership, personal development, job contents, human relations and values, creativity, and innovation and finally, customer orientation are all predictors of employee loyalty. Hossein, Sima and Ebrahim (2012) found that internal marketing has a positive and direct effect on organisational commitment. Braimah (2016) proposed communication, staff development, ICT, fairness, empowerment, teamwork and motivation as dimensions of internal marketing and in a study of employees of selected hotels in Ghana, found that all dimensions of internal marketing had a positive and significant effect on employee commitment. Service quality in three district hospitals in Taiwan and found that organisational commitment was the mediator between internal marketing and service quality. Age and title were found to affect employee perception of internal marketing and service quality. Narteh&Odoom (2015) studied IM and employee loyalty in the Ghanaian Banking industry using internal communication, reward systems, empowerment, organisational culture and training as dimensions of IM and found that all dimensions except organisational culture are significantly associated with employee loyalty. Ahmad & Al-Borie (2012) studied IM and organisational commitment among doctors in selected Saudi Arabian hospitals. They used selection and appointment, training and development, organisational support, incentives and motivation, retention policy as IM dimensions. They found that all dimensions of IM were significant predictors of employee commitment and job satisfaction. Farzad, Nahavandi, &Caruana (2008) studied the effect of IM on commitment and job satisfaction using inter-functional co-ordination and integration, training, motivation, understanding and differentiation, job satisfaction as dimensions of IM. They found that training, inter-functional co-ordination and integration and motivation where significant predictors of organisational commitment. They, however, found that understanding and differentiation with job satisfaction were not good predictors of organisational commitment. Back, Lee, & Abbott (2011) studied the link among internal service quality, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, self-esteem and organisational commitment among casino workers in Korea. They found that all dimensions of internal service quality (training, communication, and perceived benefits) positively influenced job satisfaction. Job satisfaction influenced both self-esteem and organisational commitment. Self-esteem was also found to influence organisational commitment positively. Huang & Chen (2013) studied full and part-time employees of a sports centre in Taiwan and found that IM was positively associated with organisational and customer orientation. They found that customer orientation was positively associated with organisational commitment and was a partial mediator of the relationship between IM and organisational commitment. Work status was found to be a significant moderator of the relationship between internal marketing and customer orientation but was not a significant moderator of the internal marketing-organisational commitment link. Azedo & Alves (2014) studied nurses in both public and private sector hospitals and found that IM practices positively influence nurse motivation levels. They also found that IM practices differ between the two groups. Muriuki, Maru & Kosgei (2016) studied the relationship between internal marketing strategy and employee performance in selected universities in Kenya. They found that internal marketing strategy significantly influences employee performance. They also found that organisational commitment does not moderate the link between IM strategy and employee performance. Joung, Goh, Huffman, Yuan, &Surles (2015) studied staffs of a selected restaurant chain in the USA and found that vision, development and rewards were significant predictors of employee job satisfaction while development and rewards were significant predictors of employee organisational commitment. Job satisfaction and employee organisational commitment were found to be negatively related with employee turnover intention. Tsai & Wu (2011) found that internal marketing is

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positively related to employee organisational commitment and service quality. The organisational commitment was also found to mediate the relationship between IM and service quality. Ramos (2015) studied employees of three banks in the Philippine islands and found a positive relationship between the dimensions of IM (job satisfaction, understanding and differentiation, training, inter-functional co-ordination and integration, motivation) and organisational commitment. Caruana & Calleya (1998) studied managers of a retail bank and found a significant relationship between internal marketing and organisational commitment. IM is found to have a significant relationship with affective commitment more than other forms of commitment. Ruizalba, Bermudez Gonzalez, Rodriguez Molina, & Maria (2014) studied employees of selected hotels in Spain and found that IMO (internal intelligence, internal communication, and response to intelligence) is a determinant of job satisfaction and employee commitment.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative paradigm using a multi-level unsynchronised e-mail approach to generate responses for the study. The researchers did a content validation of the interview questions for areas that were ambiguous. The study population consists of academic and non-teaching- staff of a single public university. We started the recruitment process by using purposive sampling technique to send initial e-mails and mobile phone text SMSs to 15 non-teaching staff (NT staff) and 22 teaching staff (T-staff) based on the contacts of one of the researcher, and only six non-teaching staff indicated unwavering interest to participate. In contrast, nine others declined.

Further, nine teaching staff accepted to participate, and 15 declined as we did not receive any replies from them. We employed a purposive sampling technique in selecting qualified respondents, especially those who have 5years residency and above at the case University. This is because these had worked with previous leadership regimes, and we think they are very knowledgeable in the internal politics of a University and stand an excellent chance to provide rich answers to our curious research questions. They comprise (3 union leaders and three ordinary members from the non-teaching senior staff cadre above grade level 8 and nine (9) teaching staff between the ranks of Assistant and Senor Lecturers respectively were selected for the two rounds of interviews. The first round is the face to face interviews, and the second round is un-synchronous e-mail interview. In all we had 15 participants who took part in the two rounds of interviews, Wali, Uduma and Wright (2016) opined that qualitative studies emphasise the quality of data rather than the number of participants. Each of the single and respective interviews with the 6 non-teaching staff and 9 teaching staff lasted between 20 and 30minutes (Andy-wali and Wali, 2018; Wali, 2018; Wali and Nwokah, 2017; Wali and Wright, 2016) during follow up e-mail interview we sent same sets of questions which were asked during the face to face interview to same participants and we collected replies within 21days as all participants responded (Wali and Nwokah, 2018; Wali and Nwokah, 2017). Theoretical data saturation was reached after a series of reflection on previous interviews, specifically at the 6th interview with non-teaching staff category and 8th interview with teaching staff. Still, we continued with interviewing the 9th interviewee because he has held several academic positions during one of the previous leadership regimes; hence we felt his wealth of experience should be inclusively explored. We employed categorical thematic template technique for data analysis and with the use of NVivo 11 software for thematic weighting on graphs and models for data triangulation.

4. Data analysis, findings and Discussion

Table 1 shows the summary of themes using NVivo 11 and the coding strength for each item, as found in this study. More specifically, findings suggest that internal marketing initiative is adopted. Still, its practices and influences vary in context and amongst selected staff, that is certain external factors around the University's operating environments such as religion, ethnicity and political regimes has its hook on effective internal marketing practices. Second, we found that these external forces have brought about negative and positive influences on internal marketing practices and shapes employees' commitment to work differently within the institution. That is employees who are beneficiaries of these influences believe that there is a positive internal relationship between management and staff; hence they are more committed to work than others who think otherwise. Our findings are summarised within the following thematic headings:

Table 1: NVivo 11 Thematic Coding Strength for each theme

Names	Sources	References
Staff placement	5	59
Religion Affiliation	4	18
Internal political regime	5	52
Ethnicity	5	66

NVivo 11 analysis of themes on Table 1 shows that "Ethnicity" is the most emphasised by respondents with 66 references from 5 data transcripts sources, followed by "Staff placement" with 59 references and "internal political regime" which has 52. That summarises the fact that these highly ranked themes influence employees believe about internal marketing practices and their commitment to work within the case under investigation.

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4.1 Thematic Definition

Theme 1: Religious Affiliation

This theme describes how religious nepotism influence who gets what in the institution under investigation. That is those who belong to a specific religion are most favoured in the sharing of powerful and juicy academic and administrative positions in the institution. This theme is strongly associated with the internal political regime (see Figure 3).

"My dear our CEO has given some attractive positions in this place to his religious brothers, he trusts them more than we who are not and of course he knows that I know the job with over 10years of experience, but he had to remove me and made the young man my head" (NT staff interviewee 1).

"This leader is a religious fanatic, just take a census of his new staff appointments you will discover that they are mostly those of his religion, like in my department they are three that he recently brought in" (T-staff interviewee 9).

Theme 2: Internal Political Regime

Based on summaries from respondents' experiences, this theme suggests that the current leadership of the institutions empathises with the new political system which does not support the style of the previous administration. This implies that the new IPR favours some and not everyone. This theme has a strong association with staff placement and religious affiliation (see Figures 2 and 3).

"This new administration came with new employees, and we that are already here have been watching the way they segregate us, for example, during the previous administration request for work material was approved easily but now it's not so" (NT staff interviewee 4).

"My commitment to work here is not the way it used to be because current leadership does not see anything good from any of us who worked committed during the previous regime" (NT staff interviewee 3).

Theme 3: Ethnicity

This theme explains respondents' opinion on how leadership decisions favour employees of a particular ethnic group and region of the country to against others in terms of allocation of attractive responsibilities in the case University which is a basis for lopsided commitment to work. The theme of ethnicity has a strong and positive association with staff placement (Figure 1).

"There is something I have observed, those from a certain ethnic group and I won't mention names just feel that we are intruders here and wants to run this University like a community school, it is there wish for those of us from other ethnic groups outside the region to leave" For example, this group are fond of sabotaging our efforts in standing against leadership improprieties and failure to empathise their vision could be dangerous, I like my life" (T-Staff interviewee 7).

Let me tell you there is an ethnic group that believes that this country and its endowment belongs to them and we see it play out in this institution, just take a look, and you will see that key and juicy offices in this school are occupied by the particular ethnic group" (NT staff interviewee 6).*

Theme 4: Staff Placement

This theme explains how responsibilities and job posting are influenced by ethnicity, religion, and political nepotism in a system. Staff placement is strongly associated with Ethnicity and Internal political regime (see Figure 2).

"I can tell you that this recent proper placement favoured those who are from a certain religion and ethnic group around this environment than those who come from afar off" (T-Staff Interviewee 2).

"For me, this proper placement exercise was targeted at discouraging employees who are not from a given tribe, religion and region of this country. For example, somebody who has never taught for up to 4years was recommended for double promotion to Associate Professor because he comes from immediate ethnic group whereas myself who have over 10years teaching experience was de-promoted to Lecturer 1 from my initial position of Associate Professor when I was first employed" (T-staff interviewee 4).

"The new leadership came with outsiders and majority of them are members of his religion to do our work here, and even demoted me from the post I occupied in the past 6years because of religion and things, God will help us in this country" (NT staff interviewee 5).

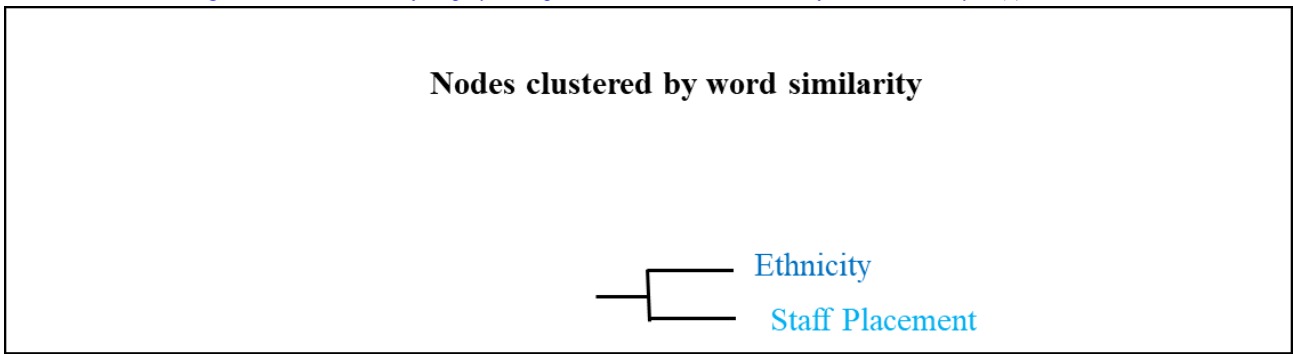**Nodes clustered by word similarity**

Ethnicity

Staff Placement

Figure 1: NVivo 11 Cluster analysis of thematic similarities

Figure 1 shows that there is a positive similarity and relationship between ethnicity and staff Placement amongst other themes. Figure 2 and 3 will further explain these relationships.
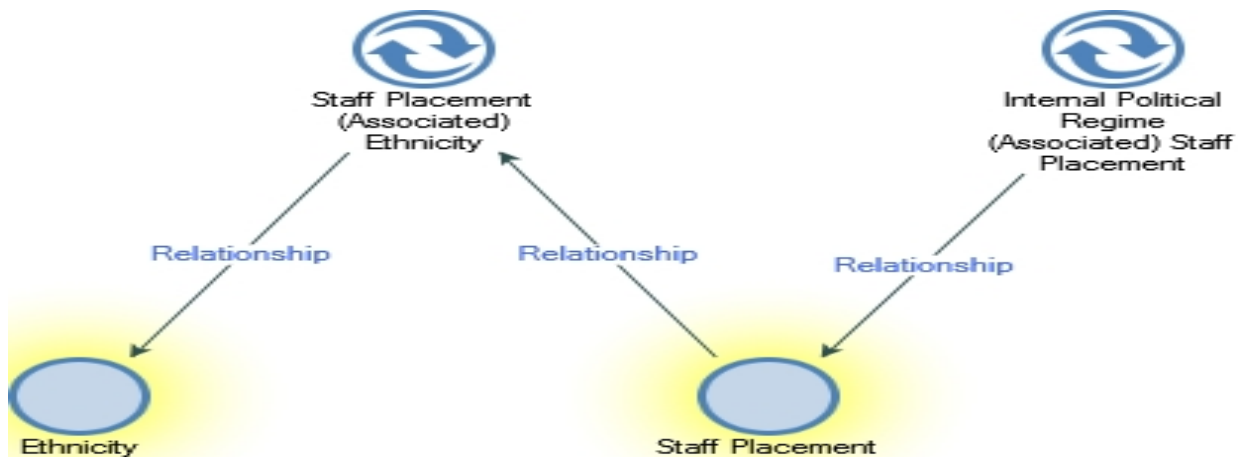
Staff Placement (Associated) Ethnicity

Internal Political Regime (Associated) Staff Placement

Relationship

Relationship

Relationship

Ethnicity

Staff Placement

Figure 2: NVivo 11 Comparison for influences between Staff Placement and Ethnicity

Religious Affiliation (Associated) Internal Political Regime

Internal Political Regime (Associated) Staff Placement

Relationship

Relationship

Relationship

Religious Affiliation

Internal Political Regime

Figure 3: NVivo 11 Comparison for influences between Religious Affiliation and Internal Political Regime

NVivo 11 analysis on figure 2 shows that the internal political regime is strongly associated with staff placement and staff placement with ethnicity. That means that staff placement which is the distribution of positions is influenced by the internal political regime and ethnic nepotism. Figure 3 shows that there is an associated relationship between religious affiliation and internal political system, and it implies that those who empathise with the new domestic politics in the institution were mostly employees of a specific religion. Additionally, those in power were likely to politically empower employees who share the same religious affinity than others who are not.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to understand employees' perception of IM practices in a single public university in Nigeria. Three overarching research questions were raised in other to achieve our aim. Findings show that IM initiative was in practice in the case university. Still, these practices are perceived differently by different employees, and the influences of these factors are based on their religious affiliation, ethnicity, and internal political empathy. We further found that the themes

which characterised employees' perception of IM practices were ethnicity and staff placement (See Table 1 and Figure 1). Also, from the NVivo 11 analysis, it was discovered that staff placement is strongly associated with ethnicity and religious affiliation is also associated with staff placement (See NVivo outputs on Figures 2, 3 and 4).

Further, it implies that the adoption and implementation of IM initiative in a government-owned public University may be influenced by factors such as ethnicity, religion and political regime and could influence the quality of responsibilities to be assigned to employees. On the contrary, lack of commitment to work may be the side effect of these influences on non-beneficiaries of this IM practices. These findings support previous studies which opined that IM practices are related with the reward system and staff empowerment (Braimah, 2016; Kaur & Sharma, 2015; Narteh & Odoom, 2015; Ahmad & Al-Borie, 2012; Chang & Chang, 2008; Park and Rainey, 2007; Saad, Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002). Our findings strongly argue that forces which influence IM practices in a profit-oriented organisation differed from those in a non-profit oriented organisation such as the case under investigation. In this context, ethnoreligious factors have shown to have influences on the implementation of IM initiatives in a Nigeria public organisation than what is practised elsewhere. That is perhaps because Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and religious society, and positively some of strategic managerial decisions are influenced by the ethnic and religious background of the leader. However, these differences in employee perception of IM practices are based on their religious affiliation, ethnicity, and internal political regime (Figure 5). Our finding suggests that those who belong to the same ethnic and religious group with the leaders were likely to be saddled with strategic job placement than others thus making the former more committed than the later. Commitment is influenced by organisational culture and sub-culture, leader behaviours and participative decision making leader support as per resource availability and all of these fall under the category of the internal political regime (Mai and Nguyen, 2014; Harrison and Hubbard, 2010; Joiner and Balkis, 2006; Lok and Crawford, 2001). Some aspect of our findings differed from previous studies because lots of works into IM practices in developed economies were mostly in the profit-oriented organisation within mono-ethnic societies. So, their studies could not have identified some contextual elements that may influence IM practices in a non-profit oriented public organisation within a multi-ethnic and religious society like Nigeria. Hence, our new understanding of IM practice from our findings has helped to shape Psychological Contract Theory. This is because PCT emerged from a study within a mono ethnoreligious society and did not envisage certain future hindrances if the theory was adopted and practised in a multi ethnoreligious society. Therefore, this study validates the relevance of PCT in practising IM initiatives because it shows positive influences in wining employees' commitment to work. Still, decision-makers in a public or privately owned organisation in thought diversified economies should be mindful of religious and ethnic bias which previous studies have neglected in other to win employees' commitment. Overall, this study makes two key contributions in theory and practice. First, it validates Psychological Contract Theory (PCT) as this study reveals that PCT supports fair distribution of reward and responsibilities amongst employees. Still, its application must take into cognisance contextual influences like ethnic nepotism, religious affiliation, and internal politics within this theoretical scope. Second, in practice, because the study's emerging themes provides a strong basis for effective implementation of IM practices and positive management of employees' commitment to work.

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