CAREER PLATEAUING AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT AMONG THE ACADEMIC STAFF OF THE UNIVERSITY OF UYO

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Abstract
Employee commitment remains a cornerstone of organisational success, particularly within academic environments where productivity and morale directly affect educational quality. In many universities, however, staff members often face limited growth opportunities, leading to career plateauing, a psychological state in which individuals perceive stagnation in their professional development. This phenomenon can hinder motivation, engagement, and long-term organisational commitment. Against this backdrop, this study examined career plateauing and employee commitment among academic staff in the University of Uyo. Specifically, the study investigated the influence of structural, job content, and personal plateauing on continuance, affective and normative commitment. A survey research design was adopted, and a structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of 288 employees.A total of 288 copies of the research instrument were distributed to selected respondents across the study population. Of these, 244 completed instruments were successfully retrieved, yielding a response rate of 84.72%. This high rate indicates strong participant engagement and enhances the reliability and generalisability of the study findings. The returned instruments were then reviewed for completeness and consistency prior to inclusion in the data analysis. The data collected were analysed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, and the hypotheses were tested at the 5% significance level. The findings revealed that all dimensions of career plateauing exert a significant negative influence on employee commitment, as measured by continuance, affective, and normative commitment. Based on findings, it was concluded that career plateauing negatively affects employee commitment among academic staff in the University of Uyo. Therefore, the study recommends that the University adopt proactive career development and internal mobility strategies such as clear advancement pathways, continuous skill development, and role diversification to mitigate the effects of career plateauing.

Key words: *Career Plateauing, Employee Commitment, Academic Staff and University of Uyo*

Introduction

In today's higher education landscape, academic institutions face growing competition, rapid shifts in teaching methodologies, and increasing demands for research output, innovation, and societal impact. Within this dynamic and demanding environment, the role of academic staff has become more complex and indispensable. These professionals are tasked not only with teaching but also with producing impactful research, mentoring students, participating in institutional governance, and driving organisational development. Their commitment is, therefore, central to achieving institutional goals and maintaining the quality of education. Despite their vital role, academic staff often encounter significant challenges that undermine their motivation and long-term engagement. One such challenge is career plateauing, a condition in which individuals perceive stagnation or a lack of upward mobility in their careers. In academia, where advancement is closely tied to research productivity, administrative roles, and institutional recognition, this sense of professional stagnation can be especially discouraging. Career plateauing typically manifests in three forms: Structural, job content and personal plateauing. Structural plateauing is driven by external limitations such as rigid hierarchies, limited promotional opportunities, and a scarcity of higher-level positions. Job content plateauing, arise from job-related factors like repetitive tasks, lack of intellectual challenge, or limited opportunities for skill development, while personal plateauing reflects an internal sense of stagnation, often involving diminished creativity, a fixed mindset, or reduced emotional well-being (Godshalk & Fender, 2014; Agu *et al*., 2023; Chang *et al*., 2024). In academia, these challenges are often amplified by institutional barriers such as insufficient research funding, excessive bureaucracy, poor access to professional development, and weak support systems (Pienaar & Bester, 2006; Rose & Leisyte, 2016; Barnes *et al.,* 2021).

In Nigerian federal universities like the University of Uyo, these issues are particularly acute. Systemic problems such as chronic underfunding, political interference, outdated promotion structures, and inflexible administrative processes contribute to a climate in which academic staff may feel undervalued, underutilized, and professionally stuck. These challenges are particularly pronounced for those who remain at the same rank for extended periods, despite having the qualifications and experience for advancement, highlighting how institutional barriers can hinder career progression and dampen professional morale (Dimunah, 2017; Jacob *et al.*, 2021; Ladipo, 2022). Organisational commitment, on the other hand, describes the extent to which employees identify with and feel emotionally invested in their organisations, and it is essential to organisational success. It encompasses three dimensions: affective, normative, and continuance commitment (Noraazian & Khalip, 2016; Okwudiri, Nwafor & Umetiti, 2025; Nwafor & Umetiti, 2025), each of which influences employee outcomes in distinct ways. However, when career plateauing occurs, whether structural, job content-related, or

personal, it can undermine all three dimensions of commitment, leading to reduced job satisfaction and a greater intention to leave the organization (Drucker-Godard *et al.*, 2014). Structural plateauing may weaken continuance commitment, content plateauing may erode affective commitment, and personal plateauing may diminish normative commitment, as employees begin to question their worth within the organization. This decline in organisational commitment can result in a range of negative consequences, including decreased productivity, low morale, higher absenteeism, reduced innovation in teaching and research, and increased turnover intentions (Salami, 2010; Drucker-Godard *et al.*, 2014; Park, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

As the academic environment continues to evolve rapidly, universities rely heavily on the commitment of their academic staff to uphold high standards in teaching, research, and service delivery. At the University of Uyo, like many other institutions, there is growing concern over the diminishing levels of employee commitment among academic staff. One significant but often overlooked factor contributing to this decline is career plateauing, a condition where employees perceive limited opportunities for growth, advancement, or new challenges in their careers. Career plateauing can have a profoundly negative impact on the commitment of academic staff. When lecturers and researchers feel that their professional development has stagnated, their motivation to contribute meaningfully to institutional goals tends to decrease. For many, the inability to advance to higher academic ranks or assume more challenging roles, whether due to institutional bottlenecks, limited opportunities, or personal perceptions, leads to frustration, disinterest, and emotional disengagement from their work and the university. Academic staff who experience structural plateauing may feel trapped in their current positions due to slow promotion processes, limited vacancies, or rigid organizational structures. This can erode their sense of purpose and belonging, resulting in reduced loyalty to the institution. Similarly, content-related plateauing, which occurs when job roles become repetitive and lack intellectual stimulation or innovation, can lead to boredom, burnout, and a decline in job satisfaction. Furthermore, personal plateauing, where individuals believe they have reached their full career potential or lose interest in further advancement, often results in diminished enthusiasm and lower levels of organizational commitment. Given its impact on employee morale and institutional performance, it is important to examine how career plateauing affects academic staff at the University of Uyo. Despite its significance, existing literature offers limited insight into this issue within Nigerian universities. This gap in knowledge has prompted an investigation into how career plateauing influences the commitment of academic staff at the University of Uyo.

Objectives

The main objective of this study was to investigate the influence of career plateauing and employee commitment among the academic staff of the University of Uyo. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. assess the influence of structural plateauing on continuance commitment among the academic staff of the University of Uyo.
2. ascertain the influence of job content plateauing on affective commitment among the academic staff of the University of Uyo.
3. evaluate the influence of personal plateauing on normative commitment among the academic staff of the University of Uyo.

Literature Review

Career Plateauing

Career plateauing refers to a phase in an individual's professional journey where advancement, skill development, or growth stagnates despite continued effort and experience. It is commonly classified into three types: structural, content, and life plateauing. Structural plateauing results from limited promotional opportunities due to organizational hierarchies or constraints. Content plateauing occurs when a role lacks variety, challenge, or opportunities for learning. Personal plateauing reflects a disconnect between personal aspirations and career progress (Godshalk & Fender, 2014; Agu *et al.*, 2023; Chang *et al.*, 2024). This stagnation can significantly affect employee outcomes, leading to decreased job satisfaction, reduced motivation, and diminished performance. Over time, it may also contribute to disengagement and increase the likelihood of turnover (Godshalk & Fender, 2014; Park, 2020; Gaturu *et al.*, 2021).

Structural Plateauing

Structural plateauing also known as hierarchical plateauing occurs when employees perceive limited opportunities for upward mobility within an organization due to organizational constraints rather than individual performance. It is often a result of factors such as organizational hierarchy flattening, limited promotional positions, or economic constraints that prevent growth (Godshalk & Fender, 2015; Özçelik & Akçay; Akpan *et al*.,2025). This form of plateauing can lead to decreased job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment (Park, 2020; Gaturu *et al*., 2021; Nwafor, Ojiako & Umetiti, 2023; Umetiti, Nwumeh & Uzor, 2020). Unlike content plateauing, which involves a lack of new challenges in one's role, structural plateauing is externally driven and reflects the stagnation of career advancement possibilities (Lin & Chen, 2020).

Job Content Plateauing

Job content plateauing occurs when employees perceive a lack of challenge or opportunities for growth in their roles, often resulting in negative consequences. Research has shown that job content plateaus are linked to decreased job satisfaction, reduced organizational citizenship behaviors, and lower organizational commitment (Hurst *et al*., 2016; McCleese & Eby, 2006). This phenomenon commonly stems from repetitive tasks, limited learning opportunities, or the underutilization of employees' skills and capabilities (Jena et al., 2023; Jena *et al*., 2025; Umetiti & Nwafor, 2025). When work no longer feels stimulating or meaningful, employees may experience boredom, disengagement, and a decline in both performance and creativity (Sánchez-Cardona, 2019). Over time, such stagnation not only impedes individual development but also undermines organizational productivity and morale (Ng & Yang, 2024).

Personal Plateauing

Personal or life plateauing arises from an individual's own attitudes, motivations, or personal choices, ultimately leading to a sense of stagnation. It reflects a worker's internal feeling of being trapped or limited in their role, particularly outside of formal work structures (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2006; Godshalk & Fender, 2015). Common reasons for this type of plateauing include a loss of interest or motivation to progress, lifestyle choices, or a general satisfaction with one's current position (Tremblay & Roger, 1993; Godshalk & Fender, 2015).

Continuance Commitment

Continuance commitment is defined as the perceived cost of quitting an organisation. It is one of three aspects of organisational commitment, together with affective and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1990). Employees with strong continuance commitment stay with their company because they believe they have to owing to the financial, social, or opportunity costs of leaving (Noraazian & Khalip, 2016). This form of commitment is usually motivated by practical factors rather than emotional connection or moral obligation.

Affective Commitment

Affective commitment is characterised by an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and interest in their workplace. It demonstrates an individual's real desire to stay with the organisation, rather than out of obligation or fear of repercussions (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This type of commitment is shaped by great work experiences and aligns employees with organisational goals, frequently resulting in beneficial results such as increased job satisfaction, lower turnover intentions, and improved organisational citizenship behaviours (Abbas & Ahmed, 2023).

Normative Commitment

Normative commitment, a component of organizational commitment, refers to the feeling that an employee has a duty to stay with a organisation for moral or ethical reasons (Allen & Meyer, 1990). It stems from internalized normative pressures and is influenced by personal predispositions and organizational interventions (Oh & Sawang, 2021). Employees with strong normative commitment feel staying is the right thing to do, even if they are dissatisfied or have better opportunities elsewhere (Gulzar, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

The study is grounded in Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, which distinguishes between motivators such as achievement, recognition, and opportunities for personal growth and hygiene factors, including salary, job security, institutional policies, and working conditions (Vijayakumar & Saxena, 2015; Alshmemri *et al*., 2017). While hygiene factors help prevent dissatisfaction, only motivators foster genuine job satisfaction and long term commitment. This theoretical lens is particularly relevant in examining career plateauing among academic staff at the University of Uyo, where many faculty members may experience limited opportunities for promotion, research funding, or leadership roles. In such plateaued academic positions, lecturers and researchers may continue to benefit from hygiene factors such as regular salaries, job security through tenure or permanent appointment, and standard teaching responsibilities. However, the absence or stagnation of motivators like opportunities for academic advancement, recognition through publications or awards, and involvement in meaningful institutional decision making can result in psychological stagnation and reduced professional fulfillment. The repetitive nature of teaching assignments, constrained research opportunities, and limited access to administrative responsibilities can erode their sense of purpose and academic identity.

This situation reflects what Herzberg would describe as a motivational void: a scenario where employees are not overtly dissatisfied due to the presence of hygiene factors, yet they remain disengaged and unmotivated due to a lack of intrinsic rewards. In line with findings by Bai *et al.* (2011), career plateauing in this context is likely to result in lower job satisfaction, weakened organizational commitment, and increased turnover intentions. For academic staff at the University of Uyo, Herzberg's theory helps to clarify why maintaining hygiene factors alone is insufficient; long term motivation and institutional loyalty depend on the presence of meaningful, growth oriented motivators.

Empirical Review

Akpan et al. (2025) investigated the impact of career plateaus, structural, content, and personal on internal audit effectiveness in public institutions in Calabar, Cross River State. Employing a descriptive survey design, the study collected primary data using structured questionnaires administered to internal audit professionals. The target population consisted of 156 internal auditors from state ministries, with a sample size of 112 determined using the Taro Yamane formula. Data were analysed using regression techniques. The results indicated that while career plateaus negatively influenced internal audit effectiveness, the effect was statistically non-significant. The study concluded that career plateaus are not a major determinant of audit performance in these institutions. Consequently, it recommended that management establish clear career advancement pathways within the internal audit function by promoting merit-based progression, conducting regular performance evaluations, and providing growth opportunities to motivate and retain audit staff.

The effect of career plateauing on academic staff performance at the University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus was examined by Agu *et al*. (2023). Specifically, the study looked at how staff performance was impacted by content, structural, and personal career plateaus. 1,482 academic staff members were the target population for the survey, and 315 respondents were selected as the sample size using the Taro Yamane formula for sample size determination. A questionnaire and an interview were utilised to gather data, and multiple regression analysis was employed to evaluate the hypotheses. The findings showed that academic staff performance was negatively impacted by the three dimensions of career plateau: content, structural, and personal. The study concluded that career plateauing is a prevalent issue in contemporary workplaces. It recommended that higher institutions adopt more flexible organizational structures to support career development and enhance employee commitment.

Tremblay (2021) examined the dynamic relationship between career plateauing and affective commitment and citizenship behaviour. The researcher analyzed 1227 observations from three longitudinal survey waves conducted over 42 months with 409 employees of a Canadian financial/insurance company. The results indicated that higher than usual occasion reports of content plateauing were related to decreased affective commitment and citizenship behaviour while hierarchical plateauing perceptions were only negatively related at the between-level to affective commitment. This study found support for an inverse association between organisational citizenship behaviour and content plateauing, such that lower than usual reports of citizenship before were related to increased perceptions of content plateauing (reverse relationship perspective). Across time, organisational citizenship behaviour was found to be a more proximal predictor of content plateauing than affective commitment.

Obianuju *et al.* (2021) investigated the relationship between structural career plateauing and employee turnover intentions among civil servants in Southeast Nigeria. The study used a survey design and targeted a total population of 2,318 civil civil from selected State Secretariats. Using Krejcie and Morgan's sample size formula, 328 respondents were chosen. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The data demonstrated that structural career plateauing was a major predictor of turnover intentions.The study revealed that when structural career plateauing grows, so does employees' intention to leave. It was recommended that public service executives promote equity, fairness, and consistency in promotion methods to reduce perceptions of injustice and turnover intentions.

Abd-Elrahman *et al*. (2020) investigated the relationships among Benha University Hospital staff nurses' self-efficacy, job embeddedness, and career plateau. A convenience sample of 164 nurses with bachelor's degrees was used in the study, which used a descriptive correlational design and four instruments: the Career Plateau Scale, the General Self-Efficacy Scale, the Job Embeddedness Scale, and a demographic/job questionnaire. Results showed that self-efficacy and job embeddedness were significantly correlated negatively with career stagnation. On the other hand, a favourable relationship between job embeddedness and self-efficacy was discovered. The researchers recommended that hospital managers implement orientation sessions for new nurses in light of these findings in order to promote realistic career expectations, match staff behaviour with institutional principles, and define temporary role expectations.

Hossain (2018) examined the impact of perceived career plateau on work-related attitudes among employees in private organizations in Bangladesh. The study employed a quantitative approach, collecting data through questionnaires and interviews. Descriptive statistics, including frequency analysis, were conducted using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The analysis identified four key factors contributing to career plateau: organisational hierarchy, organisational culture, business strategies, and employees' psychological factors. The results showed that a career plateau is linked to increasing job stress, decreased organisational commitment, higher job satisfaction, and increased turnover intentions. Specifically,, there was a negative correlation between career plateau and organisational commitment and job satisfaction, while there was a positive correlation between job stress and intention to leave.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design, which was chosen for its effectiveness in collecting firsthand information directly from respondents. This approach enabled the researcher to gather accurate and reliable data based on the participants' personal experiences, opinions, and perspectives, thereby enhancing the overall quality and relevance of the study's findings. The population of the study comprised 1,150 academic staff of the University of Uyo, with a sample size of 288, determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table.The sample size of 288 academic staff members was derived from a total population of 1,150 academic staff at the University of Uyo. This determination was guided by the widely accepted Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, which is extensively utilized in social science research for selecting statistically valid sample sizes, based on known population parameters. According to Krejcie and Morgan's sample size table, for a population of 1,150, the recommended sample size at a 95 per cent confidence level with a 5 per cent margin of error is approximately 288 respondents. The choice of a sample size of 288 for this study aligns with this guideline, thereby ensuring the representativeness and generalisability of the research findings. To implement this, a total of 288 copies of the research instrument were distributed to selected respondents across the academic staff population. Of these, 244 completed instruments were successfully retrieved, yielding a high response rate of 84.72 per cent. This robust response rate further strengthens the reliability of the study and minimises the potential for non-response bias.This sample size is deemed sufficient for minimising sampling error, enhancing the reliability of statistical inferences, and supporting both the internal and external validity of the study. By adhering to this established methodological standard and achieving a strong response rate, the research upholds the principles of rigorous sampling and ensures that the selected sample adequately reflects the characteristics of the larger academic staff population.

The simple random sampling method was employed in this study to ensure that each participant had an equal probability of being selected. This approach minimizes selection bias and increases the likelihood that the sample accurately reflects the characteristics of the overall population. The data for this study was collected through a structured questionnaire designed primarily in an open-ended format to allow respondents the flexibility to express their views in detail. Additionally, a section of the questionnaire incorporated a modified four-point Likert scale to capture the respondents' levels of agreement with specific statements. The scale ranging from Strongly Agree = (4), Agree= (3), Disagree= (2), and Strongly Disagree (1) his combination of open-ended and scaled items ensured both qualitative depth and quantitative consistency in the responses. While the analysis emphasises quantitative data, qualitative data was also integrated through the use of open-ended questions. These responses were examined thematically to identify patterns, insights, and context

that complemented the numerical findings. Although the primary focus was on statistical trends, the qualitative input provided depth by capturing participant perspectives, explaining anomalies, and enriching the overall interpretation of results.

The validity of the research instrument was assessed using both face and construct validity. Face validity refers to how transparent and appropriate a test appears to participants, while construct validity evaluates the extent to which the instrument accurately measures the intended concept. To establish validity, a pretest was conducted using 20 copies of the questionnaire distributed to academic staff at the University of Uyo. Feedback and observations were collected during this phase, leading to necessary revisions before finalizing the instrument.

To determine reliability, the test-retest method was employed. The questionnaire was administered twice, with a two-week interval, to 20 academic staff members from the same university. Cronbach's Alpha was used to calculate the internal consistency of the instrument. The resulting coefficient of 0.748 indicated an acceptable level of reliability, as values above 0.70 are generally considered reliable. In addition to face validity, we've included a discussion on construct validity. We ran an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to investigate the instrument's underlying factor structure. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated that the data were suitable for factor analysis. Factors with eigenvalues greater than one were maintained, while items with loadings greater than 0.5 were deemed acceptable(Kang,2013;Hidayah,2025). This validates the scale's construct validity. Furthermore, the items were adapted from previously validated instruments to improve convergent and discriminant validity. The objectives were analysed using the correlation coefficient and Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression results, while the hypotheses in the study were tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and t-statistic results at 1% significance level. All these tests were carried out through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0.

Results

Table 1 Correlations and Regressions

		SP	CC
SP	Pearson Correlation	1	-.708**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	-227.627	-147.997
	Covariance	-.804	-.523
	N	284	284
CC	Pearson Correlation	-.708**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	-147.997	-192.061
	Covariance	-.523	-.679
	N	284	284

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

	Coeff.	**S.E.**	**t-stat**	**p-value**
Constant	0.805	0.127	6.365	0.000
SP	-0.650	0.039	-16.827	0.000**
$R^2 = 0.501$				

**. SP is significant at the 0.01 and 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 reports the Pearson correlation coefficient between Structural Plateauing (SP) and Continuance Commitment (CC), revealing a strong and statistically significant negative relationship between Structural Plateauing (SP) and Continuance Commitment (CC) ($r = –0.708$, $p = 0.000$).Also, a unit increase in Structural Plateauing (SP) will lead to a decline of 0.65 units in Continuance Commitment (CC). This negative relationship is statistically significant at 1% and 5% significance level with an absolute t-statistic value of 16.827. Additionally, Structural Plateauing (SP) explains 50.10% of the variations in Continuance Commitment (CC). This suggests that as employees experience greater structural plateauing, perceiving limited opportunities for upward mobility, their continuance commitment to the organisation tends to decline. In other words, the more employees feel stuck in their roles, the less likely they are to remain with the organisation out of necessity or perceived cost of leaving.

This result is consistent with the findings of Obianuju *et al*. (2021), who investigated the relationship between structural career plateauing and employee turnover intentions among civil servants in Southeast Nigeria. The study revealed that structural career plateauing was a major predictor of turnover intentions. Similar to the present study, their results indicated that when employees perceive stagnation in their career progression, their intention to leave the organisation increases, highlighting a decline in continuance based commitment.

Similarly, Agu *et al.* (2023) found that academic staff performance was negatively impacted by the three dimensions of career plateau: content, structural, and personal. Although the focus was on performance, the underlying implication aligns with the current findings, career plateauing undermines employee engagement and motivation, which are closely tied to continuance commitment. However, the present findings deviate from those of Akpan *et al*. (2025), who examined the impact of career plateaus on internal audit effectiveness in public institutions in Calabar, Cross River State. While their study acknowledged the negative influence of career plateaus, the effect was found to be statistically non significant. This contrast may stem from differences in the outcome variables, whereas the current study focuses on continuance commitment, Akpan *et al.* (2025) examined performance effectiveness, which may not be immediately impacted by perceptions of career stagnation.

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1

H_0: Structural plateauing has no significant correlation with continuance commitment among the academic staff of the University of Uyo

H_1: Structural plateauing has significant correlation with continuance commitment among the academic staff of the University of Uyo

Decision Rule

The decision rule is based on the significance level (α). Generally, α is set at 0.05 (5%) for a two-tailed test. Since the p-value (0.000) obtained both for the correlation coefficient and the computed t-statistic are less than α (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis (H0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H1). This means that there is a statistically significant negative correlation between Structural Plateauing and Continuance Commitment among the academic staff of the University of Uyo

Table 2 Correlations and Regression Results

		JCP	AC
JCP	Pearson Correlation	1	-.893**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	-254.835	-198.181
	Covariance	-.900	-.700
	N	284	284
AC	Pearson Correlation	-.893**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	-198.181	-193.081
	Covariance	-.700	-.682
	N	284	284

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

	Coeff.	**S.E.**	**t-stat**	**p-value**
Constant	0.453	0.075	6.017	0.000
JCP	-0.778	0.023	-33.401	0.000**
$R^2 = 0.798$				

**. JCP is significant at the 0.01 and 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 presents the results of the Pearson correlation analysis, revealing a very strong and statistically significant negative correlation between Job Content Plateauing (JCP) and Affective Commitment (AC), with a Pearson coefficient of -0.893 ($p < 0.001$). Also, a unit increase in Job Content Plateauing (JCP) will lead to a decline of 0.78 units in Affective Commitment (AC). This negative relationship is statistically significant at 1% and 5% significance level with an absolute t-statistic value of 33.4011 and p-value of 0.000. Furthermore, Job Content Plateauing (JCP) explained 79.80% of the variations in Affective Commitment (AC). This suggests that higher levels of job content plateauing are associated with markedly lower levels of affective commitment among employees. This finding aligns with previous empirical research. For instance, Tremblay (2021) found that higher instances of content plateauing were significantly associated with decreased affective commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour among employees in a Canadian financial institution. Similarly, Agu *et al.* (2023) reported that content, structural, and personal plateauing negatively impacted academic staff performance, reinforcing the argument that career plateauing undermines employees' engagement and commitment. These studies provide robust empirical support for the current findings, affirming that job content plateauing can be a critical inhibitor of positive work attitudes. However, the results deviate from those of Akpan *et al.* (2025), who found that while career plateauing negatively influenced internal audit effectiveness, the effect was statistically non-significant within public institutions in Calabar, Nigeria. This divergence underscores the possibility that the influence of career plateauing may vary across contexts, sectors, and job functions, suggesting that organisational culture, role specificity, and professional pathways may moderate the relationship between plateauing and employee outcomes.

Hypothesis 2

H_0: Job content plateauing has no significant influence on affective commitment of academic staff of the University of Uyo,

H_1: Job content plateauing has significant influence on affective commitment of academic staff of the University of Uyo,

Decision Rule

The decision rule is based on the significance level (α), which is commonly set at 0.05 (5%) for a two-tailed test. Since the p-value (0.000) obtained for the correlation coefficient and the computed t-statistic value are less than α (0.05), we reject the null

hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1). This result indicates a statistically significant negative correlation between Job Content Plateauing and Affective Commitment. In other words, as job content plateauing increases, affective commitment tends to decrease among the academic staff of the University of Uyo.

Table 3 Correlations and Regression Results

		PP	NC
PP	Pearson Correlation	1	-.937**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	-260.296	-233.111
	Covariance	-.920	-.824
	N	284	284
NC	Pearson Correlation	-.937**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	-233.111	-237.948
	Covariance	-.824	-.920
	N	284	284

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

	Coeff.	**S.E.**	**t-stat**	**p-value**
Constant	0.398	0.064	6.193	0.000
PP	-0.896	0.020	-44.915	0.000**
$R^2 = 0.877$				

**. PP is significant at the 0.01 and 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficient assessing the association between Personal Plateauing (PP) and Normative Commitment (NC). The results revealed a strong and statistically significant negative correlation between PP and NC ($r = -0.937$, $p < .001$). Also, a unit increase in Personal Plateauing (PP) will lead to a decline of 0.896 units in Normative Commitment (NC). This negative relationship is statistically significant at 1% and 5% significance level with an absolute t-statistic value of 44.915 and p-value of 0.000. Additionally, R Personal Plateauing (PP) explains 87.70% of the variations in Normative Commitment (NC). These results suggest that increased personal plateauing is associated with decreased normative commitment. This finding is supported by Agu *et al.* (2023), who found that personal, structural, and content career plateauing negatively affected academic staff performance at the University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus. Similarly, Hossain (2018) reported that career plateauing was negatively correlated with organizational commitment and job satisfaction, and positively correlated with job stress and turnover intentions among private sector employees in Bangladesh. Although Akpan *et al.* (2025) observed a negative influence of career plateauing on audit effectiveness among internal auditors in public institutions in Cross River State, the effect was statistically non-significant. These findings

collectively indicate a consistent negative relationship between career plateauing and various organizational outcomes.

Hypothesis 3

H_0: There is no significant correlation between personal plateauing and normative commitment among the academic staff of the University of Uyo.

H_0: There is a significant correlation between personal plateauing and normative commitment among the academic staff of the University of Uyo.

Decision Rule

The decision rule is based on the significance level (α), which is typically set at 0.05 (5%) for a two-tailed test. In this analysis, the p-value of the correlation coefficient and t-statistic are both less than $\alpha = 0.05$. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1). This indicates a statistically significant negative correlation between personal plateauing and normative commitment. Based on this result, we conclude that there is a statistically significant negative relationship between personal plateauing and normative commitment among the academic staff of the University of Uyo.

Discussion of Findings

The findings related to the first objective of the study revealed a significant negative influence of structural plateauing on continuance commitment. This signifies the existence of an inverse relationship between structural plateauing and employees' continuance commitment. The relationship is notably strong, as indicated by a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.708 (p-value = 0.000). This suggests that as structural plateauing increases, employees' continuance commitment declines. The result underscores the considerable impact of structural plateauing in diminishing the level of continuance commitment among organisational staff. This finding is consistent with those of Obianuju *et al.* (2021) and Akpan *et al.* (2025), who reported similar inverse relationships between structural plateauing and employee performance, as well as turnover intentions, respectively. Consequently, this study reinforces the critical role of structural plateauing in shaping employees' continuance commitment within organisations.

In the result for the second objective, job content plateauing was shown to negatively and significantly correlate with affective commitment. This is an indication that, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.893 and a p-value of 0.000, job content plateauing has a highly statistically significant influence on affective commitment. An increased level of job content plateauing in the organisation will invariably be associated with a lower level of affective commitment. The findings aligned with the work of Agu *et al.* (2023), which found that the performance of academic staff at the University of Nigeria,

Enugu Campus, was negatively impacted by the three dimensions of career plateauing: content, structural, and personal. This finding also agrees with the findings of Tremblay (2021), who reported the existence of an inverse association between organisational citizenship behaviour, affective commitment, and content plateauing in a Canadian financial/insurance company. This suggests an increasingly detrimental role of job content plateauing in cultivating employees' affective commitment within the organisation.

For the third objective, personal plateauing showed a negative and statistically significant correlation with normative commitment. This suggests that personal plateauing adversely affects employees' normative commitment within the organisation. A very strong negative correlation between the two variables was indicated by a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.937 and a p-value of 0.000, implying that as personal plateauing increases, normative commitment declines, and vice versa. This finding aligns with the work of Hossain (2018) and Abd-Elrahman *et al.* (2020), who also reported a negative relationship between career plateauing and indicators of normative commitment such as self-efficacy and job satisfaction. The observed correlation in this study may be attributed to the evolving nature of the contemporary work environment and the increasingly significant role career plateauing plays in modern organisations.

Findings

From the analysis conducted in this research, the following findings were made:

i. Structured plateauing has negative and statistically significant influence on continuance commitment of the academic staff of the University of Uyo.

ii. Job content plateauing has negative and statistically significant influence on affective commitment of the academic staff of the University of Uyo.

iii. Personal plateauing has negative and statistically significant influence on normative commitment of the academic staff of the University of Uyo.

Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of career plateauing, operationalised through structural plateauing, job content plateauing and personal plateauing, on employee commitment, measured in terms of continuance, affective and normative commitment, among academic staff of the University of Uyo. The findings indicated that structural, job content and personal plateauing each exerted a negative influence on continuance, affective and normative commitment respectively. Based on these findings, the study concludes that a significant negative relationship exists between career plateauing and employee commitment among academic staff of the University of Uyo.

Recommendations

Based on findings, it was recommended that:

1. University of Uyo should adopt proactive career development and internal mobility strategies such as clear advancement pathways, ongoing skill development and role diversification to reduce career stagnation, enhance continuance commitment and improve employee retention.
2. To foster affective commitment at the University of Uyo, management should address job content plateauing by enriching job roles, offering continuous skill development, and promoting internal mobility. Ignoring this may have detrimental effect on staff engagement, loyalty, and the university's overall effectiveness.
3. Universities should adopt proactive career development strategies such as regular career discussions, skill building opportunities, mentorship, and internal mobility to prevent personal plateauing. This fosters stronger employee commitment, sustained engagement, and long term organizational loyalty.

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