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STRUCTURAL CHANGE AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT IN FIVE STAR HOTELS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between structural change and employee commitment in five star hotels in Rivers State. The objectives of the study were to examine how dimensions of structural Change interact with employee commitment in five star hotels in Rivers State. Findings revealed that there is a relationship between employee reduction and commitment in five star hotels in Rivers State. Also, there is a moderating role of organisational culture on the relationship between structural change and employee commitment in five star hotels in Rivers State. The study also concluded that structural change correlate with employee commitment, and it is being moderated by the organizational culture. The study recommended amongst others that management of five star hotels adopt and implement strategies that supports employee hard work in terms of task execution and reward them appropriately to boast their morale and commitment.

Keywords: Structural Change, Employee Commitment, Downsizing, Affective Commitment

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, five star hotels in Rivers State face weighty challenges in maintaining high levels of employee commitment. Issues such as job insecurity, lack of career growth opportunities, and insufficient employee recognition programs contribute to a disengaged workforce. According to Akinwale and Ojo (2023), these factors lead to decreased motivation, high turnover rates, and inconsistent service quality in Rivers State's five star hotels. Despite the crucial role that employee commitment plays in guest satisfaction and organizational performance, numerous five star hotels in Rivers State have not fully addressed the underlying causes of employee disengagement.

One weighty factor affecting employee commitment is organizational downsizing, which has become more prevalent in recent years due to economic pressures and industry challenges. Downsizing often results in job losses, increased workloads, and uncertainty among remaining employees, negatively impacting their commitment. Okafor and Olabisi (2022) have noted that downsizing erodes employees' sense of security and belonging, leading to reduced affective commitment, where employees feel less emotionally attached to the organization. This, in turn, affects the overall morale of the workforce, diminishing their motivation to deliver high-quality services, which is critical in the luxury hotel industry. Furthermore, downsizing creates a climate of distrust and dissatisfaction among employees, as they may perceive the organization as being indifferent to their well-being. Uche and Adeola (2021) argue that the psychological impact of downsizing lead to a significant decline in employee engagement and organizational loyalty. In the background of Rivers State five star hotels, where employees are already grappling with limited growth opportunities, downsizing exacerbates the challenges of maintaining a committed workforce. The remaining employees often experience increased stress and burnout, further compromising their commitment and the hotel's ability to provide consistent, top-tier service to guests. Empirically, there seem to be less attention on the study area that is why the

researcher is looking at organizational downsizing and employee commitment in Five star hotels in Rivers State.

Another issue that necessitated this study appears to be dearth of empirical on the relationship between organisational downsizing and employee commitment in five star hotels in Rivers State. Although, there has been several research efforts investigating variables understudy. For example, Oluwaseun and Ogunsanya (2023) examine the relationship between organizational downsizing and employee commitment within the Nigerian banking sector; Emmanuel and Adebayo (2023) investigated the impact of downsizing on employee commitment within the Nigerian telecommunications sector; Adetunji and Sulaimon (2022) investigated how downsizing strategies affect employee commitment in the Nigerian manufacturing industry; Okwu and Iwu (2022) explore the effects of organizational downsizing on employee commitment in selected public institutions in Nigeria; Abayomi and Enitan (2021) investigate the association between organizational downscaling and survivor performance in the banking industry in Nigeria; Mapira et al. (2014) assess the impact of downsizing on employee commitment in selected cooking oil manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe. Despite the attempts of the studies aforementioned, none was able to empirically examine the relationship between organisational downsizing and employee commitment in five star hotels specifically in Rivers State. Even few of the studies that share the same dimension, measures and indicators, are not presented as shown in the conceptual framework of this study depicted below. Therefore, there is need to close this gap.

Objectives of the Study

1. Determine the relationship between structural changes and affective commitment in five star hotels in Rivers State.
2. Examine the relationship between structural changes and normative commitment in five star hotels in Rivers State.
3. Assess the relationship between structural changes and continuance commitment in five star hotels in Rivers State.

Structural Changes

Structural changes refer to shifts in the relative share of economic activity across the broad sectors of agriculture, manufacturing, and services (Dani, 2016). It highlights how structural changes are crucial for understanding economic development. As economies grow, they typically transition from agriculture to manufacturing and then to services. Structural changes are transformations in the fundamental patterns of social organization, which can include changes in the roles and norms governing social institutions such as family, education, and employment (Bourdieu, 2018). Bourdieu emphasizes the role of structural changes in reshaping social hierarchies and power dynamics. Structural changes in political systems involve alterations in the institutional arrangements, such as the introduction of new governance frameworks, electoral reforms, and changes in policy-making processes (Fukuyama, 2020). Fukuyama discusses how political structural changes can stem from democratization, shifts in political ideologies, or external pressures such as globalization. Structural changes in the environment refer to long-term transformations in ecosystems and climate systems due to natural processes or human activities (Rockström, 2017). Rockström's work on planetary boundaries illustrates how structural environmental changes, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, are driven by anthropogenic factors.

Structural changes in technology involve fundamental shifts in the underlying technologies that drive economic and social activities, leading to new industries and changes in production processes (Perez, 2019). Perez examines how technological revolutions, such as the advent of

the internet and digital technologies, bring about structural changes by creating new economic sectors and transforming existing ones. Structural changes within organizations encompass alterations in organizational hierarchies, processes, and cultures aimed at improving efficiency, adaptability, and competitiveness (Mintzberg, 2018). Mintzberg explores how organizations undergo structural changes to respond to external pressures such as market competition, technological advances, and regulatory changes.

Job Roles Elimination: Job role elimination due to advancements in technology, where automation and artificial intelligence replace human labor (Autor, 2022). Autor highlights how technological advancements, particularly in automation and artificial intelligence, are reshaping the labor market by displacing workers in routine and manual jobs. As machines and algorithms become more capable, roles that require repetitive tasks are increasingly automated, leading to job elimination. Autor emphasizes the need for workers to adapt by acquiring new skills that are less susceptible to automation. Job elimination as a result of economic changes, such as industry decline or shifts in consumer demand (Acemoglu, 2023). Acemoglu discusses how economic restructuring, driven by factors such as globalization and shifts in consumer preferences, leads to job role elimination. Industries that fail to adapt to these changes, such as traditional manufacturing or retail sectors, often see a decline, resulting in job losses. Acemoglu argues for policies that support worker retraining and economic diversification to mitigate the negative impacts of such restructuring.

Job elimination is the management brain manifests due to companies reducing their workforce to cut costs and improve efficiency (Cascio, 2023). Cascio examines how organizational downsizing, often implemented to reduce costs and increase efficiency, leads to job elimination. Companies may downsize in response to financial pressures, mergers, or the need to streamline operations. Cascio notes that while downsizing can improve short-term financial performance, it can also have long-term negative effects on employee morale and organizational knowledge. Job roles eliminated as style of management businesses move functions to external or international service providers (Blinder, 2022). Blinder explores how outsourcing and offshoring result in job role elimination. By relocating business processes and functions to external or international service providers, companies seek to benefit from cost savings and specialized expertise. Blinder points out that while outsourcing and offshoring can lead to efficiency gains for companies, they often result in job losses in the domestic labor market, particularly in sectors like manufacturing and customer service.

Job elimination is management practice due to new regulations or policy changes that impact specific industries (Levy, 2023). Levy discusses how regulatory and policy changes can lead to job role elimination. Changes in environmental regulations, labor laws, or trade policies can have significant impacts on industries, sometimes leading to the closure of businesses or the need for substantial restructuring. Levy emphasizes the importance of considering the employment effects of policy changes and suggests that accompanying measures, such as retraining programs, are essential to support affected workers. Job roles eliminated due to market saturation and increased competition leading to business closures or downsizing (Brynjolfsson, 2022). Brynjolfsson analyzes how market saturation and heightened competition can lead to job role elimination. In highly competitive markets, businesses may struggle to maintain profitability, leading to downsizing or closure. Brynjolfsson points out that innovation and differentiation are crucial for businesses to survive in such environments. He also highlights the importance of continuous learning and adaptability for workers to remain relevant in a dynamic job market.

Strategic Shift: According to Johnson et al. (2017), strategic shift involves a fundamental change in an organization's direction, goals, or core activities to respond to external or internal pressures. According to Johnson et al., a strategic shift is necessitated by significant changes

in the business environment, such as technological advancements or market dynamics. This shift often involves redefining the company's mission and realigning resources to maintain competitive advantage. Pisano (2020), strategic shifts are major changes in a firm's strategy, which can include shifts in product lines, markets served, or business models, aimed at achieving long-term sustainability and growth. Pisano emphasizes that strategic shifts are not just about responding to immediate challenges but also about positioning the firm for future success. This involves a deep understanding of industry trends and consumer behavior. Mintzberg et al. (2021), strategic shift refers to a significant reorientation of a company's strategy, including changes in vision, mission, or core competencies, to better align with evolving market conditions. Mintzberg and colleagues highlight the importance of adaptability and foresight in executing strategic shifts. They argue that such shifts are essential for organizations to remain relevant and competitive in fast-changing markets.

Teece (2018), Strategic shifts encompass changes in organizational strategy that are driven by the need to realign the firm's capabilities with new opportunities or threats in the external environment. Teece focuses on the dynamic capabilities framework, where strategic shifts are seen as necessary to reconfigure resources and competencies to exploit emerging opportunities or mitigate risks. Hitt et al. (2019) opined that strategic shift is a deliberate change in an organization's strategy that involves significant adjustments to its core activities, resource allocation, and strategic priorities. They argue that strategic shifts are proactive measures taken by organizations to navigate complex and uncertain environments. They stress the importance of leadership and strategic decision-making in guiding these shifts. Porter and Heppelmann (2022) define strategic shifts has been involved transforming a company's strategy by adopting new technologies, entering new markets, or redefining value propositions to maintain a competitive edge. Porter and Heppelmann discuss the role of digital transformation in strategic shifts. They highlight how companies need to leverage new technologies to innovate and stay ahead in their industries

Mergers: A merger is a combination of two or more companies into a single entity, where one company survives and the other(s) cease to exist (DePamphilis, 2020). Gaughan (2021) define a merger involves the consolidation of two companies into a single entity to achieve synergies, expand market reach, and enhance financial performance. Gaughan highlights the importance of achieving operational synergies and financial gains through mergers. This process can involve complex negotiations and integration strategies to ensure the new entity can capitalize on combined strengths. Sherman (2022) opines that a merger is a strategic decision where two companies agree to combine their operations on a relatively equal basis to form a new, joint entity. Sherman emphasizes that mergers are often seen as a way to foster innovation and competitiveness in a rapidly changing market environment. The new joint entity typically aims to leverage the best practices of both firms.

Bruner (2022) opines that a merger is the legal and operational integration of two firms where the acquiring firm absorbs the assets and liabilities of the target firm. Bruner discusses the legal and financial intricacies of mergers, including the due diligence process, regulatory considerations, and the financial impact on shareholders of both companies. Weston and Weaver (2021) observed that mergers are transactions in which the ownership of companies, operating units, or other business entities are transferred or combined. Weston and Weaver focus on the strategic objectives behind mergers, such as diversification, market expansion, and achieving economies of scale. They also delve into the financial mechanisms and valuation methods used in merger transactions. Martynova and Renneboog (2020) defines merger as a form of corporate restructuring where two firms consolidate into a new entity, potentially leading to greater market power and improved operational efficiencies. Martynova and

Renneboog explore the economic and competitive advantages of mergers, as well as potential pitfalls such as cultural clashes and integration challenges.

Measures of Employee Commitment

Affective Commitment

Affective commitment is defined by an employee's strong desire to remain a member of the organization due to a positive emotional attachment and satisfaction derived from membership (Meyer et al., 2002). Meyer et al. expanded on the concept, highlighting that affective commitment is characterized by a strong inclination to maintain organizational membership, driven by emotional satisfaction and a sense of belonging. Employee affective commitment signifies a psychological attachment and bond between the individual and the organization, manifested through positive emotions and a strong identification with organizational goals (Allen, 2003). Allen's work emphasizes affective commitment as a psychological state where employees develop an emotional connection and attachment to the organization, influencing their behaviors and decisions.

Meyer and Allen (1991), Affective commitment is defined as "the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization." This definition emphasizes the emotional bond an employee feels towards their organization, which influences their willingness to stay and contribute. Mowday, et al. (1982**)** described affective commitment as "the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization." This definition aligns closely with Meyer and Allen's, focusing on the emotional aspect of commitment. Allen and Meyer (1990) viewed affective commitment as "the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization." Their perspective highlights the emotional connection that employees develop with their organization over time.

Affective commitment arises from employees' emotional involvement and personal investment in the organization, leading to a deep-seated commitment beyond mere obligation or compliance (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Meyer and Herscovitch's conceptualization underscores affective commitment as a deep emotional bond that goes beyond rational considerations, fostering loyalty and engagement through emotional investment. Affective commitment reflects the strength of an employee's emotional bond and loyalty to the organization, influencing their motivation and willingness to exert effort for the organization's success (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Rhoades and Eisenberger's research emphasizes affective commitment as a crucial factor in fostering organizational citizenship behaviors and employee engagement, driven by emotional attachment and loyalty.

Emotional Attachment: Emotional attachment refers to the deep emotional bond or connection an individual forms with another person, object, or idea, typically characterized by feelings of affection, care, and longing (Bowlby, 1969). Hazan (2002) expanded on attachment by emphasizing the emotional bond formed through close friendships. It suggested that attachment applies not only to romantic relationships but also to friendships and other close relationships. She proposed that similar attachment styles observed in romantic relationships can manifest in friendships, influencing emotional closeness and relationship dynamics. Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) defining emotional attachment as a regulatory system that helps individuals cope with stress and maintain emotional stability. Their research explored how attachment styles influence emotion regulation strategies, stress responses, and interpersonal behavior. Hazan (2003)**,** Emotional attachment involves the emotional bonds that form between humans and their pets. Hazan, extending attachment theory beyond human relationships, explored how people form deep emotional connections with animals, impacting their well-being.

Sense of Identification: Sense of identification refers to an individual's perception of belongingness or connection to a particular group, community, culture, or role, often shaping their self-concept and social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). According to boyd (2008), sense of identification refers to the persona individuals create and manage online through interactions on digital platforms. It encompasses how people present themselves, engage with others, and navigate privacy and authenticity issues in virtual spaces, influencing their sense of self in both online and offline contexts. Brown (2021), sense of identification refers to a deeper, often emotional bond with a scholar's work due to shared life experiences or cultural background. Smith (2022) defines sense of identification as the resonance someone feels with a scholar's intellectual contributions, theories, or methodologies. Garcia (2024) defines sense of identification as a professional role model involves aspiring to emulate their career trajectory, achievements, or scholarly impact. Jane (2023) see sense of identification as an individual's cognitive and emotional connection with a scholar's work or ideas, often resulting from shared values or perspectives.

Intent to Stay Long-Term: Intent to stay long-term refers to an individual's commitment or determination to remain in a particular role, relationship, organization, or location over an extended period, influenced by various factors such as satisfaction, opportunities, and personal goals (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Mitchell et al. (2001) defines intent to stay long term as the factors that influence an employee's connections to their job and community, making it difficult to leave. It includes links (connections to others), fit (compatibility with the job and community), and sacrifice (what would be lost by leaving). Staying long-term with a current scholar can be explained by high job embeddedness, where individuals feel deeply integrated into the scholar's culture, have strong relationships with colleagues and mentors, and perceive significant personal and professional benefits that would be challenging to replace elsewhere. Intent to stay long term refers to the image and reputation of an organization as an employer. It encompasses the organization's values, culture, and perceived attractiveness as a place to work. Staying long-term with a current scholar can be linked to the strength of the scholar's employer brand. If the scholar is viewed positively in terms of providing opportunities for development, a supportive work environment, and career advancement, individuals are more likely to commit long-term because they perceive the scholar as a desirable and fulfilling place to build their career (Barrow & Mosley, 2005).

Normative Commitment

Meyer and Allen (1997)**,** normative commitment is defined as "an employee's feelings of obligation to remain with an organization because staying is the 'right' or 'moral' thing to do" (Meyer & Allen, 1997). This perspective emphasizes the influence of internalized norms and ethical considerations on an employee's decision to stay with their employer. According to Brockner et al. (2008), normative commitment involves "the extent to which an individual feels a sense of duty or obligation to continue employment with an organization. This definition underscores the notion that employees may feel morally bound to stay with an organization due to a sense of duty or ethical commitment.

Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) describe normative commitment as "a sense of obligation to continue employment, reflecting a concern for the costs associated with leaving the organization. This definition highlights the practical considerations and perceived costs an employee associates with leaving, which influences their commitment to staying. Morrow (1993) defines normative commitment as "the perceived obligation to remain with an organization. This succinct definition focuses on the employee's perception of their obligation to stay, suggesting that this commitment stems from a sense of responsibility rather than mere preference. Normative commitment could be defined as the strength of an individual's

identification with the goals and values of the organization (Porter et al., 1974). This definition emphasizes the alignment of an employee's personal values with those of the organization as a central driver of their commitment. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) define normative commitment as "an employee's feeling of obligation to remain with the organization because of a belief in the ethics and morality of doing so.

Chen et al. (2019) describe normative commitment as "an employee's sense of duty or moral obligation to the organization, which prompts the individual to remain with the organization. Colquitt et al. (2015) describe normative commitment as "a desire to remain a member of an organization because of a feeling of obligation. They emphasize that this type of commitment is driven by the employee's sense of moral obligation or loyalty towards the organization. Vandenberghe (1999) defines normative commitment as "the moral obligation of the employee towards the organization. This definition highlights the ethical dimension of commitment, highlighting how employees may feel morally bound to remain with an organization. Normative commitment is characterized by a sense of loyalty and responsibility towards an organization, stemming from perceived social pressures and expectations (Meyer et al., 2004). They expand on normative commitment by highlighting its social aspect. Employees may feel obligated to stay with the organization to fulfill social norms or expectations, such as loyalty to colleagues or a sense of duty towards the organization's stakeholders. Normative commitment denotes the employee's perceived obligation to remain with an organization due to a sense of indebtedness for the opportunities provided by the organization (Randall et al., 2018). They emphasize the indebtedness aspect of normative commitment, where employees feel they owe the organization for the career opportunities, training, or support received. This feeling of indebtedness reinforces their commitment to staying with the organization.

Relationship between Structural Changes and Employee Commitment

Structural changes within organizations can significantly impact employee commitment, either positively or negatively, depending on various factors. When organizations undergo structural changes such as mergers, acquisitions, or reorganizations, it often results in shifts in reporting lines, job responsibilities, and team dynamics. These changes can lead to uncertainty and ambiguity among employees (Cascio, 2006), affecting their sense of stability and trust in the organization. Research by Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) suggests that when employees perceive these changes as disruptive or unfair, it can weaken their commitment to the organization as they may feel less valued or secure in their roles.

Conversely, structural changes can also enhance employee commitment when managed effectively. For instance, strategic reorganizations that clarify roles and responsibilities, improve communication channels, and offer opportunities for career development can strengthen employees' sense of belonging and purpose within the organization (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000). According to Allen and Meyer (2000), organizational changes that align with employees' career goals and aspirations can foster higher levels of commitment as employees perceive the changes as beneficial to their professional growth and success. Moreover, scholars like Rousseau (2001) argue that when structural changes are accompanied by efforts to involve employees in decision-making and provide them with adequate support during transitions, it can bolster their commitment by reinforcing a sense of organizational justice and fairness.

However, the influence of structural changes on employee commitment is complex and multifaceted. Scholars such as Cascio (2006), Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), Perry-Smith and Blum (2000), Allen and Meyer (2000), and Rousseau (2001) have contributed significantly to understanding how different types of organizational changes can shape employees' attitudes and behaviors towards their work and their organization. Their research highlights the

importance of proactive management strategies that mitigate negative impacts and capitalize on opportunities to strengthen employee commitment during periods of organizational change.

Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964)
According to this theory, social relationships involve an exchange of resources (such as effort, loyalty and support) between individuals or groups. When one party perceives an imbalance in this exchange (e.g. receiving less than expected or contributing more than rewarded), dissatisfaction can arise.

Justification of Social Exchange Theory to the Present
Social Exchange Theory emphasizes the reciprocal nature of relationships in the workplace, suggesting that employees are more committed to organizations that they perceive as providing them with valuable resources and support. In five star hotels, where service quality is paramount, employees often expect not only financial rewards but also job security, recognition, and career development opportunities. During downsizing, if employees perceive that the organization is prioritizing its own interests over theirs such as through abrupt layoffs without adequate support this can weaken their sense of obligation to the hotel. The resulting imbalance in the exchange relationship may lead to diminished commitment and a decline in employee morale, ultimately affecting the hotel's service quality. To counteract this, five star hotels should consider strategies that reinforce positive exchange, such as providing severance packages, offering re-skilling opportunities, or fostering an inclusive culture, thereby enhancing employee loyalty and commitment even in the face of organizational change.
In the setting of downsizing, employees may perceive the organization as withdrawing resources (in the form of job security, opportunities for advancement, or even interpersonal relationships) without adequate compensation or reciprocation. This perceived imbalance can reduce employee commitment as they feel the organization is not fulfilling its side of the social exchange. Employees might respond by reducing their discretionary effort, becoming less engaged or disengaging from organizational goals.
Conclusion

The study concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between organisational downsizing and employee commitment in five star hotels in Rivers State. Also, there is a moderating role of organisational culture on the relationship between organisational downsizing and employee commitment in five star hotels in Rivers State. While organizational downsizing has a generally positive impact on employee commitment, the strength and nature of the organizational culture can significantly mitigate these effects. A supportive culture, characterized by open communication, trust, and employee engagement, helps maintain commitment levels even during periods of downsizing. Conversely, organizations with weak or transactional cultures experience more severe declines in employee commitment, as employees feel disconnected and uncertain about their future within the organization.

Recommendations
Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Management of five star hotels should focus on continuous learning and development programs, especially in times of downsizing.
2. Management of five star hotels should be transparent about the reasons for downsizing and the process involved.

3. Management of five star hotels should offering severance packages, career counseling, and job placement assistance to employees who are laid off can show the organization's empathy and support.

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