



Anchored in Change: Librarians' Organisational Commitment during Institutional Transformation at the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC)

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Abstract

This study explored organisational commitment among librarians at the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC), Ghana, following institutional transformation. Using a qualitative design and guided by Meyer and Allen's Three-Component Model, interviews with twenty librarians were thematically analysed. The study fills a gap in African library scholarship by examining commitment within a newly merged university system, integrating change-management and affective-engagement perspectives. Findings reveal strong affective commitment shaped by professional identity and participatory leadership but challenged by workload, uncertainty, and limited recognition. The paper contributes theoretically by linking organisational commitment to transformation management and practically by suggesting leadership and human resource strategies for sustaining staff engagement in an evolving academic environment.

Keywords: Organisational commitment, librarians, academic libraries, institutional transformation, professional identity, participatory leadership, inclusive change management.

Introduction

The modern university library environment has been characterised by unprecedented levels of talent mobility, transfers and turnover as employees continuously pursue fulfilment of their diverse personal needs, leading to a surge in concerns among organisations about the retention of talented and experienced individuals (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1982; Meyer and Allen, 1997). In recent years, post-pandemic realities have reshaped academic library work, introducing hybrid service models, remote collaboration, and digital infrastructure expansion. These developments have affected librarians' sense of stability, recognition, and organisational belonging (Njoroge & Mutula, 2020; Choi et al., 2021). Within Ghana's higher-education landscape, institutional

mergers and realignments such as the creation of the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC) have amplified the need to understand how librarians maintain commitment and motivation during structural transitions.

Donkor et al. (2024) assert that elevated job mobility and transfers frequently transpire during adverse economic circumstances characterised by substandard working conditions and insufficient financial remuneration, noting also that a librarian who lacks sufficient financial remuneration to meet their family's fundamental needs is likely to experience frustration and dissatisfaction. Not being happy with their jobs can lead to less dedication and make librarians more likely to quit in search of better jobs (Huselid, 1995; Lambert, Hogan & Barton, 2001;

Donkor et al, 2024).

Labour market trends in the Library and Information Science (LIS) field now emphasise employee wellbeing, digital competence, and leadership inclusion as new predictors of organisational loyalty (Adjei & Owusu-Ansah, 2022; Heady et al, 2020; Essuman et al., 2023). In this evolving context, library management must foster environments that enhance affective commitment while adapting to change.

Recent scholarship (Adeyoyin & Ashava, 2024; Bankole, 2023) reinforces that motivation and work climate significantly determine librarians' job retention and service innovation. These studies affirm that library professionals' commitment is a critical asset for sustaining academic excellence, particularly amid changes.

While extensively studied in corporate and general educational settings, empirical research focusing specifically on OC among academic librarians in West Africa remains scarce. Existing studies often make broad generalisations across the public sector without delving into the unique professional ethos and institutional dynamics of academic librarianship (Olatunji & Mgbeke, 2020).

This research gap is particularly salient in Ghana, where the higher education landscape is undergoing significant transformation, including institutional mergers aimed at enhancing efficiency and resource utilisation. The University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC), formed in 2020 from the merger of three specialised institutes, presents a compelling case study. Such mergers, while creating opportunities, also engender uncertainty, role stress, and cultural clashes that can profoundly impact staff commitment (Cloete et al., 2006).

As universities pursue their core goals in teaching, research, and public service, retaining a dedicated and motivated library staff is essential. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the nature and determinants of organisational commitment among librarians at UniMAC within this context, with a view to offering practical insights that can guide policies and practices to improve employee engagement, reduce turnover, and strengthen the role of university libraries in the academic environment.

Statement of the Problem

Employee commitment is crucial for the long-term success of knowledge-intensive institutions such as university libraries. However, growing concerns about job dissatisfaction, limited advancement, and

workload strain have affected morale in many African universities.

Akinwale and George (2020) note that organisational commitment is influenced by leadership style, compensation, work environment, job satisfaction, and opportunities for career growth. In Ghana, many librarians face inadequate ICT infrastructure and limited professional development (Dzandza & Akussah, 2018), leading to low affective commitment.

Beyond these longstanding challenges, the post-COVID period has introduced new expectations for flexibility, technological adaptation, and institutional communication (Choi et al., 2021). At UniMAC, the merger of multiple institutions presents both opportunities and uncertainties. While the transformation enhances collaboration and resource sharing, it also imposes new workloads, shifting reporting lines, and psychological stress. This study, therefore, seeks to fill a contextual gap by examining how UniMAC librarians experience organisational commitment amid structural transformation. It explores how economic, psychological, and organisational factors interact to sustain or hinder affective, continuance, and normative commitment in a transitioning academic environment.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study was to investigate organisational commitment of librarians at the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC), following institutional transformation.

Grounded in Meyer and Allen's (1991) Three-Component Model, the research addresses the following objectives:

1. To assess the level of organisational commitment among UniMAC librarians.
2. To identify the factors that influence their organisational commitment.
3. To explore the impact of the institutional merger on their commitment.
4. To examine the perceived benefits of organisational commitment within the libraries.
5. To investigate the challenges that hinder organisational commitment.

By providing a qualitative understanding of these issues, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on library human resource management in Ghana and offers practical insights for managing staff effectively during periods of significant institutional change.

The Setting/Case Study

This research was conducted at the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC) in Ghana, a distinctive public university established in 2020 through a parliamentary act that merged three previously independent institutions: the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ), the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI), and the Ghana Institute of Languages (GIL). The university operates across a decentralised, multi-campus structure in Accra Tamale and Kumasi, where each constituent institute retains a degree of autonomy with its own administrative leadership, including a Librarian. As a newly consolidated institution specialising in training for the media, arts, and communication sectors, UniMAC provides a compelling and timely setting to investigate the dynamics of staff commitment within a complex, post-merger academic environment.

Theoretical Framework

The study is situated in Meyer and Allen's (1991) Three-Component Model of Organisational Commitment, which conceptualises commitment as a psychological state linking employees to their organisations through three components:

- Affective commitment – emotional attachment and identification with the organisation;
- Continuance commitment – awareness of the costs associated with leaving; and
- Normative commitment – a sense of obligation to remain.

While the model provides a robust foundation, this study extends it by integrating change-management perspectives (Kotter, 1996; Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). These frameworks explain how employees experience transformation and adjust their commitment in response to leadership communication, participation, and perceived fairness. By combining the Three-Component Model with change-management theory, the study captures the dynamic interplay between emotional, moral, and pragmatic responses to institutional change.

This theoretical integration is particularly relevant in the UniMAC context, where structural reform following a merger reshapes librarians' professional identities and workplace relationships. Applying both perspectives illuminates whether librarians' commitment remains primarily affective (rooted in passion and identification), continuance (driven by necessity), or normative (based on loyalty and moral obligation) during organisational

transformation.

Literature Review

Academic libraries are the intellectual centre of schools, so they need workers who are not only skilled but also dedicated to the organisation's goals. Badu (2001) demonstrated that elevated levels of organisational commitment (OC) among librarians correlate with heightened job satisfaction, decreased turnover, and improved service quality. However, since Badu's early work, the context of commitment has changed substantially. Contemporary studies increasingly focus on engagement, wellbeing, and adaptability as drivers of organisational commitment, particularly in the post-pandemic period. Njoroge and Mutula (2020) found that engagement and work-life integration strongly predict affective commitment among university librarians in Kenya. Similarly, Choi et al, (2021) highlighted that employee engagement mediates the relationship between leadership style and organisational commitment in higher education institutions.

Ajje et al, (2015) examined motivation and commitment in Nigerian academic libraries, finding that although affective commitment predominated, motivation alone did not fully explain loyalty noting that organisational culture and leadership also played key roles.

Recent evidence (Adjei & Owusu-Ansah, 2022; Essuman et al., 2023; Adeyoyin & Ashava, 2024) confirms that participatory leadership and inclusive human resource (HR) practices enhance affective commitment in Ghanaian and Nigerian universities. These findings reinforce the need for library leaders to adopt empowering, communicative management styles that foster belonging and trust. Awan and Mahmood (2010) explored the influence of leadership style and organisational culture in Pakistan, finding high commitment despite autocratic management. Later studies reinterpret this paradox, suggesting that professional ethics and identity can buffer the negative effects of rigid structures (Bankole, 2023; Popoola & Fagbola, 2021). This aligns with the UniMAC case, where librarians' intrinsic motivation sustains commitment despite resource constraints.

Mayowa-Adebara and Aina (2016) also confirmed the importance of leadership support in Nigerian libraries, concluding that transformational leadership enhances staff morale and reduces turnover. Newer evidence extends this to hybrid work contexts: Choi et al, (2021) and Njoroge & Mutula (2020) show

that digital competence and autonomy are now integral to employee engagement and commitment.

Beyond leadership, literature has shifted toward analysing organisational resilience and employee wellbeing as precursors of commitment (Essuman et al, 2023; Adeyoyin & Ashava, 2024). Libraries that provide supportive climates, professional development, and recognition cultivate both affective and normative commitment.

In contrast, environments with limited promotion opportunities or unclear communication foster continuance commitment - employees stay out of necessity rather than loyalty. Bankole (2023) found that interpersonal relationships and teamwork positively correlate with librarians' performance and commitment. This is consistent with Kahn's (2017) concept of meaningful work, which emphasises authenticity, connection, and purpose as foundations of sustained engagement. When employees perceive their roles as meaningful and valued, they exhibit deeper organisational attachment even under pressure.

Ajayi et al, (2017) observed that distributive and interactional justice significantly affect commitment, underlining that fairness and recognition remain critical motivators. Thompson et al, (2005) also showed that autonomy and participation drive satisfaction and loyalty. Taken together, recent Library and Information Science research positions organisational commitment as a complex construct shaped by leadership, communication, wellbeing, and the evolving digital environment. Yet, there remains limited exploration of these dynamics in newly merged institutions within sub-Saharan Africa. This study, therefore, contributes new contextual evidence by analysing how UniMAC librarians negotiate their commitment amid organisational restructuring and resource transitions.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative design to gain an in-depth understanding of organisational commitment within its real-life context at UniMAC. The study population comprised 20 librarians across UniMAC campuses (12 female and 8 male). Participants ranged in age from their early twenties to their late fifties, reflecting diverse career stages. Their professional experience spanned five to sixteen years, with most participants having served between six and ten years. This mix of mid-career and long-serving staff offered a valuable cross-section of perspectives on organisational commitment, capturing the insights

of both relatively new employees and those who had experienced the institutional merger over a longer period.

A census approach was adopted to ensure inclusiveness and representation. Of the twenty participants, twelve were professional librarians and eight paraprofessionals. Participants represented three main campuses, enabling diverse perspectives on the institutional merger and its implications.

Interviews lasted between 45 and 70 minutes, were audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim. Data saturation was achieved after the 18th interview, when no new themes emerged. Credibility was ensured through member checking, in which selected participants verified the accuracy of their transcripts and preliminary themes. Dependability and transferability were enhanced through an audit trail, rich description of context, and reflexive journaling. Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo 12 software. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, the process included familiarisation, coding, theme development, and review. Coding was both inductive (data-driven) and deductive (theory-informed), guided by Meyer and Allen's three-component framework.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee for the Humanities (EC) at the University of Ghana, (Approval No. ECH/223/ 24-25). Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was assured through pseudonyms (e.g., P01-P20). Data were stored securely on password-protected drives and deleted from devices after transcription.

Findings and Discussion

Levels and Nature of Organisational Commitment

The data revealed a generally high level of organisational commitment among UniMAC librarians, which was predominantly affective in nature. Librarians expressed a strong emotional connection to their work, rooted in a sense of professional vocation and dedication to supporting the academic community.

"I am very committed because I see my role as central to the academic success of students. Their progress motivates me to give my best." (P05)

"I treat my role here not only as employment but as a calling. I take pride in helping students find the right information." (P07)

This finding reinforces the vocational aspect of librarianship (Nkandu & Underwood, 2017) and aligns with Meyer and Allen's (1991) conceptualisation

of affective commitment as a desire-based attachment. This affective drive was a powerful motivator, leading to discretionary effort and a strong desire to contribute to the institution's success. However, this high affective commitment coexisted with elements of continuance commitment for some staff. A minority reported moderate commitment, often linked to institutional challenges that prompted a more calculative stance.

"I do my work, but honestly, sometimes the lack of resources makes me feel less motivated. I would say my commitment is average." (P11)

"I am committed enough to keep the job, but I can't say I give one hundred per cent because the environment doesn't encourage it." (P13)

These statements reflect a continuance commitment, where employees remain due to necessity (job security, lack of alternatives) rather than pure desire. This duality highlights a potential vulnerability. In resource-constrained environments like UniMAC, the "passion" of librarians can be exploited, leading to burnout or a gradual shift where staff stay primarily for job security rather than emotional attachment (Ibrahim & Asenge, 2019). This underscores the need for management to actively nurture affective commitment rather than taking it for granted. Normative commitment was also evident, particularly among long-serving staff or those who felt a sense of duty to support the institution through its transformation.

Factors Influencing Organisational Commitment

Five key thematic factors were identified as shaping commitment levels, each interacting with the components of Meyer and Allen's model.

Positive Aspects of the Job

The intrinsic rewards of librarianship were a primary source of commitment. Meaningful user interactions, intellectual stimulation, and collegial teamwork provided a strong sense of purpose and satisfaction.

"When a student comes back to tell me that the research support I offered helped them pass their thesis defence, I feel proud and willing to do more for the library." (P09)

"I enjoy working with my colleagues. We share ideas and support each other, and this makes me want to stay." (P05)

This aligns with the Job Characteristics Model

(Hackman & Oldham, 1976), which posits that task significance enhances motivation. The finding that meaningful work is a powerful affective driver is consistent with recent studies in Ghanaian higher education (Agyemang & Ofei, 2023).

Management and Leadership Style

Leadership style was a critical differentiator. Participatory and supportive leadership significantly bolstered affective commitment.

"When management listens to our concerns and involves us in decisions, it strengthens my loyalty to the library." (P07)

"When leaders appreciate our little efforts, it motivates us to go the extra mile." (P10)

Conversely, autocratic or distant leadership styles were reported to diminish morale and emotional connection. This finding powerfully supports transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1990) and Perceived Organisational Support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986). It demonstrates that leadership directly influences the psychological bond employees form with the organisation.

Work-Life Balance

Flexible schedules and manageable workloads were positively associated with commitment, reducing burnout and fostering loyalty.

"The workload is manageable, and this allows me to balance work with my personal life. I don't feel burnt out, which keeps me loyal." (P04)

Conversely, excessive workload pressures were cited as a key reason for decreased motivation and increased turnover intentions. This supports the work of Greenhaus and Allen (2011) and recent Ghanaian studies (Boateng & Appiah, 2022), confirming that work-life balance is not a peripheral concern but a core determinant of sustainable commitment.

Professional Development and Career Growth

Opportunities for training, workshops, and career advancement were powerful commitment anchors. They were perceived as organisational investment, fostering both affective attachment and a sense of reciprocal obligation (normative commitment).

"I am more committed because the library invests in us by sending us to seminars and workshops. It shows that they value our development." (P19)

"When the university invests in my training, I feel a responsibility to give back. It makes me want to stay and contribute more because I can see they genuinely care about my growth." P 15
"The workshops and courses they sponsor motivate me. It shows they believe in us, and that encourages loyalty. You don't easily leave an institution that keeps developing you." P.11

This finding is consistent with Meyer and Allen's (1991) model, which argues that organisational support and investment cultivate normative commitment by fostering feelings of obligation and moral responsibility among employees. Contemporary research in African higher education (Kusi et al., 2022) reinforces this view, demonstrating that continuous professional development not only enhances loyalty but also contributes to greater knowledge-sharing and institutional cohesion. This convergence of evidence indicates that UniMAC's developmental initiatives may be instrumental in sustaining commitment during ongoing transformation.

Job Security

In Ghana's competitive job market, job security was a significant stabilising factor, underpinning continuance commitment.

"When one is assured of job security, there is that peace of mind to work and be committed." (P01)

"If I leave this job now, how to survive would be a problem, you see my situation." (P13)

"Knowing that my job is secure gives me peace of mind. It makes me more committed because I don't have to worry about looking elsewhere - I can focus fully on my work and the institution's goals." (P04)

This finding is consistent with research in developing economies (Gyamfi, 2021; Rehman & Mubarak, 2022), where economic instability makes job security a primary concern, forming a calculative basis for employee retention.

Impact of Institutional Transformation on Commitment

The UniMAC merger had a dual, contradictory impact on librarians' commitment, creating both "winners" and "losers" in the process and powerfully illustrating the role of change management.

Some librarians reported enhanced commitment due to increased inter-campus collaboration, access to a wider pool of resources, and new professional

opportunities. This was often the case where the change was managed well.

"The merger brought a sense of progress. We now have access to more resources and better training, which makes me more committed." (P04)

"The changes allowed us to interact more with colleagues from other campuses, which made work more dynamic and interesting." (P07)

For others, the transformation led to decreased commitment. Challenges included role ambiguity, a significant increase in workload, bureaucratic delays, and, most critically, poor communication from management during the change process.

"After the merger, my workload doubled and I felt stressed, which made it hard to remain fully committed." (P06)

"Management often announced decisions without discussing them with staff. It made us feel like our opinions didn't matter, reducing our engagement." (P08)

The stark contrast in staff reactions supports Kotter's (1996) change-management principles and findings by Bordia et al. (2004). It demonstrates that the process of transformation is a critical determinant of its impact on commitment. Where the change was managed with transparency, training, and participation, it strengthened affective commitment. Where it was imposed opaquely, it fostered uncertainty and weakened both affective and normative bonds, aligning with experiences in other Ghanaian institutions (Essuman et al., 2023).

Perceived Benefits of Organisational Commitment

Participants articulated clear benefits stemming from high commitment, aligning with positive organisational outcomes described in literature. These benefits provide a compelling rationale for investing in staff commitment.

- **Enhanced Service Delivery:** Committed librarians were more proactive, attentive, and willing to "go the extra mile" for users.

"If librarians are very committed, it improves user experience by going the extra mile to provide the needed services to patrons." (P07)

- **Institutional Success:** Librarians saw their dedication as directly contributing to the university's academic mission.

"If librarians are committed, it impacts positively on the University because whatever the library does supports research, teaching, and learning." (P03)

- **Innovation and Positive Change:** Commitment drove staff to initiate improvements, such as implementing new digital systems and fostering a culture of collaboration.

"Through our commitment, we implemented a digital catalogue system, which has transformed how students access resources." (P13)

These findings underscore the strategic value of a committed library workforce. They move beyond abstract concepts to show that commitment directly translates into tangible outcomes like improved service quality, institutional reputation, and innovation (Mowday et al., 1979; Khan & Qureshi, 2021). This makes a strong business case for university management to view librarian commitment as a critical institutional asset.

Challenges Hindering Organisational Commitment

Despite high intrinsic motivation, several systemic challenges threatened to erode commitment over time. These challenges primarily weaken affective and normative commitment by signalling a lack of perceived organisational support.

- **Lack of Recognition and Appreciation:** A consistently cited issue was the feeling that their efforts were invisible to university management.

"When all your efforts are ignored, it makes you wonder why you should bother going the extra mile." (P12)

- **Inadequate Institutional Support and Resources:** Librarians felt the library was side-lined in institutional decision-making and starved of essential resources.

"Sometimes it feels as if the library does not exist in the eyes of management. Requests for essential resources take months..." (P11)

- **Bureaucracy and Delays:** Post-merger bureaucratic hurdles slowed down decision-making and procurement, frustrating staff and hindering efficiency.

"Sometimes the processes take too long. You submit a request and wait weeks for approval. It slows down our work and can be quite discouraging." P14

"The bureaucratic delays make simple tasks feel complicated. By the time something is approved, the momentum is gone, and it affects how motivated we feel to push new ideas." P10

- **Insufficient Benefits and Allowances:** While base salaries were accepted, the denial of expected allowances and benefits was perceived as a lack of institutional care, weakening normative commitment.

"I understand the salary is fixed, but not receiving allowances or support for professional development makes me feel neglected." (P01)

These challenges are well-documented in library literature (Dadzie, 2015; Ogunrombi & Oladokun, 2015) but are particularly potent in a post-merger environment. When staff are already navigating uncertainty, the failure to provide adequate resources or acknowledge their efforts can be perceived as a profound lack of support, rapidly eroding the goodwill and emotional attachment that management relies upon.

Lessons Learned

The study yields three important lessons for academic library management and organisational leadership. First, institutional change is fundamentally a human process; the success of structural initiatives like mergers hinges less on the change itself and more on its management. Transparent communication and participatory leadership are critical to converting uncertainty into renewed commitment.

Second, affective commitment, while powerful, is not an inexhaustible resource. It can be eroded by persistent systemic failures, such as a lack of resources or recognition. Management must, therefore, address both intrinsic motivators and extrinsic hygiene factors simultaneously, as professional ethos alone cannot compensate for institutional neglect.

Finally, commitment functions as a reciprocal relationship. Investment in professional development and supportive leadership are not merely benefits but strategic imperatives that yield returns in the form of enhanced loyalty, proactive citizenship behaviours, and institutional innovation. Empowering employees is the most effective strategy for building organisational resilience.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the organisational commitment of UniMAC librarians is predominantly

affective, rooted in a strong sense of professional vocation. However, this emotional attachment is dynamically mediated by institutional realities. The merger experience and daily operational challenges reveal that while intrinsic motivation provides a robust foundation for commitment, its sustainability is contingent on supportive organisational conditions.

Leadership emerged as the paramount factor, critically influencing how change and constraints were perceived and absorbed. Participatory management reinforced affective bonds, whereas autocratic styles fostered disengagement. Similarly, opportunities for growth and equitable workload management were instrumental in sustaining morale.

In essence, the findings underscore that commitment is a strategic asset, not a static attribute. For UniMAC and similar institutions, nurturing this asset requires a deliberate alignment of management practices with professional values. Ensuring empathetic leadership, adequate resources, and recognition is essential to transform individual dedication into enduring institutional excellence. The librarians' resilience highlights the potential for high commitment even in challenging contexts, but it also signals to management that this commitment must be actively cultivated, not taken for granted.

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Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest was disclosed