# Welfare Policies and Employee Commitment in Public Service: Emerging Issues and Challenges

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***Abstract***
*As public service organisations face increasing dmands for transparency, efficiency, and social impact, the commitment of their workforce becomes essential to ensuring sustained performance and service delivery. This paper explores the concept of welfare policy and employee commitment in public service organisations, with the objectives focusing on the impact of welfare policies on employee, challenges and effective strategies for improving employee commitment. The paper relied on the Social Exchange Theory that provides a framework for understanding the impact of welfare policies on employee commitment. The paper establishes that while welfare policies in the public service organisations have the potential to enhance employee commitment, their effectiveness is often undermined by implementation challenges, such as bureaucracy inefficiencies, inadequate funding and lack of coordination between various government agencies. Based on the extant contributions, the study indicates amongst others that well-structured welfare policies can lead to increased loyalty and commitment. Therefore, welfare policies should be carefully designed to address the needs of employees at all levels.*

***Keywords:*** *Welfare Policy, Employee Commitment, Challenges and Strategies*

## 1. Introduction

In an era marked by dynamic workplace transformations and rising expectations from public institutions, the commitments of employees in the public service organisations are significant (Vandenabeele, 2009). Employee commitment is one of the primary factors that determine the level of productivity, quality of service, and overall operational success of public institutions. Among the different types of organisational commitment, affective commitment stands out due to its focus on the emotional attachment and obligation employees feel toward their organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In the context of the Nigerian public service organisations, this form of commitment is particularly important as it influences the dedication and loyalty of employees toward their duties and responsibilities. Hyman (2008) argue that the nature and extent of welfare policies play a significant role in fostering or hindering this type of commitment. The question now is; what is welfare policy? Welfare policies are measures adopted by employers, especially in public organisations, designed to provide employees with financial and non-financial benefits, social security, healthcare, and work-life balance opportunities (McCausland, 2022). Other welfare policies include conducive working hours, transportation allowance, vacation policies, wellness initiative, family leave, workplace safety, etc. These policies are crucial not only for enhancing job satisfaction but also for building a strong, loyal, and dedicated workforce. (Olodo & Pedro, 2023; Sarah, et al., 2023). Public service sector as an integral part of the government structure, saddled with the responsibility of impacting lives of the citizens in one way or the other, e.g health, education, etc. Employees are the resource persons who put in their knowledge, skills and competencies to ensure the

expected services are delivered efficiently and effectively. As a matter of fact, employee commitment is very critical. Welfare policies serve as one of the key drivers in fostering employee commitment by addressing employee needs, improving their overall working conditions and enhancing job satisfaction (Gould-Williams, 2007). Commitment, as conceptualized by (Meyer & Allen, 1991), refers to an employee's psychological attachment to an organisation based on a perceived sense of obligation to remain in the organisation. It is often driven by both affective (developed when employees experience positive work environments, receive supports, recognition), and normative factors (through personal values and socialisation processes; mentoring, training, development). Sensibly, employees feel that they ought to stay in the organization, because of these ethical and moral reasons even in the absence of immediate rewards or tangible benefits. In orgaisations, employees work under challenging conditions sometimes with limited resources, the implementation of effective welfare policies becomes even more crucial. Welfare policies are designed to improve the social, psychological, and economic well-being of employees, thus influencing their sense of attachment and loyalty to their workplace. Armstrong (2010) adds that, when welfare policies align with employees' needs and expectations, it creates a conducive environment for the development of commitment, ultimately leading to enhanced performance, job satisfaction, and reduced turnover intentions. Despite the critical importance of welfare policies in likely shaping employee commitment, empirical evidence suggests that many Nigerian public servants experience dissatisfaction with existing welfare programs. There have been numerous reports of delayed disbursements, mismanagement of funds, and poor communication from Pension Fund Administrators, leaving retirees in financial distress (TheNation, 2024; ThisDay, 2024). TheCable (2024) documented cases in a Lagos plastic factorywhere workers lost limbs due to unsafe machinery and poor oversight. Study by Igbinovia and Ajayi (2020) have highlighted that the lack of proper implementation, the absence of employee participation in policy design, and the poor communication of policy changes contribute significantly to the failure of welfare policies in fostering employee commitment; more so, bureaucracy inefficiencies, inadequate funding and lack of coordination between various government agencies (McCausland, 2022; Odudoye & Ajayi, 2021). While welfare policies are seen as crucial not only for enhancing job satisfaction but also for building a strong, loyal, and dedicated workforce. (Olodo & Pedro, 2023; Sarah, Omonzejele & Ogboho, 2023). Therefore, this study will theoretically show the impact of welfare policies on employee commitment, the challenges and show some identified policies.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Welfare Policy

Welfare policies are measures designed and adopted by employers, especially in private abd public service organisations, to provide employees with financial and non-financial benefits, social security, healthcare, and work-life balance opportunities (McCausland, 2022). According to Rousseau, (1995), they are powerful tools that can either strengthen or erode the psychological contract between the state and its workforce These policies touch on the core of employee well-being, influencing motivation, loyalty, and performance (Gould-Williams, 2007). When employees perceive their organisation values their welfare, they are more likely to respond with increased commitment and engagement (Eisenberger et al., 1986). This aligns with the principles of social exchange theory, which suggests that positive treatment from the organisation fosters reciprocal attitudes and behaviours among employees (Blau, 1964). In many countries, these policies are a critical element of public sector administration, influencing employee behavior, motivation, and commitment to the organisation. Employee commitment,

in turn, is a vital factor in ensuring the smooth functioning of public institutions and in achieving the broader objectives of government services (Mollokent & Ombu, 2022).
Welfare policies in public service are an essential aspect of governmental efforts to improve the well-being of public employees. These policies aim to provide financial, social, and health-related benefits that support employees in balancing their work and personal lives, fostering job satisfaction, and enhancing organisational commitment. Welfare policies are generally focused on promoting fairness, equity, and social justice, which differentiate them from policies in the private sector, where profit motives often play a central role in policy formulation (Harrison & Marchington, 2021). One of the key objectives of welfare policies in public service is to enhance employee productivity by addressing the basic needs of workers, such as healthcare, housing, family support, and retirement benefits. By ensuring that employees' fundamental needs are met, welfare policies help reduce work-related stress and increase overall job satisfaction (McCausland, 2022). The effectiveness of these policies is linked to their ability to improve employees' quality of life, which, in turn, leads to higher levels of commitment and loyalty to the organisation. Research by Oduyoye and Ajayi (2021) in the Nigerian public sector demonstrated that employees who had access to comprehensive welfare packages, such as health insurance and pension plans, exhibited higher levels of organisational commitment compared to those without such benefits. Another significant aspect of welfare policy in public service is its role in promoting equity among employees. Public service organisations are often large and diverse, comprising employees with varying needs and expectations. Welfare policies that offer equal access to benefits for all employees help foster a sense of fairness and inclusivity. For example, policies that provide family-related benefits, such as parental leave or child care allowances, demonstrate an organisation's commitment to supporting employees' personal responsibilities, which can enhance job satisfaction and employee retention (Caldwell & Peter.s, 2020). Moreover, such policies contribute to building trust in the organisation, as employees perceive the government as a supportive and fair employer (Tornow & Baker, 2020).

### 2.2 Understanding Welfare Policy in Public Service

Welfare policies encompass a wide range of benefits and services provided to employees, including healthcare benefits through enrollment in the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) (NHIS, 2020), pension and retirement benefits under the Pension Reform Act (National Pension Commission, 2014), and housing schemes such as the Federal Government Staff Housing Loans Board (FGSHLB, 2021). Leave entitlements, including annual, maternity, paternity, and sick leave (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004), as well as transport and housing allowances to support daily living costs (Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation, 2020). Training and development programs are offered to build capacity and improve job performance (Bello & Ajayi, 2021), while occupational health and safety policies ensure safe working environments (Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2019). Additionally, some organizations implement gratuity payments, social security provisions, and welfare committees that cater to staff welfare and emergency needs (Okeke & Udu, 2020). The purpose of these policies is to enhance employees' quality of life, reduce job-related stress, and ultimately improve work performance (Gould-Williams, 2007). They are designed to reflect the values of social equity, fairness, and inclusiveness (Harrison & Marchington, 2021). Unlike private sector organisations, which prioritize profit maximization, public service welfare policies tend to focus on providing equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of their position or role. For instance, in a study on welfare policies in the UK public sector, McCausland (2022) noted that equitable access to welfare benefits plays a crucial role in shaping employees' perceptions of fairness, which is closely linked to their commitment to the

organisation. A significant portion of welfare policies in the public service also targets specific demographics, such as low-income employees or those in high-risk professions (Caldwell & Peters, 2020). These policies are not only meant to meet the basic needs of employees but also serve to motivate and retain workers by addressing their specific concerns and needs.

### 2.3 Employee Commitment

Employee commitment has long been recognised as a critical factor in the performance and stability of public service organisations. Meyer and Allen (1991) see employee commitment as a psychological state that binds an employee to an organisation; it encompasses affective, continuance, and normative dimensions. In the public sector, where employees often face challenging conditions, limited resources etc, fostering commitment requires more than managerial oversight - it calls for a deliberate investment in employee welfare. Welfare policy refers to a range of organisational provisions aimed at promoting employee well-being, including health benefits, housing schemes, work-life balance initiatives, mental health services, and pension schemes (Armstrong, 2014). According to Baruch & Holtom (2008) welfare policies signal the organisation's concern for its employees, which in turn influences their attitudes and behaviours at work When employees perceive such support, they are more likely to reciprocate through increased dedication and loyalty, as explained by social exchange theory (Blau, 1964).

### 2.4 The Impact of Welfare Policy on Employee Commitment

A growing body of literature has investigated the impact of welfare policy and employee commitment. Studies have shown that well-structured welfare policies can significantly impact employee morale, motivation, and overall commitment to their work (Harrison & Marchington, 2021). These policies foster a sense of security and well-being among employees, making them more likely to engage in discretionary behaviors that benefit the organisation.

Ayabowei, Aziakpono, and Fapohunda (2023) examined the relationship between employee welfare and job commitment among non-academic senior staff of tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. Their findings indicated significant positive relationships between employee welfare and the three components of organizational commitment: affective, normative, and continuance. The researchers concluded that robust welfare programs are vital to nurturing a committed and loyal workforce in the public education sector. on the impact of welfare policies in South Africa's public sector, in a study by Moloi et al. (2023), it was found that employees who perceived the government's welfare policies as fair and beneficial were more likely to report higher levels of organisational commitment. They attributed this to the fact that employees felt valued and supported by the government, leading to increased job satisfaction and loyalty to the organisation. In a study by Osazevbaru and Ogbuma (2023), the effects of fringe benefits on employee performance were analyzed across selected local government councils in Delta State. The study found that benefits such as retirement and educational/house allowances had a positive and significant impact on employee performance. The researchers recommended a continuous provision and periodic review of these welfare benefits to improve employee retention and organizational productivity. Moreover, research suggests that welfare policies are particularly effective in promoting commitment in public service organisations when they align with employees' personal values and expectations (Tornow & Baker, 2020). For example, employees who prioritize family well-being are more likely to respond positively to welfare policies that offer family-related benefits, such as child care allowances or parental leave. Similarly, employees in physically demanding roles may demonstrate higher commitment when offered policies that address health and safety concerns, such as occupational health programs or fitness allowances.

**Challenges in Welfare Policy Implementation**

Despite the potential benefits of welfare policies, their successful implementation remains a significant challenge in many public service organisations. Employees in Nigeria have expressed widespread dissatisfaction with various aspects of welfare policies, including salaries, health care, pensions, workplace safety, and employment practices. Many workers complain that their salaries have remained stagnant despite inflation and the rising cost of living, particularly after the removal of fuel subsidies. Oluwalana (2024) notes that Nigerian workers are finding it increasingly difficult to afford transportation and basic necessities, calling for an urgent review of the national minimum wage. Even when reviewed, implementing becomes a big issue. Access to quality health care is also a significant concern; not all employees are enrolled in the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), leading to heavy out-of-pocket expenses and inadequate health coverage (Punch, 2024). Pensions are another major issue, with numerous reports of delayed disbursements, mismanagement of funds, and poor communication from Pension Fund Administrators, leaving retirees in financial distress (The Nation, 2024; ThisDay, 2024). Workplace safety is frequently compromised, especially in industrial settings, where poor safety measures and lack of protective gear have led to serious injuries. TheCable (2024) documented cases in a Lagos plastic factory where workers lost limbs due to unsafe machinery and poor oversight. Furthermore, the increasing trend of job outsourcing has led to the denial of benefits such as pensions and health insurance to outsourced workers, thus exacerbating job insecurity (Ibharalu, 2024). In a study on employee turnover, Ajala (2017) found that poor working conditions, absence of grievance procedures, and inadequate fringe benefits were significant drivers of labor turnover in industries across Oyo State. Collectively, these reports and studies reveal deep-rooted challenges in the design and implementation of welfare policies in Nigeria, underscoring the need for systemic reform to ensure equitable and effective employee support.

Through the existing literature reviewed, some common challenges have been attributed to lack of sufficient funding of resources to effectively deliver these welfare benefits, bureaucratic inefficiencies, as well as fragmented policy implementation structures (Harrison & Marchington, 2021). For instance, in some developing countries, the gap between policy formulation and implementation often leads to the failure of welfare policies to reach the intended beneficiaries. McCausland (2022) noted that even when funding for welfare programs is available, the inefficient allocation of resources due to administrative delays or political interference can result in suboptimal outcomes. Another is lack of coordination between various government agencies (McCausland, 2022; Oduyoye & Ajayi, 2021). For instance, while welfare policies may be well-articulated at the government level, the resources required to implement them effectively may be lacking at the local level. Research by Harrison and Marchington (2021) suggests that even when adequate funding is allocated for welfare initiatives, public service agencies often face difficulties in efficiently utilizing these resources due to administrative bottlenecks and a lack of proper planning.

Additionally, welfare policies are often influenced by government regulations, political ideologies, and economic conditions. A study by Caldwell and Peters (2020) found that public service employees in several developing countries were unclear about the specific benefits available to them, which undermined their trust in the government and reduced their commitment to the organisation. These challenges have created gap between policy intentions and actual outcomes and has led to a sense of disenchantment among employees, ultimately affecting their commitment to the organisation (Oduyoye & Ajayi, 2021).

A study conducted by Zakariya and Achimugu (2023) focused on the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) in Nigeria's South West Zone. The research revealed that although welfare packages are stipulated in the Public Service Rules

(PSR), inconsistent implementation resulted in varying employee experiences. Despite this, employees acknowledged that the presence of welfare provisions significantly impacted their level of commitment. The study recommended full adherence to PSR-stipulated welfare provisions to improve employee motivation and performance. Therefore, effective welfare policies are crucial in improving employee engagement in the public service organisations.

**Theoretical Foundation**

The theoretical underpinning the relationship between welfare policies and employee commitment is grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET). Blau (1964) suggests that social behavior is the result of an exchange process where individuals assess the rewards and costs of their relationships. In the organizational context, SET proposes that employees engage in a reciprocal relationship with their employers, wherein they offer their skills, time, and efforts in exchange for rewards and benefits provided by the organization. Welfare policies are integral to this exchange, as they represent the rewards that employees receive for their contributions.

When employees perceive that they are receiving fair and valuable rewards through welfare policies, such as healthcare, job security, family support and other benefits, they are more likely to reciprocate with greater commitment, performance, and loyalty to the organization. On the other hand, if employees feel that the welfare policies are inadequate or unfair, they may withdraw their commitment and reduce their efforts (Jiang & Zhang, 2022). Therefore, SET underscores the importance of designing welfare policies that employees perceive as equitable and beneficial to foster a positive exchange and strengthen organizational commitment.

This reciprocal relationship has been further explored through the lens of Perceived Organisational Support (POS), which suggests that employees' commitment is enhanced when they believe the organisation values their contributions and well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The research by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) confirms that POS is strongly associated with job satisfaction, reduced turnover intentions, and heightened organizational commitment. In public service organisations, where employees often work under challenging conditions and are driven by values beyond financial incentives, POS plays an even more critical role. Welfare policies that demonstrate genuine concern for employee well-being can enhance POS, reinforcing the psychological contract and encouraging employees to remain committed to organizational goals. Therefore, welfare initiatives that promote POS is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic tool for fostering a resilient, dedicated and committed workforce. The theory suggests that well-designed and effective implemented welfare policies can enhance employee commitment by fulfilling psychological and social needs.

**Employee Commitment in Public Service**

Employee commitment manifests as a strong willingness to exert extra effort in their work and remain in the organisation. Meyer and Allen (1991) posit that employee commitment encompasses affective, continuance, and normative dimensions - explaining the reasons employee would want to remain with an organisation. In the public service sector, commitment is particularly important because it directly affects service delivery, employee productivity, and overall organisational effectiveness (Keller & Zhou, 2023). Welfare policies that improve employees' well-being tend to enhance their job satisfaction, which, in turn, strengthens their commitment to the organisation.

**Affective Commitment**

Affective commitment refers to the emotional attachment an employee has to their organization, whereby they choose to remain because they want to, not because they need to or ought to (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This form of commitment is nurtured when employees

experience a positive organizational environment where they feel valued, supported, and aligned with the organization's goals and values. Welfare policies play a crucial role in fostering affective commitment by addressing employees' physical, emotional, and social needs. For instance, policies such as paid family leave, mental health support, and flexible working arrangements demonstrate that the organization cares about the well-being of its workforce. When employees perceive these initiatives as genuine and consistently implemented, they are more likely to develop trust and satisfaction with the organization. In the public service sector, where employees often work in high-pressure and resource-constrained environments, affective commitment becomes particularly important.

Employees who feel emotionally connected to an organization that prioritizes their welfare are more engaged, resilient, and willing to go the extra mile in service delivery (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Gould-Williams, 2007). Therefore, affective commitment can be seen as a critical outcome of well-structured welfare policies that humanize the workplace and reinforce employees' sense of belonging.

**Normative commitment**

Normative commitment refers to an employee's sense of moral obligation to remain with an organisation, often stemming from the internalization of organizational values or the perception of having received favorable treatment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Normative commitment can be significantly influenced when employees perceive that the organization genuinely invests in their well-being. Welfare provisions such as health benefits, family support programs, and opportunities for professional development can foster feelings of gratitude and loyalty. Employees may feel a sense of indebtedness or responsibility to reciprocate the organization's support through continued service and dedication. This sense of obligation is not externally enforced but arises from the belief that leaving the organization would be morally inappropriate after receiving such care and consideration (Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010).

In public service organizations, where the social mission often aligns with employee values, welfare policies further reinforce this alignment, thereby strengthening normative commitment. When employees believe their organization not only serves the public good but also supports them personally, they are more likely to remain out of a genuine sense of duty and allegiance.

**Continuance commitment**

Continuance commitment refers to an employee's attachment to an organization based on the perceived costs of leaving, such as the loss of benefits, job security, or career prospects (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Unlike affective commitment, which is driven by emotional attachment, continuance commitment is more pragmatic and calculative. Welfare policies play a crucial role in shaping continuance commitment, as they can increase the perceived costs associated with leaving the organization. For example, comprehensive benefits packages, including pensions, healthcare, and paid leave, create financial incentives that make the idea of leaving the organization less appealing. In the public service sector, where pension plans and job security are often significant draws, employees may stay because of these tangible benefits rather than emotional attachment. Employees with high continuance commitment may remain with their organization not out of passion or loyalty, but because the perceived costs of departure outweigh the potential benefits (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Therefore, welfare policies that enhance job security and provide valuable benefits can strengthen continuance commitment by making the idea of leaving the organization less desirable.

**Effective Welfare Strategies for Improving Employee Commitment**

To address the challenges in welfare policy implementation and enhance employee commitment, several strategies have been suggested in the literature. One key strategy is the development of more inclusive and transparent welfare policies that clearly outline the benefits available to employees and how they can access them (Tornow & Baker, 2020). Ensuring that employees are fully informed about welfare provisions can improve their trust in the organisation and enhance their commitment.

Another strategy is to tailor welfare policies to the specific needs of different employee groups. A one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective in addressing the diverse needs of public service employees, particularly in large and complex organisations (Bokhari, 2019). For example, employees in frontline roles may benefit from different welfare provisions than those in administrative positions. A study by Moloi et al. (2023) highlights the importance of offering customized welfare benefits that resonate with employees' personal and professional needs.

Finally, regular monitoring and evaluation of welfare policies is crucial to ensure that they remain relevant and effective. Feedback from employees can help identify areas for improvement and inform future policy adjustments (O'Leary, 2020). By continuously assessing the impact of welfare policies on employee satisfaction and commitment, public service organisations can create a culture of continuous improvement.

**Conclusion**

This seminar paper theoretically examined extant positions on the link between welfare policies and employee commitment in public service organisations. It looked into Social Exchange Theory (Blau 1964) supported by Eisenberger et al. (1986) that provide a framework for understanding the impact of welfare policies on employee commitment. The literature reviewed revealed that while welfare policies in the public service have the potential to enhance employee commitment, their effectiveness is often undermined by implementation challenges, which include lack of sufficient funding or resources to effectively deliver these benefits, bureaucratic inefficiencies, as well as fragmented policy implementation structures (Harrison & Marchington, 2021), etc. The study identified that well-structured welfare policies that considers the need of employees at all levels can lead to increased job satisfaction, motivation, commitment and loyalty (Olodo & Pedro, 2023; Oyetakin, Ajalode & Alen, 2019). The study concludes by highlighting amongst others - the need for a more comprehensive welfare strategies to address the diverse needs of public sector employees to foster higher levels of commitment.

**Implications for Policy and Practice**

1. Public service welfare policies should be carefully designed to address the needs of employees at all levels. Policy frameworks should be clear, inclusive, and tailored to diverse employee categories to ensure widespread effectiveness.
2. Governments should allocate sufficient funds for the implementation of welfare policies. This will ensure that welfare programs are adequately supported and can achieve their desired impact on employee commitment.
3. Public service agencies should ensure that welfare policies are communicated effectively to all employees. Transparency in policy formulation and implementation processes can build trust and improve employee engagement.
4. There should be ongoing monitoring and evaluation of welfare policies to assess their impact on employee commitment. Regular feedback from employees can help in identifying gaps and making adjustments to improve the effectiveness of welfare programs.
5. The training of managers and administrators involved in welfare policy implementation is

crucial. These individuals should be equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to overcome challenges and execute welfare initiatives efficiently.

6. Employees should be actively involved in the design and review of welfare policies. Their input can ensure that policies reflect their actual needs, leading to greater satisfaction and commitment.

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