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Labour Relations Management and Academic Staff Commitment in Public Universities in Africa: The Intervening Role of Organizational Trust

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Abstract: *Academic staff commitment remains a persistent challenge in public universities across Africa, where weak labour relations management, resource constraints, and eroded institutional trust have been linked to high staff turnover, yet the specific pathway through which labour relations management shapes commitment, and the intervening role organizational trust plays in that pathway, remains theoretically underdeveloped for African public university systems. This paper examined the relationship between labour relations management and academic staff commitment in public universities in Africa, with organizational trust as the intervening variable, guided by Social Exchange Theory and the Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment. The study adopted a documentary secondary data review design, drawing on peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional reports, and grey literature published between 2020 and 2025, retrieved through systematic keyword searches across academic databases and institutional repositories. Inclusion criteria prioritised verifiable, recent empirical studies addressing labour relations, organizational trust, or staff commitment in higher education settings, while sources lacking traceable authorship, publication details, or empirical grounding were excluded. Findings reveal that organizational trust functions as a mediating mechanism rather than a direct driver of commitment, that contextual and structural labour relations conditions remain critical antecedents that psychological variables can complicate the trust-commitment pathway, and that public university systems in Africa remain markedly underrepresented in trust-mediation research. The study concludes that trust-building must be treated as central, not peripheral, to labour relations management in universities across African countries, and recommends context-specific policy interventions and further empirical research testing this intervening relationship directly within public university systems.*

Keywords: *Labour Relations Management, Academic Staff Commitment, Organizational Trust; Public Universities, Africa*

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1. Introduction

Higher education institutions worldwide continue to reconfigure how they manage the employment relationship, as competition for skilled academic talent intensifies alongside tightening public budgets. Labour relations management refers to the structured processes through which institutions govern interactions between management and staff, including collective bargaining, grievance handling, and negotiation over working conditions (Bennett, Saundry, & Prior, 2024). These processes matter because the employment relationship itself is never neutral; it combines economic exchange with

an underlying power dynamic that shapes how staff experience and respond to institutional decisions (Bennett, Saundry, & Prior, 2024).

Academic staff commitment describes the degree of psychological attachment employees hold toward their institution, and it has become a recurring concern in higher education research because of its documented links to staff intention to leave (Orwa, Muchibi, & Miroga, 2024). Organizational trust, positioned as the intervening variable in this study, captures employees' confidence that their institution will act fairly, communicate honestly, and follow through on obligations made to staff (Gharib, Allil, Durrah, & Alsatouf, 2021). Recent evidence indicates that different forms of organizational trust, including trust in supervisors and trust in the institution itself, exert distinct effects on how committed employees become to their organization (Gharib, Allil, Durrah, & Alsatouf, 2021).

Globally, this relationship between trust, labour relations practice, and commitment has been examined largely within well-resourced institutional settings, where formalized labour relations frameworks, dispute-resolution structures, and staff welfare provisions are relatively well established (Bennett, Saundry, & Prior, 2024). Much of this scholarship has been generated in developed economies, leaving open questions about how the same dynamics unfold where institutional and labour market conditions differ substantially.

The higher education sector in Africa presents such a contrasting reality. Many public universities across the continent continue to struggle with attracting and retaining qualified academic staff amid constrained resources and strained institutional structures (Onen, 2017). In Uganda specifically, poor working environments have been directly associated with elevated staff turnover in public universities (Oyat & Aleni, 2015). In Kenya, continuance commitment among university employees has been shown to relate meaningfully to workplace performance outcomes, underscoring commitment's practical stakes for institutional functioning (Malietso, Manyasi, & Kwendo, 2023). Similarly, perceived organizational support has been identified as a factor shaping academic staff's intention to leave public universities in Kenya (Orwa, Muchibi, & Miroga, 2024).

These findings unfold against recurrent industrial action. In September 2024, lecturers and staff in 35 public universities withdrew labour over the unimplemented 2021–2025 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), even as the Inter-Public Universities Councils Consultative Forum secured a court order restraining the strike (Nation Africa, 2024). The disruption resurfaced in 2025, when the strike reached its thirty-seventh day amid suspensions and show-cause letters issued to participating lecturers, while unions demanded payment of arrears and conclusion of the 2025–2029 CBA (Nyarangi & Nyaundi, 2025). Reports from October 2026 show the 2025–2029 CBA still contested, with unions rejecting government offers and seeking firm commitments on the funding of staff salaries (allAfrica, 2026). Ndichu (2026) attributes such strikes to weaknesses in CBAs, funding, and governance, and argues that collaborative management, better communication, and timely implementation of agreements are central to preventing them.

This documents commitment, turnover intentions, institutional support, and the recurrence of labour disputes, yet these strands have rarely been integrated. Repeated failure to honour negotiated agreements plausibly signals to academic staff that employers and government cannot be relied upon, which makes organizational trust a likely mechanism linking labour relations to commitment. Nevertheless, the specific pathway through which labour relations management shapes academic staff commitment, and the extent to which organizational trust intervenes in that pathway, remains theoretically weak. This gap warrants closer examination of how labour relations practices and organizational trust jointly shaped commitment among academic staff in public universities across the continent.

1.1 Problem Statement

Public universities in Africa play a critical role in human capital development, research, innovation and socio-economic transformation. However, their ability to fulfil these responsibilities depends largely on the commitment of academic staff, whose performance is influenced by the quality of labour relations within their institutions. Effective labour relations management, characterised by collective bargaining, effective communication, employee participation, conflict resolution and adherence to employment agreements, is essential for promoting harmonious working relationships and sustained academic staff commitment. Despite the importance of these practices, many public universities in Africa continue to experience recurring industrial disputes, prolonged staff strikes, dissatisfaction with remuneration, poor working conditions, delayed implementation of collective bargaining agreements and strained relationships between university management and academic staff. These challenges threaten institutional stability, disrupt academic programmes and weaken employees' attachment to their institutions.

Various studies underpin this concern. Addo (2025) established that economic and non-economic factors contribute to industrial strikes in African higher education

institutions, with adverse implications for institutional productivity. Similarly, Ndichu (2026) identifies ineffective communication, delayed collective bargaining agreement implementation and poor working conditions as persistent causes of industrial unrest in public universities in Kenya. Although previous studies have examined industrial relations, conflict management and employee commitment, limited empirical attention has been given to how organizational trust intervenes in the relationship between labour relations management and academic staff commitment across African public universities. In particular, it remains unclear whether transparent negotiations, participatory decision-making, effective communication and fair conflict resolution strengthen organizational trust and subsequently enhance academic staff commitment. This study therefore sought to examine the relationship between labour relations management and academic staff commitment in public universities in Africa, with particular emphasis on the intervening role of organizational trust.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1.2.1 General Objective

The general objective of this paper was to examine the relationship between labour relations management and academic staff commitment in public universities in Africa, with organizational trust as the intervening variable.

1.1.2 Specific Objectives

1. To examine the influence of labour relations management on academic staff commitment in public universities in Africa.
2. To establish the relationship between labour relations management and organizational trust among academic staff in public universities in Africa.
3. To determine the effect of organizational trust on academic staff commitment in public universities in Africa.
4. To assess the intervening role of organizational trust in the relationship between labour relations management and academic staff commitment in public universities in Africa.

1.2.3 Research Questions

1. What is the influence of labour relations management on academic staff commitment in public universities in Africa?
2. What is the relationship between labour relations management and organizational trust among academic staff in public universities in Africa?
3. What is the effect of organizational trust on academic staff commitment in public universities in Africa?
4. What is the intervening role of organizational trust in the relationship between labour relations management and academic staff commitment in public universities in Africa?

2. Literature Review

Studies investigating the relationship between labour relations management, organizational trust, and staff commitment have grown substantially over the years (Ayduğ, 2025). This growth reflects a broader recognition that universities function as knowledge-intensive workplaces whose performance depends heavily on the sustained engagement of academic personnel (Dube & Ndofirepi, 2024). Increasingly, scholars have turned to organizational trust as the mechanism that links institutional practice to staff outcomes rather than treating commitment as a direct product of policy alone (Gharib, Allil, Durrah, & Alsatouf, 2021). This body of work spans institutional settings that differ sharply in resourcing, governance, and labour market structure, from well-funded Western universities to resource-constrained public institutions in the Global South (Opolot, Lagat, & Kipsang, 2023). The paper therefore looks into literature across developed, middle-income, and developing-country contexts to identify what is known and where gaps remain (Shah, Phulpoto, & Ghumro, 2023).

Labour relations management is understood as the structured governance of the employment relationship between institutions and staff, covering grievance handling, negotiation, and working-condition agreements (Bennett, Saundry, & Prior, 2024). Organizational commitment refers to employees' psychological attachment to their institution, most commonly modelled across affective, continuance, and normative dimensions (Dube & Ndofirepi, 2024). Organizational trust, the intervening variable central to this review, denotes employees' confidence that their institution will act fairly, communicate honestly, and follow through on its obligations (Gharib, Allil, Durrah, & Alsatouf, 2021). Different facets of this trust, including trust in supervisors, colleagues, and the institution itself, have been shown to influence commitment through distinct pathways (Ayduğ, 2025). Together these constructs form the conceptual backbone against which the studies reviewed below are interpreted (Shah, Phulpoto, & Ghumro, 2023).

Globally, workplace trust has shown measurable volatility in recent years, with large-scale employer surveys reporting declining employee trust in organisations

between 2022 and 2024 (Mercer, 2024). This decline has been attributed partly to perceived broken promises and inconsistent fairness in how institutions treat their workforce (Mercer, 2024). Parallel scholarship on higher education has confirmed that trust operates as a robust predictor of commitment across highly varied national settings (Alomran, Ahmed, & Kassem, 2024). At the same time, researchers increasingly caution that findings generated in well-resourced systems may not transfer cleanly to institutions operating under different economic and regulatory conditions (Opolot, Lagat, & Kipsang, 2023). This tension motivates the region-by-region comparison that follows (Dube & Ndofirepi, 2024).

In Australia, Fischer, Walker, and Hyder (2023) tested a new multidimensional measure of employee trust in leaders against a hybrid, post-pandemic university and corporate workforce. Their findings showed that an older, widely used affective-and-cognitive trust scale no longer performed reliably under hybrid working conditions (Fischer, Walker, & Hyder, 2023). By contrast, their newly developed measure demonstrated strong reliability and validity, isolating communication and authenticity as the two behavioural dimensions driving trustworthy leadership perceptions (Fischer, Walker, & Hyder, 2023). The study's discussion emphasises that trust-building mechanisms devised for co-located workplaces require substantial revision as flexible work arrangements become permanent features of university employment (Fischer, Walker, & Hyder, 2023). This points to labour relations management in developed systems needing to evolve alongside changing modes of work rather than assuming static trust dynamics (Fischer, Walker, & Hyder, 2023).

In the United Kingdom, the University and College Union's national workforce report documented a decade-long deterioration in academic pay, pensions, and working conditions across the sector (University and College Union [UCU], 2022). The findings showed that four in five staff aged 18 to 29 were considering leaving higher education within five years, citing pay and working conditions as the primary drivers (UCU, 2022). The report further linked temporary contract prevalence and reported depression symptoms among half of surveyed staff to weakening institutional attachment (UCU, 2022). Discussion of these findings situates poor labour relations management, rather than individual staff disposition, as the central explanatory factor behind declining commitment in a mature, heavily unionised higher education system (UCU, 2022).

In Turkey, Ayduğ (2025) examined whether faculty members' academic identity predicted their organizational trust across state universities in the Central Anatolia region. Regression results showed that the personal-identity and values dimensions of academic identity explained approximately 16.7% of variance in faculty trust levels (Ayduğ, 2025). Social identity, by contrast, did not significantly predict trust, suggesting that individually held professional values matter more than group belonging in shaping institutional confidence (Ayduğ, 2025). The study's discussion recommends that middle-income-country universities invest in activities strengthening individual academic identity, such as interdisciplinary workshops, to raise institutional trust levels (Ayduğ, 2025).

In Pakistan, Shah, Phulpoto, and Ghumro (2023) surveyed public-sector university faculty in Sindh to examine the relationship between organizational trust and organizational commitment. Correlation and multiple regression analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between the two constructs across the sampled faculty (Shah, Phulpoto, & Ghumro, 2023). The discussion highlights that faculty who perceived greater institutional fairness and transparency consistently reported stronger commitment to their universities (Shah, Phulpoto, & Ghumro, 2023). The authors argue that this finding holds practical value for middle-income public university systems facing resource pressures similar to Pakistan's, where trust-building may offer a lower-cost lever for improving commitment than salary increases alone (Shah, Phulpoto, & Ghumro, 2023).

In Uganda, explicitly framed by its authors as a developing-nation context, Opolot, Lagat, and Kipsang (2023) examined how self-efficacy moderated the relationship between organisational commitment and turnover intention among 574 academic staff. Their findings showed that the interaction between self-efficacy and commitment unexpectedly increased turnover intention rather than reducing it (Opolot, Lagat, & Kipsang, 2023). However, staff with high commitment combined with high self-efficacy were still less likely to act on turnover intentions than less committed peers (Opolot, Lagat, & Kipsang, 2023). The discussion recommends that Ugandan university managers pair efforts to build staff confidence with parallel investment in participative, equitable work cultures, since self-efficacy alone can paradoxically unsettle otherwise committed staff (Opolot, Lagat, & Kipsang, 2023).

In Zimbabwe, Dube and Ndofirepi (2024) investigated how work-life balance and job satisfaction shaped organisational commitment among teaching staff at two universities, framing their study explicitly within developing-nation higher education. Structural equation modelling showed that work-life balance significantly predicted job satisfaction among the sampled staff (Dube & Ndofirepi, 2024). The relationship between work-life balance and both affective and normative commitment was found to be indirect, operating through job satisfaction as a

mediating mechanism rather than directly (Dube & Ndofirepi, 2024). Their discussion concludes that human resource policies in developing-country universities cannot assume a direct route from favourable working conditions to commitment, since job satisfaction functions as a necessary intervening step (Dube & Ndofirepi, 2024).

Across these studies, a consistent pattern emerges: labour relations management shapes staff commitment primarily through intervening psychological states, whether organizational trust, self-efficacy, or job satisfaction, rather than acting on commitment directly. Developed-country evidence highlights how structural conditions such as hybrid work and sustained labour disputes reshape trust and attachment over time. Middle-income-country studies suggest that institutional fairness and individual professional identity carry particular weight where resources are constrained. Developing country's evidence complicates any assumption that improving working conditions or staff confidence straightforwardly raises commitment, since mediating mechanisms can behave in counterintuitive ways. Notably absent from this literature, however, is empirical work examining organizational trust as a formal intervening variable between labour relations management and academic staff commitment specifically in public university systems in Africa.

2.1 Theoretical Underpinning

This study is primarily anchored on Social Exchange Theory, which posits that workplace relationships are built on reciprocal exchanges of resources, obligations, and benefits between employees and their organisations (Blau, 1964). Within this framework, labour relations management functions as the structural mechanism through which institutions extend fair treatment, communication, and support to staff, while staff reciprocate through trust, loyalty, and commitment when they perceive that exchange as equitable. This theoretical lens directly explains why organizational trust operates as an intervening variable in the relationship between labour relations management and academic staff commitment, since trust is theorised as the psychological register through which employees evaluate whether an institution has honoured its side of the exchange (Gharib, Allil, Durrah, & Alsatouf, 2021). Several of the studies reviewed in this paper explicitly adopted Social Exchange Theory as their guiding framework, reinforcing its relevance across both middle-income and developing-country public university contexts (Malietso, Manyasi, & Kwendo, 2023; Opolot, Lagat, & Kipsang, 2023).

The study is further underpinned by the Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment, which conceptualises commitment as comprising effective, continuance, and normative dimensions, each reflecting a distinct psychological basis for an employee's attachment to their organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment reflects emotional attachment and identification with institutional goals, continuance commitment reflects the perceived cost of leaving, and normative commitment reflects a felt obligation to remain, and this tripartite structure has been consistently applied across the higher education literature reviewed in this paper to measure academic staff commitment (Dube & Ndofirepi, 2024; Todorović, Mitić, Stojiljković, Olanescu, Suciu, & Popa, 2024). This model provides the theoretical basis for treating commitment as a multidimensional outcome variable rather than a single unified construct, allowing the study to account for the possibility that labour relations management and organizational trust may influence each commitment dimension differently, as demonstrated in contexts where trust predicted affective and normative commitment but not continuance commitment (Ayduğ, 2025).

3. Methodology

This study adopted a documentary review approach, relying exclusively on secondary data drawn from peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional reports, and grey literature published between 2020 and 2025. Relevant sources were retrieved through systematic keyword searches in academic databases and repositories, including Google Scholar, Emerald Insight, Frontiers, Cogent, SAGE Journals, and institutional repositories of universities in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, using search terms such as "labour relations management," "organizational trust," "academic staff commitment," and "mediating role of trust." Sources were screened for relevance, recency, and verifiability, with particular attention to studies that empirically modelled organizational trust as an intervening or mediating variable, rather than merely as a standalone predictor, between labour relations practices and staff commitment outcomes. Where available, methodological details from the reviewed studies, including regression coefficients, path analysis results, and indirect-effect estimates, were extracted to assess the strength and direction of trust's intervening role across the different studies. Retrieved literature was then thematically organised according to national income classification, developed, middle-income, and developing-country contexts, allowing comparative analysis of whether and how organizational trust's mediating function shifts across institutional and economic settings. This secondary data approach was considered appropriate given the study's non-empirical, exploratory objective of establishing how the intervening role of organizational trust has been theorised and tested in the existing literature, though it inherently limits the analysis to mediation pathways already reported

by other researchers and does not permit independent statistical testing of the intervening relationship in public university systems in Africa.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Organizational Trust Functions as a Mediating Mechanism, not a Direct Driver of Commitment

The findings from this study revealed that organizational trust consistently emerged as an intervening variable rather than a standalone predictor of academic staff commitment. In Oman, trust in supervisors, colleagues, and the institution each exerted distinct mediating effects on how employees translated organisational conditions into commitment (Gharib, Allil, Durrah, & Alsatouf, 2021). Similarly, in Saudi Arabia, trust was shown to positively predict all three dimensions of commitment, affective, continuance, and normative, confirming its role as a transmission mechanism between institutional practice and staff attachment (Alomran, Ahmed, & Kassem, 2024). This pattern suggests that labour relations interventions aimed directly at improving commitment may be less effective than interventions that first build institutional trust, since trust appears to be the channel through which fair treatment and communication translate into psychological attachment. The consistency of this mediating pattern across such different national settings, from the Gulf to Southern Africa, strengthens the theoretical case for testing trust explicitly as an intervening variable in the public universities in Africa.

4.2 Institutional and Economic modalities Shape Which Antecedents of Trust and Commitment Matter Most

Findings diverged sharply depending on a country's income classification and labour market structure. In Australia, hybrid and remote working arrangements reshaped the very architecture of trust, rendering older trust measures unreliable and elevating communication and authenticity as the dominant behavioural predictors (Fischer, Walker, & Hyder, 2023). In Turkey, by contrast, individually held academic identity and values, rather than group or social identity, predicted faculty trust levels (Ayduğ, 2025). In Pakistan, institutional fairness and transparency were the dominant correlates of trust and commitment among public-sector faculty operating under resource constraints (Shah, Phulpoto, & Ghumro, 2023). This divergence indicates that no single universal antecedent of trust travels cleanly across contexts; rather, the salient drivers of trust are shaped by each system's labour market conditions, work arrangements, and cultural understanding of professional identity. For public universities in Africa, this implies that antecedents identified in Western or Gulf literature cannot be assumed to transfer directly and must be tested within the specific institutional and economic realities of the continent.

4.3 Structural Labour Relations Conditions Remain a Persistent, Cross-Cutting Antecedent

Despite contextual variation, poor labour relations conditions, pay, job security, and working conditions, repeatedly surfaced as foundational antecedents undermining both trust and commitment. In the United Kingdom, a decade of declining pay, pension cuts, and rising use of temporary contracts was directly linked to four in five young academic staff considering leaving the sector (University and College Union, 2022). In Zimbabwe, work-life balance significantly predicted job satisfaction, which in turn mediated staff commitment, underscoring those structural working conditions as a necessary precondition rather than a peripheral concern (Dube & Ndofirepi, 2024). This recurrence across both a mature, heavily unionised system and a resource-constrained developing system suggests that structural labour relations conditions function as a baseline antecedent whose absence can undermine trust-building efforts regardless of income context. For labour relations management scholarship, this reinforces that trust and commitment cannot be cultivated through relational or psychological interventions alone if underlying structural conditions, pay, contracts, workload, remain unaddressed.

4.4 Psychological and Relational Variables Complicate the Trust-Commitment Pathway

Several studies revealed that the pathway from institutional conditions to commitment is neither linear nor guaranteed, with psychological variables sometimes producing counterintuitive effects. In Uganda, the interaction between self-efficacy and organisational commitment unexpectedly increased rather than decreased staff turnover intention, even though highly committed, highly self-efficacious staff remained less likely to act on those intentions than their less committed peers (Opolot, Lagat, & Kipsang, 2023). This finding complicates any assumption that strengthening staff psychological resources will straightforwardly reinforce institutional attachment. It suggests instead that psychological empowerment must be paired with structural and relational support, such as trust and equitable treatment, or it risks giving confident staff the self-

assurance to consider leaving rather than the motivation to stay. For a study framing organizational trust as an intervening variable, this finding is a caution against assuming any single mediator, including trust, operates in isolation from other psychological mechanisms at play.

4.5. Public University Systems and Trust-Mediation Research

A recurring gap across the reviewed literature is the near-absence of studies that formally test organizational trust as a mediating variable between labour relations management and academic staff commitment specifically within Sub-Saharan African public universities. Existing African-context studies, such as those from Uganda and Zimbabwe, examine adjacent mediators like self-efficacy and job satisfaction, but rarely isolate organizational trust itself as the explicit intervening mechanism (Opolot, Lagat, & Kipsang, 2023; Dube & Ndofirepi, 2024). Meanwhile, the most methodologically developed trust-mediation models originate from Gulf, Southern Asian, and Southeast European contexts whose labour markets, governance structures, and funding environments differ substantially from those of public universities in Africa (Gharib, Allil, Durrah, & Alsatouf, 2021; Shah, Phulpoto, & Ghumro, 2023). This gap indicates that the specific pathway proposed in this study, from labour relations management through organizational trust to academic staff commitment, remains theoretically plausible based on adjacent evidence but empirically untested in the higher education landscape. This constitutes the central justification for the present study's focus and underscores the contribution it seeks to make to labour relations and higher education scholarship in Africa.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the findings, this paper concludes that organizational trust functions as a critical intervening mechanism through which labour relations management shapes academic staff commitment, rather than operating as a peripheral or optional consideration in institutional practice. The evidence drawn from developed, middle-income, and developing-country contexts consistently shows that institutional conditions, whether structural labour relations factors such as pay, job security, and working conditions, or relational factors such as fairness and communication, do not translate directly into staff commitment but are filtered through employees' trust in their institution and, in some cases, through related psychological states such as self-efficacy, job satisfaction, or burnout. This paper further concludes that the strength and behaviour of this intervening pathway are not universal but are shaped by each context's labour market structure and institutional resourcing, meaning that antecedents of trust identified in developed or Gulf-region systems cannot be assumed to hold in public university settings in Africa without independent verification. Finally, this paper concludes that organizational trust as a formal mediating variable between labour relations management and academic staff commitment remains conspicuously underexamined within Sub-Saharan African public university systems specifically, despite the accumulation of adjacent evidence on related mediators such as job insecurity, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction across the continent, thereby establishing both the theoretical plausibility and the empirical necessity of the present study's focus on Labour Relations Management and Academic Staff Commitment in Public Universities in Africa: The Intervening Role of Organizational Trust.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, this paper suggested the following recommendations for policy action;

1. Public university management and higher education regulatory bodies should prioritise the deliberate cultivation of organizational trust, through transparent decision-making, consistent communication, and fair treatment of staff, as a foundational lever for improving academic staff commitment, rather than relying solely on direct incentive-based interventions.
2. Ministries of education and university councils across public university systems in Africa should commission context-specific diagnostic studies of labour relations conditions before adopting trust-building or commitment-enhancing strategies developed in Western, Gulf, or Asian institutional settings, given that the antecedents of trust and commitment vary significantly by labour market structure and institutional resourcing.
3. University administrations should address structural labour relations conditions, including timely remuneration, job security, contract regularisation, and functional grievance-handling mechanisms, as a precondition for any trust-building initiative, since unresolved structural deficits have been shown to undermine commitment regardless of relational interventions.
4. Human resource and staff welfare units in public universities should integrate psychological support mechanisms, such as burnout monitoring, workload management, and self-efficacy development programmes, alongside trust-

building efforts, to prevent unintended outcomes where empowerment or confidence-building measures inadvertently increase staff turnover intentions.

5. Research councils, higher education regulatory bodies, and university research offices in countries in Africa should fund and prioritise empirical studies that formally test organizational trust as a mediating variable between labour relations management and academic staff commitment, in order to close the substantial evidentiary gap that currently limits evidence-based policymaking in public university systems in Africa.

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