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Job Security and Employee Commitment among Casual Workers in Selected Private Firms in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria: A Sociological Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Casual employment has become a routine way for private firms in Nigeria to cut labour costs, yet the same firms still expect loyalty and effort from workers whose tenure is never assured. This study examined the relationship between perceived job security and the affective, continuance and normative commitment of casual workers in four private firms in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Guided by social exchange and psychological contract theories, it used a convergent mixed-methods design. Questionnaires were administered to 240 casual workers drawn by multi-stage sampling from an estimated population of 600, and 225 usable copies were returned (93.8%). Twelve in-depth interviews were held with ten casual workers and two human resource managers. Quantitative data were analysed with descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple regression, and interview data with thematic analysis. Perceived job security was only moderate (grand mean = 2.94 on a four-point scale), and 39.1% of respondents feared unexpected job loss. Job security correlated positively with overall commitment ($r = .624$, $p < .001$), affective commitment ($r = .472$), normative commitment ($r = .418$) and continuance commitment ($r = .356$), all $p < .001$. The three job security dimensions jointly explained 38.4% of the variance in commitment, with contractual security the strongest predictor ($\beta = .412$). Interviews showed that insecurity turns emotional attachment into a calculative, stay-until-something-better relationship. The study concludes that casualisation weakens the social bond between workers and firms, and recommends written contracts, clear routes to permanent status and firmer enforcement of the Labour Act.

KEYWORDS Job security • Employee commitment • Casual workers • Casualisation • Psychological contract • Imo State

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1. INTRODUCTION

Work is more than a source of income. It gives people identity, dignity and a recognised place in society, and the terms on which it is offered shape how workers relate to the organisations that employ them. When employment is stable, workers are more willing to invest their time, skills and loyalty in the firm; when it is uncertain, that investment becomes a risk. The employment relationship is therefore a reciprocal one, and job security sits close to its centre (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017).

Over the past four decades, employment relations across the world have moved away from the standard model of full-time, open-ended work towards temporary, contract, agency and casual arrangements (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2016; Kalleberg, 2009). Firms adopt these arrangements to reduce labour costs, adjust staffing quickly and limit the obligations that come with permanent employment. Kalleberg (2009) describes the result as precarious work: employment that is uncertain, unpredictable and risky from the worker's point of view. Standing (2011) goes further and argues that a distinct social group, the precariat, has emerged whose members lack secure jobs, predictable incomes and an occupational identity.

Nigeria shows these trends clearly. Casualisation, outsourcing and contract staffing are now common in banking, telecommunications, oil and gas, manufacturing, beverages and retail (Adewumi, 2025; Dabai & Lyndon, 2024; Laoye & Asonye, 2025; Okafor, 2007, 2012). Casual workers are often engaged for years without letters of appointment, pension contributions, paid leave or medical cover, and many work alongside permanent staff who perform the same duties for higher pay and with full benefits (Okafor, 2012; Otuturu, 2021). Section 7 of the Labour Act requires an employer to give a worker a written statement of the terms of employment within three months of engagement (Labour Act, 2004), but enforcement is weak and casual workers seldom have union protection to insist on it (Adewumi, 2025; Otuturu, 2021).

Employee commitment, the psychological bond that ties a worker to an organisation, is one of the outcomes most likely to suffer under these conditions. Meyer and Allen (1991) distinguish three forms of commitment: affective commitment, which is emotional attachment to and identification with the organisation; continuance commitment, which is awareness of the costs of leaving; and normative commitment, which is a felt obligation to remain. Meta-analytic evidence shows that affective and normative commitment in particular predict lower turnover, better attendance and stronger performance (Meyer et al., 2002), while job insecurity is consistently associated with weaker commitment (Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018; Sverke et al., 2002).

From a sociological standpoint, the treatment of casual workers is not only a human resource issue. It concerns the structure of labour relations, the stratification of the workforce into secure and insecure groups, and the social bond between workers and the organisations that employ them. In Imo State, where public sector employment is limited and private firms absorb a large share of job seekers, many enterprises in Owerri rely on casual labour to remain flexible. This has created a group of workers who are economically dependent on their employers yet formally excluded from the organisation. The present study therefore examines how perceived job security relates to the commitment of casual workers in selected private firms in Owerri, Imo State.

Statement of the Problem

Private firms in Imo State increasingly engage workers on a casual basis, often for long periods, while still expecting the loyalty, diligence and productivity associated with permanent staff. Casual workers frequently perform the same tasks as permanent employees but receive lower pay, no benefits and no assurance that their engagement will continue. This raises a basic question: can a worker who is unsure of having a job tomorrow be committed to the employer today?

Research on casualisation in Nigeria has concentrated on its legal dimensions, its implications for decent work and its effects on performance (Adewumi, 2025; Okafor, 2012; Otuturu, 2021; Zakari et al., 2024). Studies of job security and commitment, for their part, have mostly sampled permanent employees in banks, public agencies and large corporations (Akpoyibo et al., 2021; Okwuise & Ugherughe, 2023; Pepple et al., 2023). Few studies have examined the three components of commitment among casual workers themselves, and fewer still have combined survey data with workers' own accounts of insecurity. Evidence from Imo State private firms is particularly scarce. Without such evidence, employers and regulators lack a clear picture of what casualisation costs in terms of workers' attachment to the firm.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of perceived job security among casual workers in selected private firms in Owerri?

2. What is the relationship between job security and the affective commitment of casual workers?
3. What is the relationship between job security and the continuance commitment of casual workers?
4. What is the relationship between job security and the normative commitment of casual workers?

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective was to examine the relationship between job security and employee commitment among casual workers in selected private firms in Owerri, Imo State. The specific objectives were to:

i. ascertain the level of perceived job security among casual workers;
ii. determine the relationship between job security and affective commitment;
iii. examine the relationship between job security and continuance commitment; and
iv. assess the relationship between job security and normative commitment.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance:

- H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between job security and affective commitment among casual workers.
- H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between job security and continuance commitment among casual workers.
- H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between job security and normative commitment among casual workers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Job Security

Job security refers to the assurance that a worker will keep a job for a reasonable period without the threat of arbitrary dismissal, retrenchment or non-renewal. Its opposite, job insecurity, was defined by Ashford et al. (1989) as perceived powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation. The concept has an objective side, made up of contractual terms, notice periods and legal protection, and a subjective side, which is the worker's own sense of how safe the job is (Lee et al., 2018; Shoss, 2017). Recent work also separates cognitive insecurity, the perceived likelihood of losing the job, from affective insecurity, the worry that accompanies it (Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018).

For this study, job security is treated as a worker's perception of three related conditions: contractual security (whether the terms of engagement are written and clear), employment continuity (whether the job is expected to last) and security of benefits (whether entitlements such as leave, pension and medical care are assured). In the Nigerian private sector these conditions have been eroded by economic downturns, restructuring and the pursuit of lower labour costs (Okafor, 2012; Ofre & Andow, 2022). Evidence from Nigerian small and medium enterprises also shows that human resource practices which offer employment security are associated with better organisational performance (Ogunyomi & Bruning, 2016).

Employee Commitment

Meyer and Allen (1991, p. 67) describe organisational commitment as a psychological state that characterises the employee's relationship with the organisation and has implications for the decision to continue membership. Their three-component model remains the most widely used framework (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997). Affective commitment reflects a desire to stay because the worker identifies with the organisation; continuance commitment reflects a need to stay because leaving would be costly or alternatives are few; and normative commitment reflects a sense that staying is the right thing to do. The three forms are related but distinct, and they do not have the same consequences: affective commitment has the strongest positive associations with performance and citizenship behaviour, while continuance commitment can coexist with low effort (Meyer et al., 2002).

In Nigerian organisations, commitment has been linked to fair treatment, pay, career prospects and job security (Akpoyibo et al., 2021; Okwuise & Ugherughe, 2023). Pepple et al. (2023) found that commitment among Nigerian public servants was closely tied to their intention to stay, which suggests that conditions undermining commitment also carry a cost in turnover.

Casualisation and Casual Workers

Casualisation is the practice of engaging workers on a temporary, daily or short-term basis without the rights and benefits attached to permanent employment (Okafor, 2007). In Nigeria, casual workers are often kept on the same footing for many years, outside the coverage of collective agreements and with no written statement of their terms (Okafor, 2012; Otuturu, 2021). Okafor (2007) argued that casualisation in the oil and gas sector reflected a business ethic that placed short-term cost savings above worker welfare. More recent studies report similar patterns in banking, where contract staff in Sokoto described low pay, insecurity and strain on family life (Dabai & Lyndon, 2024), and in the beverage sector, where trade unions have struggled to organise casual workers (Adewumi, 2025). Among casual telecommunication workers, perceived organisational support and personal resilience were associated with higher engagement despite precarious conditions (Laoye & Asonye, 2025).

Sociologically, casualisation divides the workforce into an insider group with security and an outsider group without it. Kalleberg (2009) shows that such divisions widen inequality and weaken the social contract between employers and workers, while Standing (2011) links them to the loss of occupational identity. These arguments suggest that the effects of casualisation should be visible not only in pay and conditions but also in how workers feel about, and relate to, the firm.

Empirical Review

Meta-analyses provide a consistent picture. Sverke et al. (2002) found that job insecurity was negatively related to organisational commitment, job satisfaction, trust and involvement. Jiang and Lavaysse (2018) confirmed these associations and showed that both cognitive and affective insecurity predict weaker commitment. A systematic review by Hngoi et al. (2023) also found that job insecurity is associated with lower commitment and that perceived organisational support may soften this effect. In a three-wave study of South Korean employees, Kim and Kim (2020) found that job insecurity reduced performance partly by raising stress and lowering commitment.

Studies of temporary workers point in the same direction. De Cuyper et al. (2008) noted that temporary workers report weaker attachment to their organisations when their contracts offer no realistic route to permanence. Wilkin (2013) found that contingent workers were, on average, less satisfied than permanent workers, especially when their temporary status was involuntary. Fantinelli et al. (2023) showed that transactional psychological contracts among call centre operators were associated with lower affective and normative commitment.

Nigerian studies are fewer but consistent. Akpoyibo et al. (2021) reported that job security was significantly related to employees' job commitment in power and energy firms in Delta State. Okwuise and Ugherughe (2023) found that job security was one of the organisational climate factors that predicted commitment in the tourism sector in Warri. Ofre and Andow (2022) reported a positive association between job security and performance in a construction firm. Zakari et al. (2024) found that labour casualisation was associated with lower employee performance in government establishments. However, none of these studies focused on casual workers in Imo State, and few separated the three components of commitment.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on two related theories: social exchange theory and psychological contract theory.

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) treats employment as a set of exchanges in which each party provides resources in expectation of a return. Gouldner (1960) argued that such exchanges rest on a norm of reciprocity: people feel obliged to return benefits they receive and to withdraw cooperation when benefits are withheld. Cropanzano et al. (2017) note that exchanges between employers and workers involve both economic resources, such as pay, and socio-emotional resources, such as security and recognition. Applied to casual work, the theory predicts that workers who receive security will reciprocate with attachment and effort, while those denied it will limit their investment in the firm.

Psychological contract theory (Rousseau, 1995) holds that workers form beliefs about the mutual obligations between themselves and their employers, often beyond what is written. A breach occurs when a worker believes the employer has failed to meet these obligations. Breach has been shown to reduce trust, satisfaction and commitment and to increase turnover intentions (Topa et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2007). Casual workers who are kept on for years may come to expect regularisation; when it does not arrive, the gap between expectation and reality is likely to be experienced as a breach.

Taken together, the two theories lead to the expectation that perceived job security will be positively related to all three components of commitment, most strongly to affective commitment, which depends most on the quality of the exchange. They also suggest that insecure workers may stay for calculative reasons, so that continuance commitment may persist even when emotional attachment is weak.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a convergent mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). A cross-sectional survey measured the relationship between perceived job security and the three components of commitment, while in-depth interviews explored how casual workers understand and respond to insecurity. The two strands were collected in the same period, analysed separately and then brought together in the interpretation of findings.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Owerri, the capital of Imo State in south-eastern Nigeria. Owerri is the state's main commercial centre and hosts manufacturing firms, retail outlets, hotels and service providers, many of which engage casual workers.

Population

The population comprised casual workers in four private organisations in Owerri: two manufacturing firms and two service-sector companies. The organisations were selected because they made documented use of casual labour and granted access for the study. Their records indicated an estimated 600 casual workers at the time of data collection.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size was determined with Yamane's (1967) formula, $n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$, with $N = 600$ and $e = .05$, which gave 240 respondents. A multi-stage procedure was used. First, the four organisations were selected purposively on the basis of their use of casual labour. Second, casual workers in each organisation were stratified by department. Third, respondents were selected from each stratum by simple random sampling, in proportion to stratum size. For the qualitative strand, 12 in-depth interviews were conducted: ten with casual workers drawn from the survey respondents to cover both sectors, both sexes and different lengths of service, and two with human resource managers.

Instruments

Quantitative data were collected with a structured questionnaire, the Job Security and Employee Commitment Questionnaire (JSECQ). Section A recorded sex, age, educational qualification and years of service. Section B measured perceived job security with items adapted from Ashford et al. (1989), covering contractual security, employment continuity and security of benefits. Section C measured affective, continuance and normative commitment with items adapted from Meyer and Allen (1997). Section D contained open-ended prompts on employment experiences. Items in Sections B and C were scored on a four-point scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). Higher scores indicate greater perceived security and stronger commitment. A mean of 2.50 was taken as the criterion for agreement.

Qualitative data were collected with a semi-structured interview guide covering perceptions of job insecurity, experiences of casual engagement, relationships with permanent staff and supervisors, and the influence of these experiences on loyalty and motivation.

Validity and Reliability

Face and content validity were established by two experts in industrial sociology and psychometrics, who reviewed the items for relevance and clarity; their comments were incorporated before administration. Reliability was assessed in a pilot study with 30 casual workers from an organisation outside the main sample, which yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .86 for the instrument.

Procedure

Copies of the questionnaire were administered in person at the four workplaces with the permission of management. Respondents completed them during breaks or after work, and completed copies were collected

on the spot or within an agreed period. Of the 240 copies administered, 225 were returned complete and usable, a response rate of 93.8%. Interviews were conducted in English or Igbo, according to the participant's preference, at locations chosen by the participants, and were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed with SPSS version 25. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to describe the respondents and their responses. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to test the hypotheses, and multiple regression was used to estimate the joint and unique contributions of the three job security dimensions to overall commitment. All tests were two-tailed at the .05 level. Interview transcripts were analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke (2006): the transcripts were coded, codes were grouped into candidate themes, and themes were reviewed against the data before being named.

Ethical Considerations

Approval for the study was obtained from the ethics committee of the Department of Sociology, Imo State University, Owerri. Participants gave informed consent, took part voluntarily and were told that they could withdraw at any time. No names or employer identifiers were recorded on the questionnaires, interview extracts are reported without identifying details, and the names of the participating firms are withheld. Because casual workers may fear reprisal, interviews were held away from supervisors, and managers were not told who had been interviewed.

4. RESULTS

Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1. *Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 225)*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	118	52.4
	Female	107	47.6
Age (years)	18–30	52	23.1
	31–40	86	38.2
	41–50	59	26.2
	51 and above	28	12.4
Educational qualification	Diploma/NCE	31	13.8
	Bachelor's degree/HND	127	56.4
	Master's degree	58	25.8
	Doctorate/others	9	4.0
Years of service	Below 5	67	29.8
	5–10	81	36.0
	11–15	46	20.4
	16 and above	31	13.8

Source: Field survey, 2026.

As Table 1 shows, the sample was almost evenly divided by sex, with slightly more men (52.4%) than women (47.6%). Most respondents were between 31 and 40 years old (38.2%), and more than a third (38.6%) were 41 years or older. The sample was highly educated: 86.2% held a first degree, HND or higher, and 25.8% held a master's degree. Most respondents had been engaged for a long time; 70.2% had served five years or more and 13.8% had served 16 years or more, which shows that casual engagement in these firms is often a long-term arrangement rather than a short stopgap.

Level of Perceived Job Security

Table 2. *Respondents' perceptions of job security (N = 225)*

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	I feel secure in my current job.	82	91	34	18	3.05	Agree
2	I am confident that my organisation will retain me as long as I perform well.	76	98	35	16	3.04	Agree
3	There is little fear of unexpected job loss in my organisation.	58	79	55	33	2.72	Agree
4	My organisation provides employees with reasonable protection against arbitrary dismissal.	69	91	44	21	2.92	Agree
5	I believe my job will remain available to me in the foreseeable future.	73	95	39	18	2.99	Agree
	Grand mean					**2.94**	**Agree**

Source: Field survey, 2026. SA = Strongly Agree (4); A = Agree (3); D = Disagree (2); SD = Strongly Disagree (1). Criterion mean = 2.50.

Table 2 shows that the grand mean for job security (2.94) was above the criterion of 2.50, so respondents on balance agreed that their jobs were secure. The level of agreement was modest, however, and varied across items. The lowest mean (2.72) was for the item on fear of unexpected job loss: 88 respondents (39.1%) disagreed that such fear was low. Between 22.7% and 28.9% of respondents disagreed with each of the other items. Perceived security among these casual workers can therefore be described as moderate, with a substantial minority who felt clearly insecure.

Level of Employee Commitment

Table 3. *Respondents' responses on selected commitment items*

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	I feel emotionally attached to my organisation.	88	91	31	16	3.11	Agree
2	I am willing to put in extra effort to help my organisation succeed.	96	89	28	13	3.19	Agree
3	I feel proud to tell others that I work for this organisation.	83	98	31	14	3.11	Agree
4	I would prefer to remain with this organisation for a long time.	79	92	36	19	3.02	Agree
5	I feel that the organisation's success is important to me personally.	91	94	29	12	3.17	Agree
	Grand mean					**3.12**	**Agree**

Source: Field survey, 2026. Scoring and criterion mean as in Table 2.

Table 3 shows that respondents agreed with all the commitment items, with a grand mean of 3.12. The highest mean (3.19) was for willingness to put in extra effort, and the lowest (3.02) was for the wish to remain with the organisation for a long time. The pattern suggests that casual workers were prepared to work hard and took some pride in their organisations, but were less certain that they wished to stay.

Relationship between Job Security and Commitment

Table 4. *Descriptive statistics and correlation between job security and employee commitment*

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*r*	*p*
Job security	2.94	0.71	225		
Employee commitment	3.12	0.68	225	.624	< .001

Source: Field survey, 2026. Correlation is two-tailed.

As shown in Table 4, job security had a strong positive correlation with overall employee commitment, $r(223) = .624$, $p < .001$. Workers who perceived their jobs as more secure reported stronger commitment, and job security shared about 39% of its variance with commitment.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 5. *Correlations between job security and the components of commitment (N = 225)*

Hypothesis	Component of commitment	*r*	r^2	*p*	Decision
H_{01}	Affective commitment	.472	.223	< .001	Rejected
H_{02}	Continuance commitment	.356	.127	< .001	Rejected
H_{03}	Normative commitment	.418	.175	< .001	Rejected

Source: Field survey, 2026. df = 223; all tests two-tailed.

Hypothesis one stated that there is no significant relationship between job security and affective commitment. Table 5 shows a positive and significant relationship, $r(223) = .472$, $p < .001$. Workers who felt more secure expressed stronger emotional attachment to their organisations. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This was the strongest of the three relationships.

Hypothesis two stated that there is no significant relationship between job security and continuance commitment. The relationship was positive and significant but weaker than for the other components, $r(223) = .356$, $p < .001$, and the null hypothesis was rejected. The interviews help explain why the association was modest: several workers said they remained in insecure jobs not out of attachment but because alternative jobs were hard to find, which is the essence of continuance commitment.

Hypothesis three stated that there is no significant relationship between job security and normative commitment. A positive and significant relationship was found, $r(223) = .418$, $p < .001$, and the null hypothesis was rejected. Respondents who saw their employment as stable expressed a stronger sense of obligation to the organisation and its goals.

A multiple regression was then run with the three job security dimensions (contractual security, employment continuity and security of benefits) as predictors of overall commitment. Together they explained 38.4% of the variance in commitment, $R^2 = .384$, $F(3, 221) = 45.92$, $p < .001$. Contractual security was the strongest unique predictor, $\beta = .412$, $t = 5.63$, $p < .001$, which indicates that whether a worker's terms of engagement are written and clear matters most for commitment.

Qualitative Findings

Three themes emerged from the interviews.

Theme 1: Living from day to day

Workers described insecurity as a constant background worry. A male manufacturing worker aged 34 said:

> "I have been working here for four years without any appointment letter. Every day I wake up, I am not sure I still have this job. I do my work, but I cannot say I love this company because the company does not give me any future."

Theme 2: Staying without belonging

Several workers explained that they stayed because they had few alternatives, not because they identified with the firm. This calculative attachment matches the continuance component of commitment. A female service-sector worker aged 28 put it plainly:

> "If I find another job, even with less money, I will leave immediately. There is no bond between us."

Theme 3: Insiders and outsiders

Workers contrasted their position with that of permanent colleagues who did similar work but enjoyed benefits and recognition. They described this contrast as a source of resentment and exclusion, and it appeared to weaken their sense of being part of the organisation.

5. DISCUSSION

This study examined how perceived job security relates to the commitment of casual workers in private firms in Owerri. Three main findings emerged. First, perceived job security was only moderate, and nearly two in five workers feared sudden job loss. Second, job security was positively and significantly related to overall commitment and to each of its three components. Third, the interviews showed that insecurity tends to turn emotional attachment into a calculative relationship.

The moderate level of perceived security deserves comment. One might expect casual workers to report low security, yet most agreed that their jobs were secure. A likely explanation lies in the long tenure of the sample: seven in ten respondents had been engaged for five years or more, and long service may create an informal sense of continuity even without a contract. The interviews show the limits of that sense, however. Workers who had served for years still described waking each day unsure whether they would keep their jobs. Perceived security in this setting appears to rest on habit and hope rather than on enforceable rights, which is consistent with the distinction between subjective and objective security drawn by Lee et al. (2018) and Shoss (2017).

The positive relationship between job security and commitment is consistent with meta-analytic evidence that job insecurity weakens attachment to the organisation (Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018; Sverke et al., 2002) and with Nigerian studies linking job security to commitment in other sectors (Akpoyibo et al., 2021; Okwuise & Ugherughe, 2023). The present study extends this evidence to casual workers in Imo State private firms, a group that has received little attention. The size of the overall correlation (.624) suggests that security is among the most important conditions shaping how these workers relate to their employers.

The pattern across the three components also fits theoretical expectations. The relationship was strongest for affective commitment, which depends most on the quality of the exchange between worker and employer. Social exchange theory explains this: when firms offer security, workers reciprocate with emotional investment; when security is withheld, the norm of reciprocity licenses workers to withhold attachment (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Gouldner, 1960). The weaker relationship for continuance commitment is also understandable. Continuance commitment rests on the costs of leaving, and in a labour market with high unemployment those costs remain high whether or not the current job is secure. The interview finding that workers stay because alternatives are scarce supports this interpretation and echoes Meyer et al.'s (2002) observation that continuance commitment can coexist with weak attachment.

From the perspective of psychological contract theory, the long tenure of many respondents is significant. Workers who are kept on for years may reasonably expect regularisation, and when it does not come they are likely to perceive a breach (Rousseau, 1995). Breach is known to reduce trust and commitment (Topa et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2007). The finding that contractual security was the strongest predictor of commitment points in the same direction: what matters most to these workers is a clear, written statement of what the firm owes them. This is also what the Labour Act already requires (Labour Act, 2004), which suggests that compliance with existing law could improve commitment at little cost.

The educational profile of the sample adds a sociological dimension. More than four in five respondents held a first degree or higher, and a quarter held a master's degree. Graduates working as casual staff illustrate how casualisation absorbs educated workers who cannot find secure employment, a pattern consistent with Standing's (2011) account of the precariat and with Kalleberg's (2009) argument that precarious work spreads into groups once thought to be protected. The contrast that workers drew between themselves and permanent colleagues shows how casualisation produces a stratified workforce within a single firm, with consequences for solidarity and for workers' sense of belonging (Okafor, 2012; Otuturu, 2021).

Finally, the interview accounts show that the effect of insecurity is not only a reduction in the amount of commitment but a change in its character. When workers say there is “no bond” between them and the firm, they describe a relationship reduced to a transaction. This is consistent with evidence that transactional psychological contracts are associated with lower affective and normative commitment (Fantinelli et al., 2023) and with Dabai and Lyndon's (2024) account of contract workers in Nigerian banking. For employers, such a relationship may hold labour costs down in the short term but is likely to reduce discretionary effort and raise turnover once better options appear.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be noted. The study was cross-sectional, so the associations reported cannot establish that job security causes commitment; committed workers may also be retained longer and come to feel more secure. The four organisations were selected purposively in one city, which limits generalisation to

other parts of Imo State or other sectors. All quantitative measures were self-reported in the workplace, which may have encouraged some respondents to overstate their security or commitment. Finally, the qualitative sample was small and was drawn from the survey respondents, so the themes should be treated as illustrative rather than exhaustive.

6. CONCLUSION

This study shows that perceived job security is positively and significantly related to the affective, continuance and normative commitment of casual workers in private firms in Owerri, and that the relationship is strongest for emotional attachment. Contractual security, in the sense of written and clear terms of engagement, was the most important aspect of security. Although most workers reported moderate security, a large minority feared sudden dismissal, and interview accounts showed that insecurity reduces the relationship between worker and firm to a calculation of costs and alternatives.

From a sociological perspective, job security is therefore not merely an economic matter. It is a social condition that shapes work identity, organisational loyalty and the quality of employment relations. Casualisation may appear efficient to employers in the short term, but by dividing the workforce and weakening the social bond on which commitment depends, it is likely to work against the long-term interests of both workers and firms.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Private firms should give every casual worker a written statement of the terms of engagement, as the Labour Act requires, specifying duties, pay, duration and entitlements. Contractual security was the strongest predictor of commitment in this study, so this step is likely to bring the largest return.
2. Firms should establish clear and published criteria for converting long-serving casual workers to permanent status, for example after a defined period of satisfactory service, so that long tenure leads to recognised security rather than continued uncertainty.
3. The Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment and its Imo State office should strengthen inspection and enforcement of existing provisions on written terms of employment and against the indefinite use of casual labour.
4. Supervisors and managers should be trained to treat casual and permanent staff fairly and to communicate openly about contract renewal, since perceived exclusion was a recurring theme in the interviews.
5. Trade unions and labour associations should extend organising and education efforts to casual workers so that they know their rights and can take part in collective bargaining.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies should use longitudinal designs to track how changes in job security over time affect commitment, include permanent workers for comparison, cover more sectors and locations in Imo State and South-East Nigeria, and examine whether perceived organisational support or supervisor relationships buffer the effects of insecurity on commitment.

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